

Relationship Between Reading & Writing

WSRA Position Statement

Research continues to emphasize the similarities and connections between the reading and writing processes. Language educators accept the integration of all the language processes and recognize that these processes are rooted in oral language development. Historically, however, K-12 instruction has been conducted in ways that overlook the interrelatedness of reading and writing. In light of current research findings, the Wisconsin State Reading Association recommends that educators establish classroom relationships between reading and writing.

How Reading and Writing Are Related

Although the professional literature suggests numerous ways reading and writing are related, the below-listed fundamental relationships seem most significant for teachers:

1. Reading and writing are personal and social activities and are driven by a need to communicate. Writers need responses to the text that they are writing; readers need to respond to what they are reading based on text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world mental connections and receive responses from others to their interpretations of the text.
2. Reading and writing are reciprocal processes. Writers can learn much about writing by reading. Likewise, readers can learn much about reading by writing.
3. Reading and writing are parallel processes. Both are purposeful, are dependent on background knowledge and experiences, and are focused on the construction of meaning.
4. Recent brain research indicates that meaning and understanding for learners is enhanced when connections are made between two or more things. The close relationship between reading and writing provides a basis for learners to make these mental connections, not only about the craft of writing, but also when common content is found in both.
5. Reading and writing naturally intersect in the process of learning about the world. As writers explore topics, they often find the need to read. As readers explore topics, they often find a need to write. Simple organizational tools like graphic organizers enhance the transfer effect between reading and writing.

Literacy in the Classroom and Beyond

Teachers can take advantage of the natural relationships that exist between reading and writing to enhance literacy development in their classrooms. Teachers should:

- * Provide time each day for students to engage in "real" reading and "real" writing. This personal reading and writing time helps students gain insights into how written language works and demonstrates the value placed on reading and writing by the school.

- * Create classroom environments that help students develop a sense of ownership of the reading and writing processes by encouraging students to make decisions about their own reading and writing.
- * Create classroom communities where students seek responses to their reading and writing and where students enjoy sharing the insights they acquire about the reading and writing processes.
- * Provide conversational opportunities for students to make mental connections about the structure and craft of writing as well as about the common themes and content found in that which they read and write through the use of cooperative groups such as literature circles, book clubs, etc.
- * Insist that school districts provide staff development programs and other forms of continuing education on the relationships between reading and writing for school personnel and other members of the community.

As literacy leaders, teachers should also internalize these concepts into their personal lives. Teachers should:

1. Make time on a regular basis for their own reading and writing. As practicing readers and writers, teachers are able to model what it means to be literate.
2. Assume ownership for their own reading and writing by regularly reading personal, self-selected materials and engaging in self-initiated writing activities.
3. Become part of a literate community where they seek responses to their own reading and writing and enjoy opportunities to interact with other literate adults.
4. Take the initiative to mobilize community-wide literacy efforts. Creating a more literate society is a collective responsibility of the home, school, and community; teachers should play leadership roles in this enterprise.

Students who read and write every day will naturally discover connections between reading and writing. They will also come to value reading and writing as significant parts of their lives. To be literate means to connect literacy to life. Teachers who have connected reading and writing to their own lives and who have created literate classroom environments provide the best opportunities for children to become truly literate.

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Written inquiries may be sent to: Wisconsin State Reading Association, N7902 E. Friesland Road, Randolph, WI 53956-9407