

# Some Observations about Reading Lessons

## TEACHERS in schools - READING activities

### Some Observations about Reading Lessons in Malaysian Classrooms:

#### 1. Are children really reading?

Sometimes teachers worry that maybe young children (especially year 1) are not 'really reading'. They are just pretending as they memorise the words they hear and then point to the words and 'read'.

This is perfectly OK, and totally normal. Using the "First Steps" continuum - which many Malaysian teachers are (should be) familiar with - this is described as the "Role Play" phase of development. Children gradually move from this stage into "Early Reading" as they start to recognise individual sounds, whole words, and even chunks of language.

#### 2. How important is Reading Aloud?

From the teacher's point of view, if the children do not read aloud, you can't tell if they are actually reading. Therefore the whole reading lesson tends to be based around reading aloud, usually with the teacher leading and the children copying or following along. Most of us would agree that this is mind-numbingly boring! Let's look for some refreshing new ideas.

#### 3. But what if they get it wrong?

Teachers seem to be afraid of letting children make mistakes. They support and protect them every step of the way. Children are afraid of making mistakes, and so they are 'shy' when they are asked to speak or read alone. We need to make it OK for them to make mistakes so that they can learn from them.

#### 4. There is not much good reading material readily available

If we are relying totally on just the text book, the material tends to be very 'dense', full of information that we want the children to take in - rather than for them to just enjoy the sensation of reading a fun-filled text. We need to find and use lots of *other* print materials in a *variety* of ways - maybe from the library, or get children to bring material from home, or find and print from the Internet. (Here is one place to look: [Stories for Malaysian Kids.](#))

**Here's an idea:** Put charts and stories on the walls, **change** them frequently, and offer rewards to children who have read them and can answer questions about them.

#### 5. Phonics is so difficult, I'm not used to it

Many teachers who have been teaching for a while are more used to methods other than phonics, such as "whole language". However, it is important to learn the Phonics system properly (yourself, as a teacher) and to make sure the children are all well-grounded in it. It's a starting point, and children who don't master it will be disadvantaged as they progress. After that, you don't have to totally abandon all of those other methods, they are still good and useful, and can be used for variety and especially to allow for all of the "multiple intelligences" in your classroom.