

# Emergent Literacy and Reading for Children of Taipei: Reading, Creativity and Dream Come True

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*Children's reading ability plays an important role in the future development and competence of a country. Taipei municipal government was aware of the importance and started a 4-year program of "Emergent Literacy and Reading for Children" since 2003 in order to facilitate a quality environment for reading atmosphere through a variety of creative reading activities. Hoping that children can start their own journey in the world of books. The "Emergent Literacy and Reading" program has open the door to a wonderful world of reading full of imagination for the children. The efforts of this program has been devoted to the youngsters and hopefully will develop a reading culture of Taipei.*

## Preface

Children's capacity to read has always played a vital role in the future development of a country. Taipei Municipal Government is aware of such importance, and has been promoting a four-year program of "Emergent Literacy and Reading for Children" since 2003. This is aimed at a quality environment for children to read through a variety of creative activities. With the hope that reading can be shaped as a kind of habit in children's life, seeing them absorb in the world of books would be our greatest expectations.

### *I. Aims*

The aims of the "Emergent Literacy and Reading" program are as below:

- A. To provide information on books and assistance in curricular development of emergent reading
- B. To design activities that help children relate their own experiences in life to the reading materials
- C. To strengthen children's creative thinking by developing supportive instructions on reading
- D. To provide training courses for teachers and encourage sharing of teaching strategies so as to improve the quality of teaching
- E. To enrich the limited human resources by bringing in parents' involvement
- F. To integrate the electronic technology and share internet resources in order to broaden children's reading
- G. To design various ways of reading, create an atmosphere of reading, and fundamentally lead children to a life-long fondness for reading

## *II. Annual Goals*

- A. 2003 is on the theme of “Happy Reading for Youngsters” with the goal of encouraging extensive reading individually.
- B. 2004 is on the theme of “Reading Books, People, and Life” with the goal of extending reading habits from school back home.
- C. 2005 is on the theme of “Encouraging a Versatile Spirit” with the purpose of inspiring an attitude to learn from multiple sources
- D. 2006 is on the theme of “Sustaining Reading in Taipei” with the purpose of promoting a constant fondness for reading
- E. 2007 is on the theme of “Reading Fine Arts” in pursuit of popularization of fine arts in daily life.

## *III. Work Frame*

In 2003, the Bureau of Education of Taipei Municipal Government established a committee of “Emergent Literacy and Reading for Children at Elementary Schools in Taipei City” hosted by the mayor. The committee is composed of the following members: the assistant commissioner, the chief secretary, administrative officers in related fields, school inspectors, experts, scholars, and school representatives. There are five divisions under the committee including “Administrative Planning”, “Information Service”, “Research and Publication”, “Promotion of Activities”, and “Teaching Workshop” In 2006, the four-year plan moves to the second stage, and adjusts to four divisions of “Administrative Planning”, “Resource Service”, “Research and Development”, and “Promotion of Activities”.

The aim of this project is to enhance reading atmosphere for youngsters throughout Taipei City. All of the schools need to team up for the best, therefore the Bureau of Education of Taipei Municipal Government selects a central school from each district as the leader, which should cooperate with the other schools within the same district on planning and carrying out activities.

## *IV. Results*

Since the “Emergent Literacy and Reading” program of Taipei City in 2003, extensive reading has been introduced into campus. Through the cooperation between teachers and students, children in Taipei City will hopefully enjoy a happy childhood with reading.

### *A. Providing resources and service to schools*

The project committee and hub schools have been facilitating schools in the practice of reading activities on campus. Newly published books are evaluated each year and booklists are provided to schools as reference. A website is also established to enable parents and teachers to search for books and related information. The committee also holds sessions for teachers to share teaching experiences and books specialized in reading instructions.

### *B. Devising creative learning methods*

Whole-class reading, discussion and experience sharing are conducted to stimulate students’ thinking and creativity. Schools also hold a series of reading activities such as handmade books, reading portfolios, reading reflections, story-telling, sharing favorite

books, and reading camps. Students can hopefully expand their experience with reading and broaden their world view through these activities.

#### C. Enriching resources and libraries

In addition to subsidies from Taipei City Government, schools have also obtained financial support from their parent associations and local communities. Taipei City Government have also purchased for each school the books recommended by scholars and teachers in an evaluation held by the government since 2004.

#### D. Teachers' training

Teacher training sessions are held to facilitate teachers' competence in teaching and promoting reading through experience sharing, attending class, study groups, workshops, material development sessions, and behavioral researches.

#### E. Involving parents in reading

As parents are an important resource in reading activities, they are also encouraged to join the volunteer work in story-telling and activities on reading. Through the cooperation between teachers and parents, students will hopefully develop a stronger interest in extensive reading and a positive view of life.

#### F. Utilizing Internet resource and online learning

A website (<http://contest.hhps.tp.edu.tw>) has been established for the "Emergent Literacy and Reading" program, which includes sections of "About the Reading Project", "Results", "Lesson Plans", "Behavioral Research and Award-Winning Works", "Videos on Story-Telling", "Online Reading Club", "Links to Reading Websites", "Search for Books", and "Latest Reading Information". The use of the internet has enabled teachers and students to search and share reading resources with much more convenience.

#### G. Reading activities and competitions

A series of reading activities are held during April each year. Awards are given to "Reading Champions", including writing works, supportive teams on reading, original reading lesson plans, and reading portfolios. This allows teachers and students to demonstrate their creativity and accomplishment in reading, to reinforce their reading habits and interest, and to develop their confidence.

#### H. Visits and information exchange

A tele-conference was held on 21 Apr 2006 between Jian Kang Elementary School in Taipei City and Yaumati Catholic Primary School in Hong Kong. On 3 Mar 2006, representatives from Taipei City visited Yaumati Catholic Primary School to share students' reading experiences and teachers' curricular design. Ever since, schools in Taipei City continue such informational and cultural exchange with schools from other parts of Taiwan or around the world.

#### I. Caring for the minority

The theme of reading in 2006 is "Caring, Sharing, Creativity, and Sustainability", which emphasizes the assistance given to children from the minority groups. 125 schools are involved in this project, which includes reading camps and online reading clubs. 20,169 pieces of reading reports are posted online, along with 15,000 books donated to the minority groups. Students have thus learned to share good books with others who may not be able to own them.

Taipei City Government has been promoting reading and emergent literacy at primary schools, aiming at building students' reading habits first, and then extending reading to schools, local communities, and the whole society. Since the implementation of the project, reading has broadened students' minds and world view. It has also reinforced the cooperation between teachers and students, and instilled confidence into both groups.

## References

Taipei Municipal government Bureau of Education (2003). *The program of Emergent Literacy and Reading for Children of Taipei City, Taiwan : Taipei.*

### *Author Notes :*

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