



Washington State Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

“The Practitioner’s Best Friend”
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‘Critical Questions’ Series

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Budgets are tight. Needs are great.

Why should I invest in parents to best impact children?

We see it in every kindergarten classroom at the start of each school year. Some children come prepared and ready while others don’t have the skill set or attention span to take in all the rich instruction available to them in our schools. We offer support and encouragement to shore up that disparity, but the 32 million word gap is too wide a divide to be closed in the best of classrooms. According to Jim Trelease a teacher would need to speak 100 words a second for 900 hours to make up for the 32 million word mark that some students are lacking.

How can you make changes in the lives of elementary students when they walk in the door so far behind? That’s a question for another author. What I want to talk with you about is how we can close that gap and significantly improve the number of children who walk in the classroom ready on day one.

It starts with a simple premise. Parents are their child’s first and most influential teachers, and in South Kitsap School District we invest in those parents long before school starts through a program called READY! for Kindergarten.

READY! is a lifestyle approach and provides parents with the tools and knowledge they need to prepare their children for kindergarten. Parents leave, not with a checklist of things they must do, but with fresh ideas and research-based activities that they can ‘play with a purpose’ with their child for 10 minutes a day and read with their child for 20 minutes a day.

READY! empowers parents. Instead of telling parents, “Give me your child. I know what’s best for them.” READY! says, “No one else can or should care more about your child than you do. We’re going to deepen your toolbox, showing you what your child is capable of and how to assess his or her progress, so you can steer them to the next steps.” Tara, a first time attendee, put it this way, “My sister-in-law is a preschool teacher. Her daughter knows all her colors and all her numbers and all her letters and now I feel like the playing field has been leveled. Now I know what I can do to help my child.”

READY! doesn’t cost, it pays. The easiest and most cost effective way to change a child’s academic trajectory is from birth to age 5. That means fewer interventions because children who come to school ready for the first day are set on a path of success that impacts their entire lives. Of course there is some capital, but you can’t match the returns! READY!’s best work doesn’t happen during the 23 hours spent in workshops over five years. The magic happens when parents and children spend 30 minutes a day reading and playing with a purpose. Those minutes multiply to 913 joy-filled hours of preparing for school.

The result? Washington State University did an independent study of READY! in Kennewick: *In fall 2008, 79% of children whose parents attended READY! classes met the standard for kindergarten, compared to 55% with parents who didn't regardless of family income.*

Because budgets are tight and needs are great, we can't afford to not invest in parents for the good of our children.

Submitted By:

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