

abekamazing

CHRISTIAN SCHOOL | *We make it easy so you can make it amazing.*

Analyzing

Reasoning

Evaluating

Creating

Imagining

The best books plant
spiritual, emotional, and
intellectual seeds that
grow inside.

Reading for Meaning | 8
Where to Start and How to Build

SPRING 2020
ISSUE 1
VOLUME 4

TEACHER'S WORKROOM
*The Reading Circle—
A Game Changer!* p. 6

A LOOK AT THE ISSUES
*The Case for Good Taste
in Children's Books* p. 14

CREATIVE CLASSROOM
Beat the Blahs
pp. 18-20

*Students respect and
treasure language*

WHEN THEY SEE GOD

as the source of it.



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abeka.com/NewEnglish

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We make it easy so you can make it amazing

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Cover Story

Reading for
Meaning



Your great idea could win \$100!

Share your brilliance! Abekamazing would love to hear how you make it work with specific systems and routines in your classroom. Little things can make an amazing difference. What do you do to make ...

- days begin and end smoothly?
- behavior/attention improve?
- teacher prep go faster?
- lessons stick?
- homework get done?
- every minute count?

Share your amazing ideas at amazingschool@abeka.com by March 1, 2020.

Abekamazing Christian School, a service of Abeka (Pensacola, Florida), is an extension of our commitment to Christian traditional education in schools and homes. Our mission is to support and equip students, teachers, and parents by providing amazing Pre-K through grade 12 academic resources based upon biblical values.

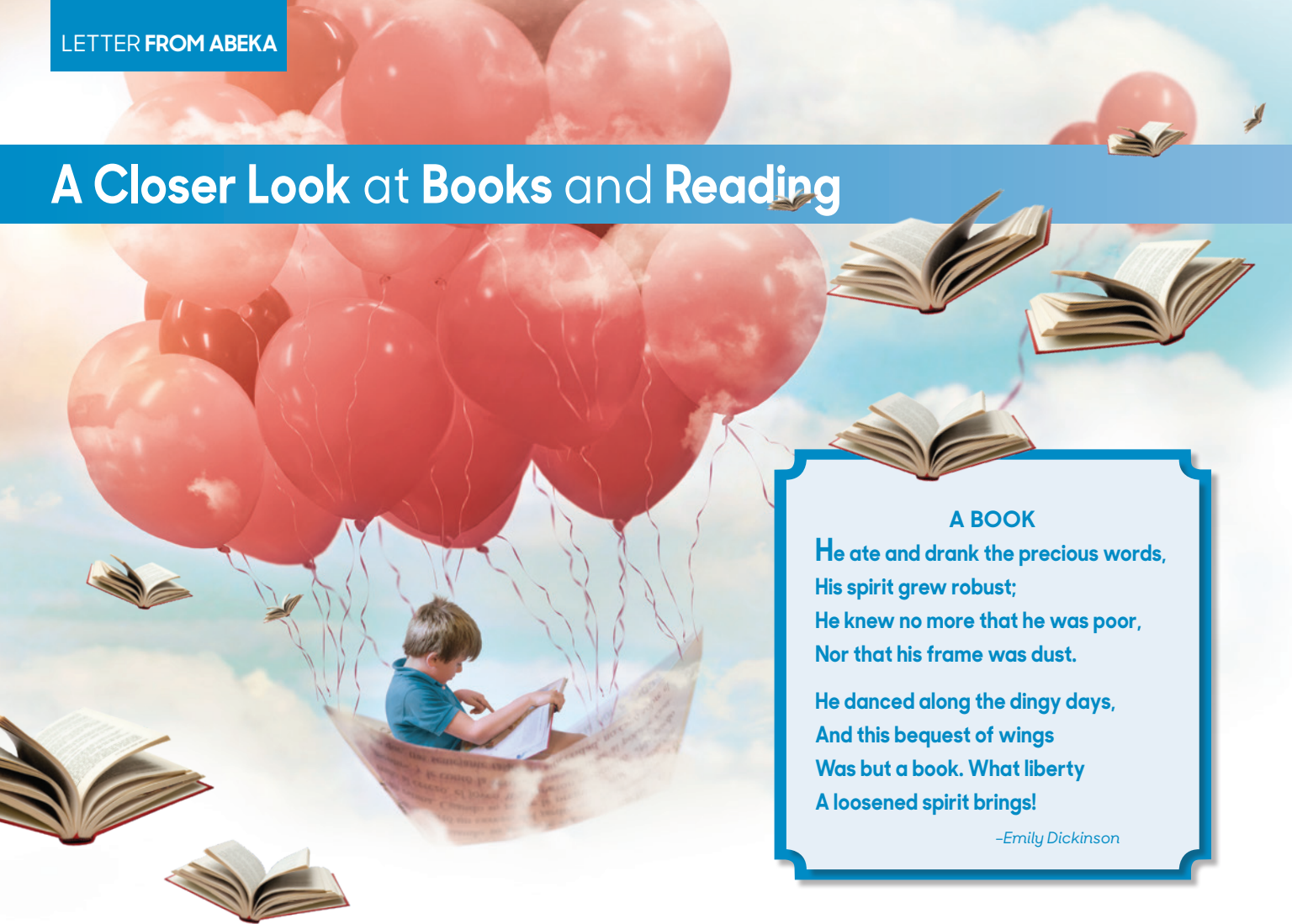
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A Closer Look at Books and Reading



A BOOK

He ate and drank the precious words,
His spirit grew robust;
He knew no more that he was poor,
Nor that his frame was dust.

He danced along the dingy days,
And this bequest of wings
Was but a book. What liberty
A loosened spirit brings!

—Emily Dickinson

DEAR FRIENDS,

Believe it or not, I still remember getting on the bus for my very first day of school those many years ago—a bit scared but mostly excited. Dad had told me that when I went to school, I would learn to read, and I could hardly wait. When I got off the bus that afternoon, however, I announced that school wasn't for me. I had spent a whole day there and still couldn't read! Thankfully, my story has a happy ending.

That memory came back to me recently when I came across this horrible statistic: *1 in 4 American children grow up functionally illiterate.* I like to imagine that many of them

also began school with eager attitudes and expectations for success. Their story does not have a happy ending though. They lost those expectations because they never learned to read. The wider world of wonder and new learning was never opened to them.

Here is what I have learned: the majority of the reading problems they face might have been avoided or resolved in their early school years. And Christian education makes that a reality.

Did you know that Abeka began (unknowingly) as a search for phonics materials in the 1950s? The look-say, or whole-word, method taught in the Scott Foresman Dick and Jane series was pretty much all that was available. That futile search led




to the development and refinement of what became Abeka phonics, the outstanding early-reading program that gives students tools and gets them reading right away. It is easy, systematic, and works with children regardless of innate verbal ability. And it gets them on the path leading to all the treasures found in good books. It is known as a pure phonics program, meaning it focuses on sounds not the science of phonics. (Learning terms such as *diphthong* or *digraph* don't start you reading!)

Probably your Christian school, like many others, attracts students whose parents trust you to help their

sons and daughters become good readers of good books. Keep up the good work!

We think that reading and books are worth a closer look in this issue of *Abekamazing*.

Emily Dickinson said books gave her "wings to fly." I like that.

 **Let's help our students unlock their potential and soar above those horrible statistics!** ■


Dr. Phyllis Rand
 Senior Editor
amazingschool@abeka.com



BOOKS I LOVE...

Laurel Hicks, Abeka's first editor and a major player in the refinement of Abeka phonics, says that she returns to these fiction titles again and again:

David Copperfield, Charles Dickens
Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan
Paradise Lost, John Milton
Idylls of the King, Alfred, Lord Tennyson
Moby Dick, Herman Melville



As for me, here are some of the books I have read and reread at different ages and stages and for different purposes. Their impact remains.

Nests Above the Abyss, Isobel Kuhn
If, Amy Carmichael
The Red Sea Rules, Robert Morgan
Time of Wonder, Robert McCloskey

And I will never forget
Black Beauty, Anna Sewell





KIM SMITH

Welcome to the teacher's workroom, where veteran Christian school teacher Kim Smith shares ideas you can use to make your classroom amazing.

PERSONALLY SPEAKING ABOUT QUALITY READING CIRCLES

As a first-grade teacher, I conducted over 1,000 reading circles a school year—6 every day. Once in the morning and again in the afternoon, I met with 3 separate groups of children based on reading ability. That individualized attention was a game-changer!

The progress occurred when I finally realized that it was up to me that not one single child slip through the cracks.

I began to focus on progress no matter how small: Yesterday he had to sound out every letter. Today he read a blend without sounding out. Tomorrow, could he possibly read two blends without sounding out?

I began to challenge for progress: Look at the blend, sound it in your head. Now read the blend. Way to go! Now can you think of a word that starts with the blend "be"? Bed! Yes! Good thinking!

I began to ask myself: At the end of the day, did they become better readers through their mistakes because of my focused comments and praise?

I learned a lot that I want to share with you.

The READING CIRCLE— A Game Changer!

What I Learned about Reading Circle Success.



15-Minute Chunks of Purposeful Instruction Take Students Further Than I Thought Possible.

- ▶ **story introduction/vocabulary** (1–2 min.) to whet their interest and develop quick phonics application
- ▶ **oral reading and comprehension** (10–13 min.) to develop skills and comprehension
- ▶ **discussion throughout** to cement application as appropriate (Much of this is already included in Teacher Editions, I just liked to make it personal by adding a few extras.)



The Focus Is on Oral Reading. Silent reading is assigned periodically; but when they are first learning, I cannot possibly know if my students are reading with accuracy, expression, or even observing punctuation with understanding if they are not reading aloud.



Two Short Daily Reading Circles Accommodate Attention Spans.

(Designated as A.M. and P.M. reading in Abeka curriculum.) Students hear comments, immediately reread to implement improvement comments, and then follow through with new stories in the 2nd reading circle.

(Every student reads at least twice during a reading circle. Some an entire page and others only a sentence—and then may reread that same sentence once or twice to practice your comment. If there has been improvement, that is success. You might read a portion as an example of expression, etc.)



Students Need to Know How to Do Better.

- ▶ If you asked a student, "What could you do to improve your reading?" would he know?
- ▶ If the parent asks him, "What does the teacher say about your reading?" would he have an answer?
- ▶ If parents question the reading grade, do you have a ready answer?
- ▶ If the answer is no to any of these questions, you probably have not communicated clearly. Practice saying "Reread for"



Grades Should Reflect Reading Quality Not Effort.

Whether you use the suggested Abeka grading scale or your own rubric, the grade should be a true reflection of a student's reading not effort. Reward and encourage effort in other ways.

- ▶ Abeka gives guidelines for grading all 3 pacing levels. (See the teacher information pages at the front of the reading curriculum.)
- ▶ Keep comments within the framework of the oral reading qualities listed in the front information pages of the Abeka reading curriculum. It is consistent through elementary grades, and once explained, children know exactly what they need to improve.

accuracy	enunciation	smoothness
expression	observing punctuation	volume
comprehension	speed	poise

- ▶ Because I always had scrap paper or a sticky note in my TE (Teacher Edition) and a pen in my hand, I was able to jot down quick notes about readers. My students never knew when I was taking a grade.
- ▶ Grade on new material not on homework reading. You grade on how the child applies his phonics and reading skills to brand new content. It is the child's application and implementation of skills you are grading. ■



Students benefit from hearing what other students are doing right. Mimicry is a great reading teacher!

Attach an oral reading skill to the end of your comments.

- 📖 Great job reading with expression!
- 📖 You did not miss a single word!
- 📖 That reading was so smooth!
- 📖 Way to watch the punctuation!
- 📖 Good job reading with speed and accuracy.
- 📖 You made the story come to life!



Reading for Fun Enrichment Library

Set of 54 easy to read books that will challenge kindergartners to keep reading.

abeka.com/SummerReading



Did I do all of these things in my first few years? No, but I learned, and I'm thankful veteran teachers shared their secrets to reading success with me, so I in turn can share them with you! Is there something that you could implement even tomorrow? It might be a game-changer!

Reading for Meaning

Where to Start and How to Build

Reading instruction begins with intensive phonics for all children. It is the foundation for learning about words. But as we know, being able to read well goes beyond learning how sounds and letters work together.

Reading instruction that aims for understanding gets children into books right way and integrates these important elements:

1. Language Skills—

the introduction, integration, and practice of the discrete skills that teach how language works

Language skills are taught early as part of phonics and continued throughout the school years via systematic and **explicitly taught* grammar, word usage, writing, spelling, and opportunity for wide reading.

2. Knowledge—

the realization that comprehension grows with a person's general knowledge

It makes sense, doesn't it? Someone who reads well about geography may not read well about science—despite decoding ability. Background knowledge affects comprehension.

But what exactly is general knowledge? It is just wide-spread knowledge of many things—the kind of knowledge that should be available to every person—no extensive training or specialization required. (E. D. Hirsch calls it cultural literacy.) There may have been a time when American culture and family or church life, combined

with what children learned in school, adequately passed along this general knowledge. But changes in family life, church attendance, and school curriculum have contributed to less and less shared knowledge. Just one of the consequences is poor reading comprehension and such declarations as "high school graduates read on

* Think about Explicit Teaching

A student's best tool is his teacher's explicit instruction. In other words, his teacher

- 📖 Proceeds in small steps
- 📖 Gives clear explanations and demonstrations
- 📖 Provides supported practice with feedback
- 📖 Checks for understanding

Lesson 28 (20 min.)

SAMPLE Curriculum Page

Written Practice ✱ Enrichment Ideas ✎ Teaching Note

Preparation

- Objectives:
 - Applying proper ending punctuation to sentences
 - Recognizing/applying *cr* in *crab*, *tw* in *twins*
 - Applying phonics sounds/rules to complete dictation
- Board:
 - A Dad will play a game with Blake. Will Blake win the game? Great job, Blake.
 - B crack twin crisp twist cry twig
- Materials:
 - Scrap paper for each student
- Visuals:
 - Large Phonics Teaching Charts 6, 7
 - Basic Phonics Flashcards 25—*cr* in *crab*, 26—*tw* in *twins*
 - Blend Practice Cards B 91–100
- Enrichment Ideas: (optional)
 - ending punctuation: poster-board visuals of period, question mark, exclamation point
 - cr* in *crab*: two identical *crab* visuals to illustrate both special sounds; baby *crib* or cradle
 - tw* in *twins*: two *crab* visuals; Arithmetic flashcards illustrating combination twins
- Study Teaching Procedure.

Teaching Procedure

- Phonics Review**
 - Charts 6, 7: Review charts, pointing to special sounds in mixed order.

2. Language Instruction—Ending Punctuation

- Use sentences on board to review/teach ending punctuation:
 - Point to first sentence. A sentence begins with a capital letter and usually ends with a period.
 - Point to capital letter and period in first sentence.
 - Have class read question, using expression.
 - Point to second sentence. Some sentences ask a question. A sentence that asks a question begins with a capital letter and ends with a question mark.
 - Demonstrate writing a question mark after second sentence.
 - Have class read question, using expression.
 - Point to third sentence. Some sentences show expression. A sentence that shows expression begins with a capital letter and ends with an exclamation point.
 - Demonstrate writing an exclamation point after third sentence.
 - Have class read question, using good expression.

3. Phonics Instruction—*cr* in *crab*, *tw* in *twins*

- BPF 25, 26 (picture side): Introduce special sounds; one at a time. Demonstrate each special sound, having class, groups, individuals repeat sound/sentence several times:
 - cr* in *crab*, *cr*, *cr*, *cr*
 - tw* in *twins*, *tw*, *tw*, *tw*, *tw*

Note integration of phonics and language

elementary level." *If ever there was an argument for an information-filled, knowledge-building curriculum, this is it!*

3. Vocabulary—

the need for planned introduction and explanation of many words

Jeanne Chall makes a strong case for the necessity of vocabulary enlargement if a student is not only to learn to read but also be able to use reading to learn.¹ Reading comprehension can be thwarted by vocabulary limitations.

Just as in the case with phonics, vocabulary is inadequately addressed when considered a natural development. Beimiller's research shows that, "There is evidence that younger children profit less from simply being read

to. There is also positive evidence that children readily acquire vocabulary when provided with a little explanation as novel words are encountered in context."²

So, in addition to regular spelling and vocabulary, begin class with new words/terms to be encountered in the lesson. Write them on the board, pronounce and define them, and call them to the class's attention when they come up.

This purposeful teaching of these elements produces readers who can comprehend varied and increasingly complex writing—the purpose of learning to read! ■

¹Chall, J.S., Jacobs, V.A., and Baldwin, L.E. (1990.) *The reading crisis: Why poor children fall behind.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

²Andrew Beimiller "Teaching Vocabulary: Early, Direct, and Sequential." *American Educator*, Spring 2001. Beimiller calls vocabulary the missing link in reading/language instruction. "However vocabulary deficits are fundamentally more remediable than many other learning problems." <http://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/spring-2001/teaching-vocabulary>

Did You KNOW?

The help and immediate feedback beginning readers get in reading circles is the first step to understanding what they read:

- 📖 Learning the few English sight words
- 📖 Observing reading clues such as punctuation
- 📖 Reading with expression that shows meaning

Take a Look Inside



Sample what's
new in our 4th and 9th
grade Language
Arts program!

abeka.com/NewProducts

Reading to Learn

How to Analyze a Book and Promote Critical Thinking

First, we learn to read words already part of our vocabulary and knowledge base.

Then, we develop greater comprehension via expanded vocabulary instruction, content knowledge, and quality reading material.

All the while, learning how to respond analytically, critically, and evaluatively to what we read.

Perhaps you have heard the phrase “engaging or interacting with the text” to describe what skillful readers do. Instead of passively reading on a surface level (“I read it, but I don’t get it”), they use what they have been taught about language and the world to actively think and evaluate as they read—almost like a conversation.

What does that word mean?

I thought he said . . .

I have never heard of this before.

Where is the proof?

Why did he say this? It seems to contradict.

This doesn’t sound right. I’ll read it again.

This kind of reading builds comprehension and critical thinking skills and helps get the most out of what a piece can offer—the most enjoyment, the most information,

the most truth or insight, the most beauty, the most understanding or empathy. Good books (including textbooks) and stories and poems have those rich rewards to offer. And we want to claim those rewards!

Good books have rich rewards to offer. We want to claim those rewards.

Like beginning reading instruction, active reading also benefits from explicit instruction and practice. Not every student picks it up on his own.

I have read several strategies that hope to accomplish this—some which seem like busywork to me. I keep going back to Mortimer Adler. His *How to Read a Book* is still the best and most practical explanation of how to actively read and look for the

meaning. I like it because, in essence, Adler simply says to the reader: classify the kind of book, identify and interpret the book’s theme(s), and analyze it for truthfulness and accuracy.

Adler's 3 Stages of Reading

“In the case of good books, the point is not to see how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through to you.”

—Mortimer Adler

Stage 1

Finding What a Book Is About

What is the book about as a whole?

- Classify the book according to kind and subject matter.
- State what the whole book is about with the utmost brevity.
- Enumerate its major parts in their order and relation, and outline these parts as you have outlined the whole.
- Define the problem or problems the author has tried to solve.



Analyzing

Stage 2

Interpreting a Book's Contents

What is being said in detail, and how?

- Come to terms with the author by interpreting his key words.
- Grasp the author's leading propositions by dealing with his most important sentences.
- Know the author's arguments by finding them in, or constructing them out of, sequences of sentences.
- Determine which of his problems the author has solved and which he has not; and of the latter, decide which the author knew he had failed to solve.



Reasoning

Stage 3

Criticizing a Book as a Communication of Knowledge: Is It true? What of It?

General Maxims of Intellectual Etiquette

- Do not begin criticism until you have completed your outline and your interpretation of the book. (Do not say you agree, disagree, or suspend judgment, until you can say "I understand.")
- Do not disagree disputatiously or contentiously.
- Demonstrate that you recognize the difference between knowledge and mere personal opinion by presenting good reasons for any critical judgment you make.

Special Criteria for Points of Criticism

- Show wherein the author is uninformed.
- Show wherein the author is misinformed.
- Show wherein the author is illogical.
- Show wherein the author's analysis or account is incomplete.

Note: Of these last four, the first three are criteria for disagreement. Failing in all of these, you must agree, at least in part, although you may suspend judgment on the whole, in light of the last point.



Evaluating

Critical Thinking Skills
Claim Your Reading Rewards

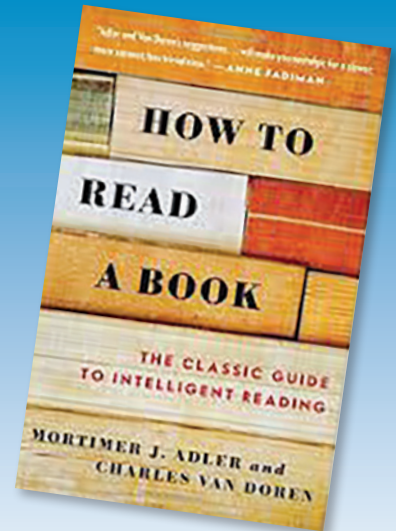
From *How to Read a Book* by Mortimer J. Adler. Copyright © 1972 by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren. Reprinted with permission of Avid Reader Press, an Imprint of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

(Reading to Learn continued on page 12)



Adler's stages taught me that teaching active reading can begin early.

- Children can early learn the purpose of a piece of writing—what the story or book or poem is about. They can tell me what happened before they learn what plot and summary and outline are.
- They can find the "problem" and the story's "lesson" before they understand what moral theme is.
- I use the reading stage (and vocabulary) that best fits the age group I am teaching. As soon as students learn *biography*, *theme*, *summary*, etc., use those terms.
- Even in elementary, I like to look at the author's choice of words in certain pieces. Are there particular words, terms, or sentences that give us hints as to what the author seems to be telling us about life, people, God?
- What details/description made you sympathize with the main character, see God's love, etc.?
- I really find his advice useful in the third stage of reading and require older students to either write or present orally an evaluation of a work's theme and how the author presents it.
- Responding personally to a work's effect on your own thinking is the ultimate goal of active reading. It can change your life! 🌈



How to Read a Book, by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, Available online

All content is not necessarily reflective of the views held by Abeka.

Something to Think About

Great book report idea: Tell about a book that changed your life.



Did You KNOW?

Starting in kindergarten, **if a student reads 20 minutes a day at home**, he will read 1.8 million words per year. He will have read for 851 hours by 6th grade. On standardized tests, he will likely score better than 90% of his peers.

The powerful influence of early reading on later reading and vocabulary growth was demonstrated when researchers had children keep diaries of how they spent their time when they were not in school. The very best readers, those who scored better than 90 percent of their peers on reading tests, read for more than twenty minutes a day, while those at the fiftieth percentile read only 4.6 minutes a day. The poorest readers, those children reading below the tenth percentile, read less than one minute each day, and would require one year to read what the best readers read in two days.¹

¹ *Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level*, Sally Shaywitz, M.D.

Coming from Abeka

Because my own six children are among the millions of students who have learned from Abeka, I am both personally and professionally grateful for the firm foundation undergirding Abeka's educational resources for more than five decades. While the foundational principles are timeless, they are also timely. Whether you've trusted Abeka for decades or are just getting to know us, take confidence in our firm foundation.



AMY YOHE
Managing Editor, Abeka

Laying the Foundation for Success

Abeka provides a trusted education built on four main principles:



BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

Teaching every subject through the lens of Scripture reinforces that our every-day lives aren't split into the sacred and the secular. It gives students countless opportunities to come to Christ for salvation and to adopt biblical values for their own. These values will make all the difference today, tomorrow, and for eternity.



RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Products meet both biblical standards and academic standards so that young people are prepared for wherever God calls them—from the mission field to the medical field. What you'll teach is relevant, and data-driven. You won't be teaching to a state or national test, but your students will be ready. When you use Abeka, you'll experience how a Christian education is an excellent education.



PROVEN PHILOSOPHY

Your materials and methods start with the firmest foundation: what the Bible says about human nature, knowledge, and authority. Instead of the latest short-lived educational trends, lessons build on methods that have produced results for generations. Students will acquire the knowledge and skills they need, but they'll also learn how to learn, build sound character, establish healthy relationships with others, and form the priceless habit of personal accountability.



CRITICAL THINKING

Building from a foundation of facts, your students will learn how to apply those facts to solve problems, generate ideas, and discern truth. They'll be able to think through issues, form logical arguments rather than just opinions, and make wise decisions. They'll be equipped to stand out as leaders and use their influence to make a difference.

ONLY THE *Best Books*

Four decades ago, **Young Adult literature (YA)** became a distinct literary subset aimed at 12-to-18-year-old readers. Meghan Gurden, Children's Book Reviewer for the Wall Street Journal, speaks revealingly about YA in this excerpt from a speech she gave at Hillsdale College.

The book industry, broadly speaking, says: Kids have a right to read whatever they want.

What to Read

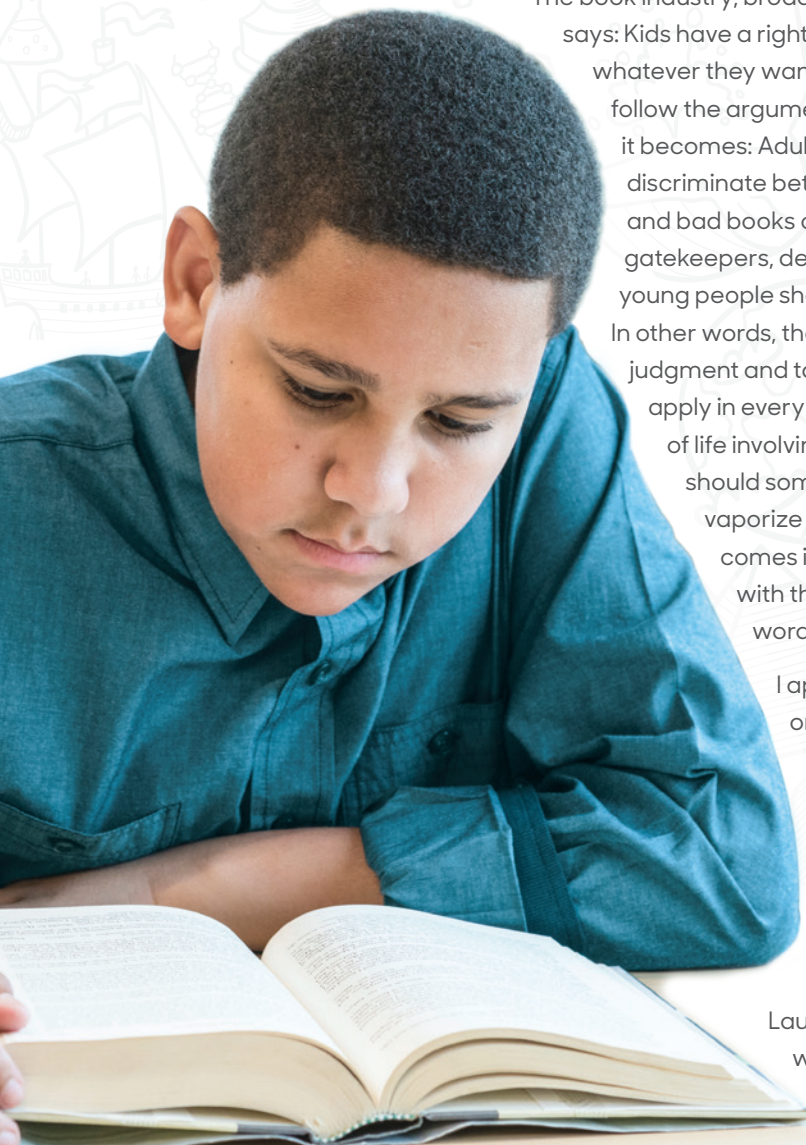
The book industry, broadly speaking, says: Kids have a right to read whatever they want. And if you follow the argument through, it becomes: Adults should not discriminate between good and bad books or stand as gatekeepers, deciding what young people should read. In other words, the faculty of judgment and taste that we apply in every other area of life involving children should somehow vaporize when it comes in contact with the printed word.

I appeared on National Public Radio to discuss these issues with the Young Adult book author Lauren Myracle, who has been hailed as

a person "on the front lines in the fight for freedom of expression." Myracle made clear that she doesn't believe there should be any line between adult literature and literature for young people. In saying this, she was echoing the view that prevails in many progressive, secular circles—that young people should encounter material that jolts them out of their comfort zone; that the world is a tough place; and that there's no point shielding children from reality. I took the less progressive, less secular view that parents (and teachers) should take a more interventionist approach, steering their children away from books about immorality and horror and degradation, and towards books that make aesthetic and moral claims.

A Surprising Correlation

Federal researchers were puzzled for years by a seeming paradox when it came to educating children about the dangers of drugs and tobacco. There seemed to be a correlation



between anti-drug and anti-tobacco programs in elementary and middle schools and subsequent drug and tobacco use at those schools. It turned out that at the same time children were learning that drugs and tobacco were bad, they were taking in the meta-message that adults expected them to use drugs and tobacco.

This is why good taste matters so much when it comes to books for children and young adults. Books tell children what to expect, what life is, what culture is, how we are expected to behave—what the spectrum is.

Imprimis. July/August (Volume 42, Number 7). Adapted from a speech delivered at Hillsdale College on March 12, 2013.

Books don't just cater to tastes.

They form tastes. They create norms—and as the example above shows, the norms young people take away are not necessarily the norms adults intend.

The good news is that just like the lousy books of the past, the lousy books of the present will blow away like chaff. The bad news is that they will leave their mark. As in so many aspects of culture, the damage they do can't easily be measured. It is more a thing to be felt—a coarseness, an emptiness, a sorrow. ■

Something to Think About

T.S. Eliot's admonishes in "Religion and Literature" that "in ages like our own, in which there is no . . . common agreement, it is the more necessary for Christian readers to scrutinize their reading, especially of works of imagination, with explicit ethical and theological standards."

The orderly world that God made for us is full of beauty and wonder—to the smallest detail. That tells us so much about our Creator! Because He values beauty, so do we. Have you thought about this: such things as neat homework, good handwriting, well-made room decorations, polite manners and pleasant words, and even straight margins all contribute beauty to our environment? They are part of every teacher's aesthetic concerns because they condition the student's tastes for the lovely and meaningful—and mirror God's love of beauty and order.



With What Will You Furnish Their Spirit?

"Children don't stumble onto good books by themselves; they must be introduced to the wonder of words put together in such a way they spin out pure joy and magic. . . . Every child ought to know the pleasure of words so well chosen that they awaken sensibility, great emotions, and understanding of truth. This is the magic of words—a touch of the supernatural, communication which ministers to the spirit, a gift of God."

—Gladys Hunt



Rosedale Baptist School

BALTIMORE, MD



JEREMY ERRETT
Head of School

Our Field

For two decades, Rosedale Baptist School, a ministry of Rosedale Baptist Church, has been a beacon of hope to families living on the outer edge of the city of Baltimore. Because our community offers few safe and positive options for education, we have an open door to minister to students and their families. Beyond the physical safety they initially seek—we share hope through the gospel. God has strategically placed us here on the front lines of outreach into Baltimore's homes.

Our students may wear uniforms, but they are by no means cookie cutter. Our diverse student body comes from

a wide spectrum of spiritual, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds. Some are struggling at home, some have learning challenges, and many have little biblical knowledge or moral values. Our teachers lovingly minister from God's Word to them all in daily Bible classes and weekly chapels.

Our Mission

Our mission is to **Reach** students for Christ, **Build** them to their greatest potential in Him, and train them to **Serve** the Lord and others.

Even though many of our students' families are not primarily seeking an education from a biblical worldview, that is exactly what we want to deliver. We are grateful that Abeka helps us to do just that for every single student, regardless of his spiritual background. We have seen life after life transformed by the power of the gospel and the prayers of teachers—while getting a great education.

To inspire the student body, we organize three annual school-wide service projects to support local ministries or organizations. One of our favorite projects was organized





in response to one of our students being diagnosed with leukemia. Casey Cares is an organization that supports families battling childhood cancer through meaningful gifts and support. As a school this year, we were able to collect over 2,000 requested items and \$1,000 in gift cards to help Casey Cares plan fun nights, even while enduring difficult days. And the class with most donations got to deliver it all! Also, we are happy to report that the student is doing much better!

To see young people trust Christ as Savior, grow in Him, and then give to others has truly been fulfilling. God is using our mission.

Our Future

What a blessing it has been to see our student body grow by nearly 100 students each of the last three years! Over 730 students enrolled this year in K2-12th! We had to add a second campus about 5 minutes down the road this summer. K2-2nd now have a wonderful building (once an insurance building) with everything they need.

We praise God for the flood of students He continues to send our way as we plan for future expansion and growth.

We love where God has placed us, and we love the students He has sent us. What an incredible opportunity we have been given! 🇺🇸



THE CREATIVE

CLASSROOM



WHAT'S YOUR BIG IDEA?

If you have an idea to share, we want to hear about it. Send it, along with a high resolution photo (>1.5Mb), to amazingschool@abeka.com.

Brighten the Day and Beat the Blahs by ...

1

Performing a random act of kindness like

- writing and delivering cards or letters to a school administrator, office person, or bus driver. **Allowing choice is a positive mood enhancer.**
- surprising another class with a song or memorized Bible verses.
- picking up trash on the school grounds.
- collecting money for the class missionary by selling brownies at lunch time.
- offering compliments to classmates and family.

Dear Mr. Bell,
Thank you for driving the bus for our field trip to the museum. It was such a fun day. Thank you for getting us safely there and back.
Mrs. Benthall's Class

INTERESTING FACTS

- A 2009 University of Maryland study showed that *reading* is something that happy people tend to have in common.
- Studies show that having *flowers* and *plants* in the room increases creativity and perks up your mood. Maybe even a picture of flowers? It's worth a try!

2

Creating interesting new names for room jobs like

- **Energy Expert**—turns the lights on and off when class leaves and enters the classroom.
- **Sanitation engineer**—makes sure no paper is on the floor at the end of the day.

- **Materials Manager**—passes out papers and materials.
- **Technology Assistant**—helps you if you need any technical assistance,
- **Photographer**—takes pictures to help document special moments in your classroom.
- **Courier**—delivers notes to the office
- **Temp**—fills in for absentees

3

Treating your class to an unexpected surprise like

- learning something new—a song, a poem, how to say "thank you" in three languages, a funny joke. **There is a link between lack of challenge and boredom.**
- rearranging the class seating.
- planning a surprise indoor recess scavenger hunt around the school. Place clues in advance, each clue leading to next clue. It is fun to make the clues in verse.

Clue 1: Give this room some looks—the place with all the books.

Clue 2: Go where we get a special greeting—from ladies helping with our eating.

4

Reading Mentors

My students read a suggested book to a kindergartner. It turns out to be a great buddy system.



— Brittany G.



Principal's Pop-In Party!

About once a month, I pick a class to visit for a popcorn fellowship with the kids. *(I always check with the teacher first.)*

– Larry N.



Dress-up Fridays

At points during the stretch from January to spring break, do your elementary students lose focus and excitement about learning?

They still love to play dress-up so one way to "Beat-the-Blahs" and renew excitement for school during February is have dress-up Fridays.

In January, teachers choose easy, inexpensive themes and make a flyer to send home to parents. What fun to post pictures on the school website and form parades to show off the costumes!

And teachers get in the act too! We really did it up right during a very successful "Under the Sea" day last year. Our jellyfish hats were made with sombreros, poster board, bubble wrap, colored cellophane, and streamers. We wore them at times throughout the day. They were a hit!



– Sherri O.

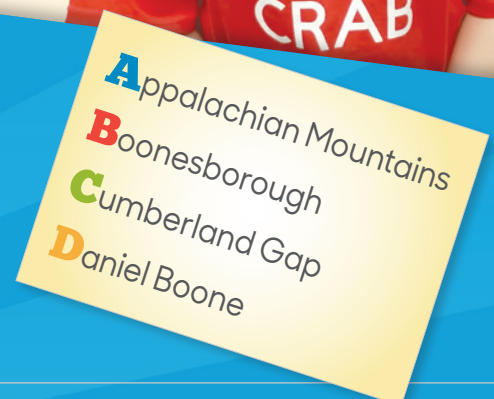


Review by the Letter

Not Looking Forward to Unit Review? Let's Create a Glossary

Glossary: an alphabetical list of terms with definitions in a particular subject matter

For homework or classwork, challenge students to think of and write study terms from the unit that begin with every letter of the alphabet. Who got the most? Spelled right? In class, go around the room to hear terms and explanations and provide feedback.



1 Put a decorative rug in the circle for readers to stand on. The goal is to stay on the reading carpet by reading in the same way they would talk—by phrases, looking ahead, and not choppy (word by word). This also works with a chair pillow.

6 Encourage them to NOT let the teacher “take over.” Every time they read over a word or add their own word, the teacher takes over the reading. Create a sheriff theme and give them a star to wear if they read accurately. Inaccuracies demote the reader to deputy. For the next few days, motivate each circle to have more sheriffs than deputies.

2 Invite a student to sit in your chair while you sit in his chair because he reads just as a teacher would—with smoothness and accuracy.

3 Take a phone pic of the outstanding circle or reader. It could be posted in the room or at PTM.

4 Celebrate by ringing a small bell every time someone reads his portion with good expression. Try again if necessary.

5 Use special pens or mini sticky notes to write a happy note around a portion of reading that was exceptional. Remind them to show their parents the special note when they read homework that night.

10 Call on students to read in random order and at atypical stopping points—even the middle of a sentence. If the next reader can pick up right where the last reader left off, he gets a stuffed toy to hold or put beside his seat. When reading circle is over, hold a net out for them to toss their animal. If they did not earn an animal, encourage them to try again in the afternoon circle.

9 Boost the love for reading circle with an encouraging skill-related note. Make notes in advance highlighting elements such as smoothness, accuracy, or expression. Readers who do what’s called for get to take the note home.

8 To work on enunciation and volume, use echo microphones (found at most toy stores). If they spoke too softly, their voice was not heard in the microphone. If they run over their words without careful enunciation, they could not be understood in the microphone.

7 Select a theme—farm, for example. Each reading circle chooses animals from among your cut-outs. The goal is to add as many animals to the barn (drawn on board) during the A.M./P.M. circle as possible. Guessers move an animal back to the field outside the barn. Multiple opportunities to read applying that day’s skill might get an animal back into the barn.

10 Easy Motivational Ideas Geared Toward Skills Improvement in Reading Circles



– Kim S.



ABEKA

CAN

HELP

YOU!

Q: Abeka is known for helping teachers, but what about a new principal like me? I want to be a better leader in my school.

A: You are right. Professional development isn't just for teachers—it's for principals and administrators too. About 30 years ago, administrators asked your same question, and in response, Pensacola Christian Academy has been hosting a Principals Clinic ever since. 65 years of experience results in a lot of learning to give back!

When and where is it held?

Pensacola Christian Academy, Pensacola, FL
March 23–25, 2020

Who should attend?

New or experienced Christian school principals, administrators, and office staff. There are three tracks for principals and administrators. There is also track for office staff since one key to a school's success is a knowledgeable, efficient, and welcoming office staff.

What can you expect?

You will...

- observe classrooms in a thriving Christian school
- get pointers for success in administrative methods
- discover new ideas for your ministry
- earn CEUs (continuing education units) through attendance at Clinic.

What will you learn?

A professional staff will share knowledge and proven techniques on key topics such as

- How to run effective parent teacher meetings and programs
- Best practices for using Abeka curriculum
- Business procedures
- Admissions and evaluation of students
- Equipping your office

What others say

"It was a tremendous blessing for me to attend the Principals Clinic. I returned with a fresh vision for our schools, ready to move into plans for the next school year."

How to register

Register online at
abeka.com/Principals20
before February 21.



Principals Clinic

March 23–25, 2020

For new or experienced principals and office staff

Remember! Register online by February 21
at Abeka.com/Principals20
We hope you can join us!



Book Survey

Encourage student involvement and wider reading with this idea. Download and cut the free book survey. Have students take home, complete, fold, and help arrange onto a bulletin board like the one pictured here. (Note: this teacher has two sections of English. Adapt as necessary.)

Every day pull a book "off the shelf" for student comment. Award with a bookmark. (See page 21.)

Alternative: file the forms and bring one out for discussion daily.



Fold the survey in thirds along the dashed lines.



Who Is Reading What?





Reader Recognition

When surveys are submitted, recognize students' reading accomplishments with these bookmarks.

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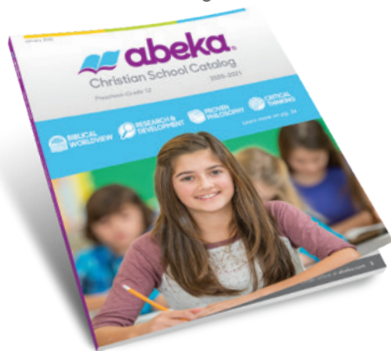
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