

A Reading Program That Fits The Bill

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reading

Kumon is proud that its Reading Program represents the effective teaching methods recommended by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in the United States. This institute is a world leader in the field of Reading Research and was instrumental in writing the Early Reading education bill that was recently passed by the Bush administration. NICHD's Reading Research was conducted in many major universities including, Yale, Georgetown, The University of Toronto, and The University of Washington.

President Bush's new education bill places a strong emphasis on reading. Whether you live in Canada or the U.S., this initiative should have an impact on future reading education across the continent. Its expectation is that US schools will adopt methods of reading instruction which are scientifically based, i.e. phonics driven. The emphasis on phonics (the ability to connect sounds with letters) follows closely in the spirit of past legislation to teach reading by teaching phonics in a systematic and explicit fashion.

Before children can learn phonics, they must be taught reading readiness skills such as phonemic awareness, the concept that words consist of sounds. Without this awareness, children will be unable to learn phonics - a true "cart before the horse" situation. Starting at birth, parents can teach their children phonemic awareness by reading aloud and singing to them as well as by engaging them in rhyming and other word play. The Kumon Reading Program not only teaches preschoolers these reading readiness skills in preparation for learning how to read, it also systematically teaches phonics, firmly believing - along with the experts, that being able to connect sounds to letters is a strong indicator of whether or not students will be successful in learning how to read.

Some educators are critical of a phonics only approach to reading instruction because they feel that it can lead to superficial reading programs that drill children in sounding out letter combinations but never teach them to comprehend what they read. These critics believe that reading can best be taught by immersing children in rich literature, an instructional strategy known as the whole language approach.

At Kumon, parents do not have to make an either/or choice between the phonics method or the whole language method of reading instruction because Kumon takes advantage of the benefits of both. Kumon offers children a comprehensive and balanced approach to phonics through the worksheets and whole language through a system of phonics worksheets coupled with a rich and varied reading list of classical and contemporary selections.

Note from the editor:

A Reading Program That Fits The Bill - Written by Andrea Pastorok, Ph.D. / Educational Psychologist - Published by Kumon.