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# INTRODUCTION

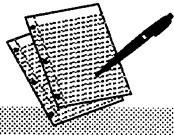
## **The Dawn of Holistic Language Arts**

A wave of much-needed reform in the teaching of language arts is sweeping through our nation's primary classrooms. Basal readers and worksheets have been relegated to the back shelves in favor of a wealth of literature selections and communication opportunities. We are not sure what those worksheets accomplished, but it is becoming clear that they did not improve reading and writing skills, nor did they generate enthusiasm.

A great number of teachers are now convinced that the natural and most effective way to learn to read is by reading, the natural way to learn to write is by writing, and the natural way to increase language capacity is by giving children meaningful opportunities to talk. Therefore, we are searching for and creating a variety of ways to engage our students in appropriate and meaningful reading, writing, and speaking.

One strategy that is effective in all three areas is to have our young students write each day in journals. Among the many benefits are these:

- Students have opportunities to express their own thoughts and ideas.
- Students come to understand that writing is merely thoughts written down, and that reading is merely recovering those thoughts from the printed words.

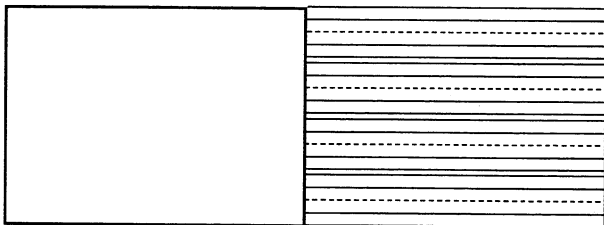


# 1. Stage One READING WORDS

## Preparation

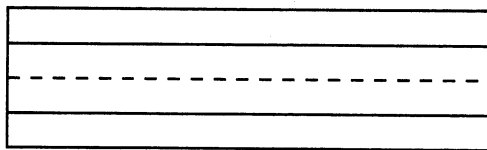
### Journals

Make journals for each student by cutting 8 1/2" x 11" drawing paper and writing paper into thirds horizontally. Alternate six sheets of drawing paper with five sheets of lined paper. Cover each journal with construction paper on the front and back. Staple along the left edge. Write the child's name on the cover. You will need one journal for each child at the beginning of this program, and most children will need several more journals of this size later. When opened and ready to use, the journal will look like this:



### Word Cards

Use the copy master and instructions found in the Appendix to make word cards like this:



## OVERVIEW

Students will choose between ten and fifteen words of their own to learn to read, asking the teacher to write one new word for them each day. Students will trace the word with a felt-tip pen in order to learn correct printing. Students will also use each new word in a sentence that the teacher or helper will write in the children's individual journals. The students will then illustrate their work.

## FINAL OBJECTIVE

First-grade students will learn to read fifteen words of their own choosing. Most second-grade students will learn to read ten words (or more if you think they need additional practice).

## MATERIALS

**For the students:** Folders and journals as described under Preparation, number 2 pencils with erasers, and crayons or felt-tip pens

**For the teacher:** Word cards as described under Preparation, pencils and erasers, a red pen or a star stamp, transparent tape, a stapler, rubber bands, and a box for students' folders

**For the helper:** Pencils and erasers, a red pen or a star stamp, and a dozen light-colored felt-tip pens. Light colors are essential for tracing, because if the students trace letters incorrectly, the correctly printed pencil marks still dominate. (Crayola pastels work well.)

## Stage One: Reading Words

### Individual Folders

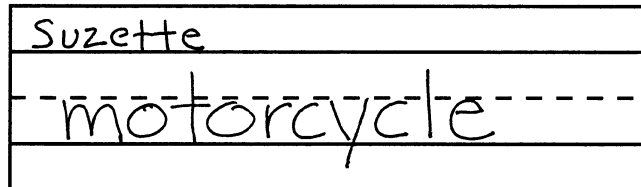
Make a folder for each student by stapling together the side edges of a manilla file folder so that only the top is open. Write the child's name on the tab. The folder will be a secure holder for your students' word cards and for journals.

### Introduction

Give each student a journal and a folder. Working with only one child at a time, say, "Today you are going to begin to learn how to read. Tell me something that you love, something that is important, and I will write it down for you" (chapter 7 has a variety of options for arranging to be able to work with one child at a time.)

### Process for the First Lesson

1. Write the student's name in small print in the top left-hand corner of a word card, and then print the word that she asks for:



If the student cannot think of a word, ask questions and make suggestions until she settles on an important word for the day. You must always let the student do the selecting, as any word that you provide will probably not be important enough for her to remember.

**Benefits:** Students learn that a word is a single unit of thought. They begin to read and write using their own internal vocabularies, learning naturally that reading is merely interpreting someone's ideas that have been written down.