

*The following material on how to support beginning readers is extracted from the Preface of **Assessing and Teaching Beginning Readers: A Picture Is Worth 1000 Words**, forthcoming June 2006.*

PREFACE

We have written this book primarily for educators who are interested in developing their understandings of beginning reading behavior and this behavior's impact on literacy instruction in early primary classrooms. Moreover, this book is for teachers, administrators, and parents who know that young children have a great capacity to learn and want to learn more about developmentally appropriate teaching practices that support their students' learning. While inservice teachers are the primary audience for this book, it is recommended as a professional development resource for preservice educators who hope to teach in prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade.

In our first book, *Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers: Every Picture Tells a Story* (Matteson and Freeman 2005), the focus was on developing the student as a writer. This book focuses on developing the student as a reader. Oral language continues to be an emphasis in our work. Just as in writing, a student's control of oral language and attention to picture detail build the strong foundation for a child's later literacy experiences in learning to read. While the oral language connection in our first book was to the drawings that children created, the oral language connection in this book is to the illustrations within books that children are "reading." As we worked with teachers and taught in early childhood classes, we were confident that the Early Literacy Continuum for Writing was helping teachers to be more intentional in their assessing, planning, and teaching of writing. During our continued work with teachers, it became apparent that a tool was needed to help teachers as they

worked with students in reading. We wanted to create a companion tool that would help them be more intentional in their assessing, planning, and teaching of reading and would complement and mirror the continuum we had developed for writing. The Early Literacy Continuum for Reading was created to fill that need. The structure or framework for each continuum is similar. It presents levels of Student's Oral

about the authors

David M. Matteson uses his 20 years of diverse teaching and leadership experiences to make the most of his work with students, teachers, and school districts. He has been an early childhood classroom teacher and Reading Recovery® teacher and currently works with several districts, primarily focusing on assessing and teaching young children. He is also a coordinator of teacher and school development through The Learning Network®. David lives in Naperville, Illinois with his wife Angela and son Colin. His son Nicholas is currently attending Boston College.



Deborah K. Freeman is currently a prekindergarten teacher at Beckham Elementary in Arlington, Texas. Over her longtime career as an educator, Debbie has taught at a variety of grade levels and has served as a literacy coach for prekindergarten teachers in her district and through The Learning Network. She regularly makes presentations at state, regional, and national conferences and provides inservice and staff development training to other educators. She is the proud mother of two grown children, Angel and Danny. Being Grandma to Emily and Luke keeps Debbie and her husband, Ken, very busy!



Language, Student’s Book Handling Skills (referred to as Student’s Work in the Writing Continuum), and Teaching Objectives. This Early Literacy Continuum for Reading will also support district curriculum developers, as it is an easy and convenient way to structure district or state early literacy objectives within an organized and developmental framework.

HOW THE CONTINUUM WAS DEVELOPED

After the completion of our first book, we were approached by many teachers who made comments such as: “Now that I am using the continuum for writing, I feel more confident in my teaching, and I can really see how it supports the growth of my students in writing—but what about reading? I wish I had something like this that I could use to assess reading with my younger students. I am using bits and pieces from several different assessments, but they were originally designed for older students. In most cases, these assessments don’t have an oral language component. As an early childhood educator I know that developing my students’ oral language abilities is important, and I want to use an assessment that helps me do that.” As a result of that statement and many more with a similar theme, we began to observe students as they “played at reading.”

As we observed young students at work with books and other written text, we considered that in light of the characteristics of emergent readers (Mooney 1988). We noticed and began to categorize the similarities among students as they used the pictures in books to tell stories. Two categories became evident—how students handled the books they were reading and their ability to tell a story. With regard to their

book handling skills, some students randomly flipped through books and did not display an understanding of basic concepts about print such as book position or the directionality of pictures and print. Other students appeared to understand the basic concepts of book position and directionality of picture and print, but did not seem to spend enough time with the book to grasp the story line. There were others who had fairly well developed concepts about print, but they did not notice the detail within the pictures that was critical to the story line. Once students had a firm grasp of book handling skills and attended to the detail that was critical to the

story, their behaviors could be further categorized into those who completely ignored the print and those who attended to some of the print on the page.

Unlike student writing or drawing, which produces an artifact, teachers can’t hold on to a child’s attempts at reading.

Our observations also gave us insight into a student’s ability to tell a story through using pictures or illustrations. These observations revealed that some students did not converse about the book. They also revealed students who simply labeled objects within the illustrations.

These students could be further divided into two groups: those who seemed unsure and used inconsistent word choices during continued reading and those who labeled objects and used language that remained constant during continued reading. The fourth group of students went beyond labeling objects and began to tell a story as a result of the teacher’s questioning. The final group of students seemed to understand that each page was part of a whole. Each told a cohesive story that flowed from page to page. It was by analyzing these observations that we were able to create the Early Literacy Continuum for Reading for prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade teachers—a tool that would help them

focus their observations and as a result focus their reading instruction.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Unlike student writing or drawing, which produces an artifact, teachers can't hold on to a child's attempts at reading. In *Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers* (Matteson and Freeman 2005) there are several examples of student writing, as well as student stories. These examples help teachers understand how the writing continuum works. In this book there are several transcriptions of learning opportunities intended to help our readers understand how the reading continuum works. These transcripts or vignettes are of actual children or teachers and children working together, not made-up scenarios. Danessa was videotaped by her parents for us. Danny was videotaped by his teacher while he was spending free choice time in the classroom library. The reading demonstration using the book *Hug* (Alborough 2000) was supplied by a teacher who shared a transcript of her teaching and discussed with us the rationale for her actions. The small group reading instruction example using *Best Friends* (Cox 1999) was taken from a video made for training purposes. These vignettes are contained within Chapters 2 through 8, which help explain the significance of the reading behaviors demonstrated by the children and/or teachers. These chapters are a mix of theory (the "why") and application (the "how"). In each and every vignette presented, we hope that you will ask *yourself* why and how practices such as these could be implemented within your classroom or

district. These vignettes are meant to clarify the premise of this book which is set out in Chapter 1—that *comprehension* is the basis of beginning reading, not letters, sound, words, or sentences.

Its thought-provoking commentary on the authentic conversations between children and authors, enhanced by dialogue with caregivers, will bring readers to new levels of understanding

—from the Foreword by
Margaret E. Mooney

Chapter 9 shows how one district's preschool program is using the reading continuum to guide their practices and monitor the progress of their learners. This closing chapter is meant to support teachers in understanding the importance of monitoring and recording and its role in encouraging more developmentally appropriate practices described in this book. Every practice shown and advocated within this book is important in managing and creating successful early primary classrooms. It is our desire

that you apply what you learn here and that your students benefit greatly from your efforts.

*The article above is extracted from the preface of **Assessing and Teaching Beginning Readers: A Picture Is Worth 1000 Words**. See the next page for more information about ordering this title from **Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc.***

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Assessing and Teaching Beginning Readers: A Picture Is Worth 1000 Words

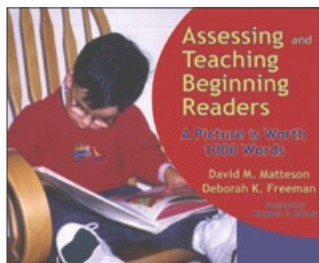
David M. Matteson
and Deborah K. Freeman

Foreword by Margaret E. Mooney

This book for pre-kindergarten and early primary teachers describes a comprehensive and developmentally appropriate approach to working with fiction and nonfiction texts through “playing at reading” and introduces a formative assessment tool designed to determine how beginning readers engage with books and print. As in the companion book, **Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers: Every Picture Tells a Story**, the authors explore ways to develop students’ proficiency in oral language and attention to detail.

Assessing and Teaching Beginning Readers

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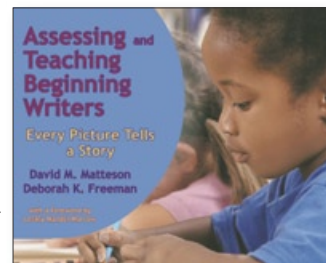
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Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers: Every Picture Tells a Story

David M. Matteson
and Deborah K. Freeman

Foreword by Lesley Mandel Morrow

Based on strong understandings of developmentally appropriate practices, the authors have created and explained a continuum designed to assess what very young children know about oral language, drawing, and writing. This new, well-researched, and easy-to-use assessment tool helps teachers determine powerful next literacy steps and instruction for their young students. Many writing, drawing, and construction examples and vignettes of conversations between teachers and children show what best practices look and sound like in instructional settings for three- to six-year-old learners. Selected visuals and data-gathering forms will help educators in early literacy settings get the most out of developmentally appropriate instruction.



Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers

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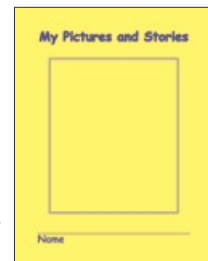
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