
KEEP BOOKS: Reading that is Fun and Easy

Henry Ford Elementary School

Ypsilanti, Michigan

We have many families who have limited home libraries. It is our belief that our students must become successful readers and that this can only become a reality if they learn to love reading. Reading KEEP BOOKS helps our students view themselves as readers and provides a beginning at home to a personal home library of children's books. Two years ago, we began our program on a limited scale and this year we provided all our first graders with a complete set of forty-eight books.

We began early in the year with the simplest books. Teachers introduced the books individually through an introduction summary statement and a picture walk through the book. Children were then given the opportunity to read these books and interact with them by completing text on some pages and coloring pictures on others. Books were kept in personal student storage boxes in the classroom. Some of our staff was concerned about permitting children to color and write in their books. (These KEEP BOOKS are printed on white paper with no color. As of this date, teachers have found no difficulty with the practice of individualizing the books with colors and names.) After several books were distributed and classroom reading time became a practice, parent night was held. This was a family affair. Parents and students met in the gym for a presentation on the KEEP BOOKS, then parents went with their child's teacher to the classroom and received an inservice on how to work with children in a supportive and strategic way. The children were, at this time, in a separate area enjoying a movie. After acquainting parents with the KEEP BOOKS, the children came to the rooms and shared their books with their parents. Children loved showing parents how well they could read their books and talking about their favorites. We all regrouped in the gym to share a pizza dinner. Books and the book boxes went home that night. As the year progressed, additional books were introduced in the classroom and taken home to be added to their personal book box collection.

Parents have been extremely supportive and pleased with the KEEP BOOKS program. They have indicated that to many children these books are very special, used for personal pleasure, used to share with family and friends, and often used to take along on family trips. The idea of having a special place to keep the books has appealed to many.

We find the children are very enthusiastic about receiving each new book and positively anticipate taking them home, sharing them with their families, and adding them to their collection.

This year we added an additional set of KEEP BOOKS that introduce math concepts in simple and lively real life situations. These have been well received and we plan to distribute these Math KEEP BOOKS to the second graders.

KEEP BOOKS are available from the Early Literacy Learning Initiative, The Ohio State University. Each set of forty-eight costs \$12.00. Our only additional cost was for the family dinner. Funds were taken from the Title I/At Risk GOALS 2000 account.

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