

Stainthorp, R., Hughes, D. (2004). What happens to precocious readers' performance by the age eleven? *Journal of Research in Reading*, 27, 357-372.

Key Words: culturally responsive instruction

Summary:

This article reports on the progress made by 14 eleven-year-old children who had been originally identified as being gifted readers before they started school at age five. Their progress was compared to the progress of a comparison group (also 14 students) of students who had been deemed average readers upon entering school.

Assumptions:

- A "precocious reader" is one who has achieved fluent word reading skills at or before receiving formal literacy/reading instruction.
- Most important predictors of success in reading are thought to be: knowledge of the alphabet, exposure to print, and phonological awareness.
- Although word reading is the main indicator of success at the early stages of reading, accuracy of word reading at the adolescent stage is less important than comprehension and motivation.

Findings:

- The children who began school as gifted readers continued to make advanced progress in reading accuracy, rate, and comprehension when contrasted with their comparison group.
- However, their progress seemed to follow the same trajectory as the comparison group; both groups continued at a steady pace throughout their reading education.

Conclusion:

Gifted or precocious reading skills do not, according to this study, diminish over time. The authors agree that the skills students bring to school are not a result of parental "drill" but rather of capitalizing on a supportive, literacy-rich environment. Although high ability does not always result in high attainment, it does seem to point to long-term achievement.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Find out who the "precocious readers" are in your classroom and consider ways to further their reading development.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Offer professional development opportunities that focus on supportive instruction for high-achieving readers.