

PRACTICAL HINTS FOR TEACHING PRIMARY CLASSES
TO READ BY ANY METHOD.

BY JAMES L. HUGHES.

II.

2. Let the pupils bring their slates to the reading class. "Activity is a law of nature." Children learn by doing. The surest way to be certain that their minds are occupied with what you are trying to teach, is to compel those minds to direct their fingers. If a boy's fingers are at work printing or writing, his own mind must guide them, and so his attention is made an absolute necessity. Too much dependence has been placed on the use of tablets in the past. The eye alone has been used to far too great an extent in learning reading as well as other subjects. The eye is undoubtedly the best gateway to the mind, but is not the most certain means of compelling the mind to take definite action. The teaching processes may be classified as follows:

1. Teaching by verbal explanation only.
2. Teaching by showing things already prepared, such as maps, charts, tablets, &c.
3. Teaching by allowing the pupils to look at work done in their presence.
4. Teaching by making each pupil do work for himself.

The last should be the foundation method of teaching every subject. The other methods should be subsidiary aids merely, used to render the last method as perfect as possible. They should be used for the shortest possible time, and to the smallest possible extent. When they have to be used teachers should remember that they are valuable in the inverse order to that in which they are stated. Showing a thing, is better than talking about it, making the thing in the presence of the class infinitely better than merely showing it; but the aim of all teaching is to enable the pupils to know and do for themselves.

It may be urged that in reading, the work of the pupil is not done with the fingers but with the eyes, and in oral reading with the vocal organs, and that consequently children do not need to use their slates. The reply to this is twofold:

1. The eye is compelled to act more critically by the use of the slate than in any other way.
2. The mind is compelled by the use of the slate to note carefully what the eye sees in order to be able to direct the hand in printing or writing.

These two reasons account for the well known fact that doing a thing once with the fingers by writing or otherwise, will make a more lasting impression on the memory than a dozen verbal repetitions. The slate should unquestionably be brought to the reading lesson in the primary classes, until the pupils have been made thoroughly acquainted with the elements they are to use in reading. Reliance on the printed tablet alone has done much to make the teaching of reading the stupefying process it too commonly is, and to produce the monotonous droning which is popularly known by the name of reading.

The following are some of the ways in which pupils may profitably use their slates in a reading class:

1. They may copy the words put on the board by the teacher. This should only be done at a very early stage, as it would afterwards occupy too much time. In more advanced classes the lesson may be copied after the pupils return to their seats. They should both write and print from the beginning.
2. The teacher should often sound words, and ask the pupils to print or write them on their slates. At first these should be only regular words such as cap, desk, step, slap, &c., containing no silent

letters, but in a few weeks the little folks will be able to write harder words and mark the different sounds of the vowels, strike out silent letters, etc.

3. The teacher may write such words as ought, bc., lamb, sword, &c., and after pronouncing them, require the pupils to strike out the silent letters, and mark the vowels to show the correct sound. More difficult words may be treated in a similar way as the pupils advance.

4. The teacher may write words on the board and require the pupils to alter the marking so as to change the pronunciation of the words. Each pupil may then be asked to sound the word as he has it marked.

5. The teacher may write the beginnings and endings of words, as P—t, and ask the pupils to fill the vacancies with various letters properly marked so as to make as many words as possible. At first the spaces should be filled by a single sound, then two or more sounds may be called for as the class progresses.

The last four exercises enable the teacher to test thoroughly the progress made by the pupils in gaining a practical knowledge of the powers of letters, and will greatly facilitate their acquirement of a ready grasp of the sound of a word by a glance at its elements. These exercises may be made to have all the fascination of games for the pupils, and they enable them to learn the sounds of the letters in the only philosophical way in which anything can be learned; by using them.

6. When a new word has been taught, the pupils should always be set to find how often it occurs in the lesson in hand. Pupils are sometimes asked to point out the word in as many places as they see it. Only one at a time can be tested in this way, and every pupil ought to act for himself. Let every pupil count as many of the new words as he can see, and write the number on his slate. Then let the one who saw the smallest number point them out, call on some one else to show more, and continue till all have been shown.

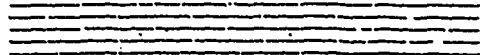
7. Each pupil may be required to write out a few words about some subject suggested by the teacher or one of the pupils, and to read what he has written. It is astonishing how very quickly pupils properly taught from the beginning will put words together to make little sentences. Such pupils never know when they began to write compositions.

TONE TALKS WITH THE TODDLERS.

BY MRS. G. RICHES, TORONTO.

No. 1.

You have all seen a pretty little pussy; tell me what it said. That is right. It cried Me-yow, Me-yow! If I had a little kitty in my table-drawer, would you like to hear it say Me-yow? You would, and Willie would like to see it. I have not a pussy, but I can make on the board some queer little things that sing. Would you like to make them? Well, then, take slates. Now watch.



What have I made, Johnnie? A ladder. How many steps, Mary? Five. Let us count together—one, two, three, four, five. These little fellows that we are going to make are like monkeys, great climbers, and the ladder is for them to sit upon. Have you all made the ladder? Very good. Now make a short step under the ladder. That is for a queer little fellow who never climbs very high. Hold up your slates so that I can see the short step. All right. Now for