

What Every Parent Should Know about Kenneth S. Goodman

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Many parents (and some educators) will not recognize the name *Kenneth Goodman* or know about his profound impact on the world of literacy. But this pioneering theoretician and researcher, who passed away on March 12, 2020, revolutionized our understanding of reading and reading development. His (“psycholinguistic”) theory of reading also had a profound influence on reading instruction and assessment all across the world. Here are just some common classroom practices that his theory and research encouraged:

- Using quality children’s literature as the main resource for helping kids learn to read and love to read
- Setting aside time every day for independent reading of books that kids choose
- Setting aside time to read aloud to kids every day to foster enjoyment of literature and language
- Focusing on reading for meaning rather than just “saying words” on the page
- Asking kids to retell what they understand from their reading instead of just answering questions
- Closely examining children’s oral reading (one-on-one) to discover their strengths and needs
- Forming small group book clubs so kids could discuss what they’ve read and enjoyed
- Encouraging kids to engage in meaningful writing, even before they can spell “correctly”, so that they can express themselves and learn about how the written language system works
- Encouraging teachers to teach reading based on the needs of their students rather than on a mandated sequence of skills.
- Encouraging teachers to respect and accept the many ways that children’s language and cultural backgrounds influence their reading development.
- Helping students to view reading and writing as means for learning about and improving the world.

There have been many misinterpretations of Kenneth Goodman’s work through the years. Various mainstream media campaigns have maligned his theories based on false assumptions and lies, particularly in regard to the role of phonics in his theory of reading and reading instruction. The truth is that Goodman’s theory always included the use of letter-sound relationships as one of several strategies that readers should use *in conjunction with other strategies* while always keeping their focus on meaning. Goodman’s research on thousands of readers showed that an over-reliance on “sounding out” while reading was actually detrimental to comprehension. Helping young readers develop a variety of strategies to read and understand written language was therefore seen as an important goal of instruction.

Ken Goodman was also a beloved teacher, friend, husband, parent, grandfather and great-grandfather. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him and learned from him. To learn more about his life and work, visit

https://kengoodmansmorningpost.blogspot.com/2020/03/reading-researcher-and-founding-father.html?sref=fb&fbclid=IwAR1OM7Q5YTHC-N5JB7YdK6mNQgtK_Mp4sFyPboGb9MHuHfftVrNd-61bUZY