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How This Whole Thing Got Started
CHAPTER 1

About The New Book of Knowledge

Do you think your students know what a riverbank is, or a hinge, a sole of a shoe, a moat, or an egg white? Ask them, you might be surprised at their answers. These "parts" of common things are mentioned in books, stories, poems, and on assessments at the elementary school level, yet many children are not familiar with them. While working with many different children and a variety of reading materials, I have discovered a huge discrepancy between what we think children know and what they actually do know about common objects. I am amazed daily at the things my students don’t know. Have you been similarly amazed? A couple of years ago, I started a list of common things many children didn't know, and the list grew into two books.

I am convinced that this lack of common background knowledge affects reading comprehension. If we want to improve reading comprehension, we must expand our students' knowledge base. We know that as we read, the brain seeks to attach new information to old information already stored in our brains. Therefore, the broader the child’s knowledge base, the easier it should be for him to understand and retain what he reads, thus improving reading comprehension and reading test scores. This vocabulary development program is a fun and exciting way to do just that.

In addition to expanding your students' background knowledge, The New Book of Knowledge program helps build your students' listening comprehension. Each lesson, if implemented as suggested, provides practice in following oral directions. Usually "Following Oral Directions" activities consist of having the students listen and do what the teacher says on illustrated worksheets, with the sole objective of following directions. In contrast, while doing The New Book of Knowledge program, the students follow oral directions and learn new things at the same time. It has been my experience that children love to learn new things and they love to draw. That is the premise upon which The New Book of Knowledge program was built. From the comments in the front of this book, it is obvious that children love building their own "Book of Knowledge" because they are able to draw and label and actually learn something new! They don't even know they are practicing the skill of following oral directions. This program, if implemented as suggested, uses the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning channels. Isn't that just perfect!

Not only will The New Book of Knowledge program build background knowledge, improve reading comprehension, and provide practice in following oral directions, but it can also improve your students' writing. Writing is more interesting to read and will receive higher scores if it includes details, elaboration, sentence variety and adult expressions (see chapters 6). The New Book of Knowledge entries (ch. 3 & 4), suggestions for improving writing (ch. 6), and the adult expressions in chapter 7 provide students with tools they need to improve their writing.

It is easy to implement this program. All you will need is a composition book or a one-subject spiral notebook for each child and a whiteboard, chalkboard, or chart paper for you. There is no need for copy paper or extensive advance preparation time. Throughout the year, you will be leading your students as they build their own "Book of Knowledge."
Parts of an Airplane

- propeller
- cockpit
- fuselage
- wing
- landing gear
- vertical stabilizer
- rudder
- horizontal stabilizer (tail wing)
- cabin (passenger area)
- baggage compartment
- nose
Animal Feet

- hoof
- frog
- cloven hoof
- webbed feet
- paws
- dewclaw
- palmer pad
- digital pad