

Using Poetry "I Can Read" Notebooks in the Classroom (a.k.a. "Read Together" or "Family Reading" Anthologies)

Nothing supports a child as a successful reader, writer and speaker more than a rich storehouse of memorized language. It is this familiarity with the English language that allows the child's decoding to be error free and their reading to be fluent. That is why young children need to memorize, recite and perform language - to turn print into sound. When you give each child a growing collection of well-loved poems, rhymes, songs and chants to learn "by heart" they will have beautiful language models to internalize while they develop as good speakers and fluent readers.

"I Can Read" Poetry Anthologies are an important part of a comprehensive and balanced literacy program for young children. Select only the most memorable and delightful language pieces and make sure they are copyright secured. Look for imagery that invites dramatic, artistic and creative involvement. Children memorize, recite, and perform this language. Then they illustrate the page of each new selection. These poems, rhymes, songs and chants become "their own" to read and speak with confidence, careful articulation and expression. When children are choral reading together from familiar poems, rhymes and songs, the least-able reader in the group perceives himself as successful.

It is important for the child to practice tracking and rereading the language of each new song or rhyme. Train "reading buddies" and other helpers in techniques to support the emergent reader. Set aside a time for small and large group guided reading, and let the child use the notebook for "Read to Self" or "Reading Buddy" time. Educate families on optimum use of this valuable reading notebook.

Children love their anthologies. Parents love hearing their child perform language. Language acquisition research supports us in engaging children in language that has meaning. Brain research encourages us to use rhythm, rhyme and repetition to accelerate language learning. Systematic engagement with familiar songs, poems, rhymes, and chants is a powerful tool in a balanced and comprehensive approach to literacy. Nellie Edge Anthologies (on Teachers Pay

Teachers) provide engaging collections of memorable songs, poems and rhymes printed on 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 paper that are copyright secured so they can be legally photocopied for each child in your class year after year. This provides an inexpensive and practical way to give children the sounds of language and foster the home-school connection. You can also download over 100 [free poetry notebook pages](#) from our website.

Developing the "I Can Read" Anthology or Poetry Notebook:

Each student needs a hard cover 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch, three-ring binder, preferably with clear plastic front and back sleeves. Clearly print the child's name on the spine. Notebooks can be purchased inexpensively through your school district, or ask your students' parents to purchase them along with basic school supplies. Store the notebooks on a special, child-accessible shelf in the classroom. Add new pages of poems and songs each week. A satisfying link between language and art is generated as the children illustrate the pages using crayons or colored pencils. A sample "Parents as Partners in Developing Literacy" letter is also enclosed. Some teachers tape this parent letter on the inside cover of the notebook. Each week (or month) a regular time should be scheduled for the children to take their notebooks home for reading pleasure with their families. You will want to establish the expectation of notebooks being promptly returned.

At the emergent reading level, K-1 teachers often call these the children's "I Can Read" Anthologies, Poetry Notebooks, "Read Together" Notebooks, or "Family Reading" Notebooks. At the independent reading level, children refer to them as their **Personal Anthologies**. We strongly encourage you to give each child the **gift** of their personally illustrated anthology notebook at the end of the year. Parents treasure this collection of up to 100 illustrated pages. It is a celebration of the child's growing success and pleasure in learning to read and developing a love of language. **Children will cherish their personalized reading notebook and return to it again and again.**