

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS EARLY GRADE READING IN NEPAL

WHAT IS MEANT BY EARLY GRADE READING?

Reading is the ability to understand words and sentences and early grade reading is the foundation to succeed in education. Early grade reading includes recognizing alphabet, reading simple words, understanding sentences and paragraphs and listening with comprehension. Children who can read the words and sentences fluently and accurately in early grades can comprehend the meaning of what they are reading easily. This skill prepares them to comprehend any subject in upper grades, which eventually have positive effect in their future education.

WHY IS EARLY GRADE READING IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN?

It is vital that students master core reading skills reading in the early grades, as this will prepare them to be able to read to learn across subjects throughout the rest of their schooling. Educators say that in grades 1-3 children “learn to read” and from grade 3 on they “read to learn”. A child that has reading proficiency by the third grade is four times more likely to graduate from high school and will have higher chances for better jobs and economic stability. Studies have shown that children who cannot read in their early grades will fall further behind in their educational, social and other aspects of life.

WHY IS EARLY GRADE READING IMPORTANT IN NEPAL?

Nepal's first nationwide Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) conducted by USAID in 2014 has revealed that reading in the early grades remains to be a significant challenge. Thirty-seven percent of second graders and 19 percent of third graders were not able to read a single word correctly. These reading scores show that the reading achievement among early graders is very low and needs to be addressed.



WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S NATIONAL EARLY GRADE READING PROGRAM (NEGRP) AND USAID'S EARLY GRADE READING PROGRAM (EGRP)?

The USAID's Early Grade Reading Program in Nepal is designed as a technical assistance to support the Government of Nepal's five-year National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP). Early Grade Reading Program is working closely with the Ministry of Education and several Central Line Agencies including: Department of Education (DoE), Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), National Centre for Educational Development (NCED), and Education Review Office (ERO).

Similarly, it will also provide assistance by working closely at the district level with the District Education Office (DEO) and the Resource Center, and at the school level with the Village Development Committee (VDC), Ward-level Education Committee, School Management Committee (SMC) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO IMPROVE EARLY GRADE READING?

The Early Grade Reading is being addressed by the Government through its five year National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP) that focuses primarily in improving the reading skills of students in grade one through three.

NEGRP and EGRP focus on the following key activities : revise curriculum and teaching and learning materials in keeping with evidence based and best practices for early grade reading; better equip teachers with the skills and knowledge to conduct early grade reading programs; engage and support parents as partners in early grade reading; set benchmark and standards for both students and teachers in early grade reading and enable teacher, Head teachers, District Education Officers, and other actors to use assessment to track progress and identify areas where more support is needed; and increase access to reading materials through classroom book corners, school libraries, community learning centers and local clubs.

HOW DO YOU TEACH A CHILD TO READ?

The early grade reading approach is to focus on the development of a student's core skills. These core skills are the foundation to build on to learn to read. Early grade reading will focus on reading and writing along with comprehension; teacher will teach children to connect word sounds with symbols; vocabulary will be developed by teaching new words and how to learn new words; and students will practice reading out loud and silently to become familiar with words and sounds and sentences.

WHO ARE THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE EARLY GRADE READING PROGRAM?

Early grade reading includes students in grade one through three at government and community schools. EGRP is specifically for students from marginalized communities, minority ethnic populations, and from lower socio-economic status. Emphasis is placed on these students to help them develop their reading skills.

The program is for both boys and girls and they are to be equal participants in school for boys and girls to learn to read at an early age. Girls' education is a high-priority for the government of Nepal and the Nepali society. Reasons and benefits of a girl learning to read and staying in school benefit her, her family, and her community. Education will increase her self-confidence and self-worth; increase her family's income; she has healthier children, and educating girls is a long-term investment that will contribute to the country's economic and social development.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN LEARN TO READ?

There are simple things that parents can do at home, even if they do not read or do not read well. For example, by telling stories and talking with children about them, children will be developing their comprehension skills. Parents, and grandparents, can support their children in practicing reading by having their child read aloud to them for 10 minutes or more each day, making a place for them to practice their reading quietly and without other chores and duties, and talking to them about what they read.

WHAT CAN TEACHERS DO?

Teachers can create an enabling learning environment for children to enjoy reading in the classroom. They can set aside time every day for students to read in class, and read aloud to the students. Teachers and parents can strengthen their partnership to expand reading beyond the classroom in community libraries, reading clubs and at home.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES AND PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS IN EARLY GRADE READING?

School Management Committee's or SMCs and Parent-Teacher Association or PTA have very different and separate roles. Both, however, share the objective of improving education for the students in their districts and clusters. One responsibility is to monitor how students are progressing in learning, attendance, and progressing in their students. For Early Grade Reading SMC and the PTAs can better support schools and students by facilitating improved planning, better human resource management, and timely supply of relevant materials.

HOW CAN COMMUNITY LEADERS CONTRIBUTE TO EARLY GRADE READING?

Community leaders from both the public and private sector are an important part in advocating for resources that support early grade reading in their community. Resources are scarce in many communities and community leaders and private sector decision-makers can advocate for resources to purchase reading materials, manage and create set-aside reading spaces, and invest in after school reading activities. For very little money it can organize or support parent-student reading programs.

EARLY GRADE READING GOAL IS TO TEACH CHILDREN TO READ

EGRP's objective is to improve the reading skills of children in grades one through three. Studies monitoring and evaluating early grade reading have shown that when children learn to read in their first language or their mother tongue, it is easier for them to acquire essential reading skills. To use a second language or a new language for school instruction hinders and delays their learning to read. To be most effective in learning is to teach them in their first language or mother tongue. EGRP is being conducted in areas of Nepal where Nepali is not the mother tongue and is spoken less than local languages Rana Tharu, Avadhi and Maithali.

EARLY GRADE READING PROGRAM AND LANGUAGES

The Early Grade Reading Program's objective is to develop the reading skills of children in primary grades one through three. Reading studies show that students learn better and faster when taught in their mother tongue or first language. EGRP is working in areas of Nepal where local languages are Rana Tharu, Avadhi and Maithali and reading and teaching materials have been developed in these languages to help facilitating the reading process. There are other education programs and activities that specialize in teaching a language, such as English, and those programs are different than EGRP's role.

