

ANALYTICAL THINKING IN THE FIRST GRADE

As one writer said, "Where there is an open mind, there will always be a frontier." This might be considered a maxim for Analytical Thinking.

Under the direction and guidance of Dr. Reed, analytical thinking was implemented in my first grade class at Meadowbrook Elementary. During the school year Reed visited my class once or twice a week for twenty or thirty minutes. He had written a whimsical story, Rebecca, to introduce analytical thinking to very young children. Unlike Harry and Lisa, designed for children in upper grades, Rebecca is aimed at improving the reasoning ability of students from first to third grade. Through Rebecca, my first graders were introduced to philosophy and logic - an introduction they would not soon forget. During the discussion of the story, Reed directed the class in talking about many new things: distinguishing between reality and fantasy, jumping to conclusions, prejudging, value judgements, fact versus fiction, as well as inductive and deductive reasoning.

When questions were asked of my class by Dr. Reed, a simple "yes" or "no" answer was not acceptable. Children had to support their answers in the same manner that lawyers support their cases. They had to give reasons - good reasons - why what they said was right. At the same time, other students had to listen and either support them or logically disagree with them. As a result, my children learned to respect each other's opinions. Without a doubt, my first graders' thinking was brought to order, and they were taught to reason, to question, and to examine. What more can one ask of a program?

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