

CHARACTERIZATION OF READING AND WRITING

Caracterização da leitura e escrita

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: to characterize the performance of school reading and writing to students enrolled in the third grade of elementary school. **Methods:** the study included 160 children aged between 8 and 9 years old (average of 8 years and 7 months). The data collection instrument was used to measure: Performance Handbook School – Analysis of Reading and Writing in the early grades of elementary schools – MDE (Rosa Neto, Santos, TORO, 2010). For analysis and interpretation of data it was used the Excel and SPSS for Windows 17.0 programs. **Results:** it was found that the students had an average of 75.88% accuracy on the general performance of the EAW, and among the average score between the categories of the manual, the writing had the lowest percentage, 72.10% accuracy. **Conclusion:** it was verified that 40% (n=64) in the sample are fully literate, ie able to read fluently and understand the general meaning of the text, to locate information, to make inferences and formulate hypotheses about the text content. In writing, they are able to write legibly and understand a short text, according to the standards required by our culture. However, 50% (n=80) of the students assessed is still in the learning process of reading and writing and 10% (n=16) of children showed poor performance to the level they were in school, or in the early stages of literacy.

KEYWORDS: Reading; Handwriting; Students

■ INTRODUCTION

Currently, the formal education has an enormous cultural value and the good school performance is an indicative of future social success. Thus, all professionals involved in the education and child health should have knowledge about the child stages of development and its particularities¹.

In this sense, the learning of reading and writing in children has been widely studied by researchers from several areas of knowledge such as medicine, psychology, sociology, linguistics, pedagogy and the speech-language pathology ^{2,3}.

Reading and writing are abilities composed of multiple interdependent processes, generally represented by models of information processing (memory, attention, perception, inference and

deduction) and can be studied under various aspects⁴.

But the teaching-learning in literacy⁵ is very complex and difficult for children at initial stage of literacy, because it involves empowered- cognitive and motor activities that require from the students the use of sensory-motor components and perceptive, i.e. the capacity of words decoding and motor action adequate in writing. Also, this process is influenced by several factors: biological, neuropsychological, psychosocial (from family and school context), pedagogical, the psycho- motor repertoire, among others⁶.

Therefore, it is very important to know about the abilities strategies to read and write used by children on the initial years of elementary school, because it is an essential requirement for the prevention, identification and treatment of the reading and writing difficulties⁶.

One says that the act of evaluating has as function to investigate the quality and performance of the students, having in mind to proceed an intervention for the results improvement. For this reason, the evaluation of school learning is gaining space as an object of research and studies, mainly by

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being considered an indispensable element to the diagnosis and, consequently, the more effective guidance to reduce the problems that characterize the Brazilian educational system⁷.

This study had as its main objective to characterize the reading and writing performance in school children enrolled in third year of Fundamental School.

■ METHODS

This research was conducted in five schools of the Public Municipal Schools of Florianópolis/SC, located in similar socio-cultural standard neighborhoods, chosen intentionally and non-probabilistic. The data were collected between August to December 2009.

Were part of the sample 160 students of the third year of the fundamental school with age between 8 and 9 years, the average age of 8 years and 7 months, and 45.0% (72) boys and 55.0% (88) girls (Table 1). The criteria for participating in the study were: (a) inclusion: parent/guardian's signature of a Free and Informed Consent, submit chronological age for the third year of fundamental school;

b) exclusion: returning students and presenting important changes in development (mental, sensory, neurological). This group of students was the first class that has joined, at the beginning of the school year of 2007, with 6 years of age, in the first year of Fundamental School for 9 years.

Table1 – Distribution and frequency of the sample regarding gender, age (years/months) and the school to which belongs

Schools	Sample	Average Age	Male	%	Female	%
A	12	8.6	2	21.4	10	78.6
B	29	8.7	16	59.4	13	40.6
C	46	8.7	25	54.3	21	45.7
D	48	8.9	22	45.8	26	54.2
E	25	8.8	7	26.9	18	73.1
Total	166	8.7	72	45.0%	88	55.0%

For the reading and writing evaluation of schoolchildren, was used the Manual of School Performance – Analysis of Reading and Writing in Early Grades of Fundamental Education – MDE⁶ with the purpose of analyzing the children learning process of reading and writing. Used in the psychometric form, goes through several steps: application, consistent correction, evaluation, analysis and interpretation. In this way, the evaluation receives a diagnostic inquiring characteristic, by which it obtains qualitative and quantitative results capable to sign the proficiency and the deficit points of the child.

The manual offers to Health and Education professionals a helpful tool to identify the problems of school learning, difficulties in reading, writing, comprehensive language and expressive, attention deficits and concentration, slowness in the literacy process, dysfunctions related to the process of reading and writing (dyslexia, dyslalia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, stuttering, other).

It was developed to meet the four levels of ages corresponding to the initial series levels of Fundamental School for 9 years, the age range between 7 to 10 years, starting from the 2nd year: Level I = 2nd year; Level II = 3rd year; Level III = 4th year; Level IV = 5th year. It is comprised of (2) parts, the first being, directed on reading (letters, syllables, words, text and text comprehension); and the second, directed on writing (dictation, copying and spontaneous writing). The test has a gradual increase in the level of complexity of the tasks and the result is calculated on the basis of the average scores of reading and writing. Is structured into six categories: CATEGORY I – Reading of letters, syllables and words (expressive language); CATEGORY II – Reading of texts (expressive language); CATEGORY III – Interpretation of texts (comprehensive language); CATEGORY IV – Copy; CATEGORY V – Dictation; CATEGORY VI – Spontaneous Writing.

The materials used in the application of the tests are: papers with 26 uppercase letters, 26

lowercase letters, 26 syllables, 26 words, texts and 10 questions related to the text to reading comprehension; papers with the texts for the dictation, the copy and the spontaneous writing. In addition to the Manual, the examiner must have in hand: the answer sheets of writing and reading; pencils, pen and rubber, for its use, and stopwatch to record the execution time of the activities. Available to the child there must be one pencil and one rubber.

All questions of the tests of the manual have score from 1 to 10. To obtain the overall score in reading, it is necessary to perform the summation of 3 scores from the categories and divide by three to arrive at the student performance in reading. The same procedure to arrive at the performance of the student in writing.

Score Reading: $PL = (CI + CII + CIII) / 3$
Score Writing: $PE = (CIV + CV + CVI) / 3$

To obtain the overall score at MDE, is necessary to perform a summation of all the 6 categories and divide by six, to reach the overall performance of the student in reading and writing. *Overall Score:* $PG = (CI + CII + CIII + CIV + CV + CVI) / 6$

For the evaluator use the manual on a preventive diagnostic way, it is suggested that the score is accompanied by indicative of errors committed by children during the execution of activities⁶.

After the project approval and explanation of their methodology to Municipal Secretary of Education, to the school principals and teachers of educational institutions, were sent to parents/guardian a Term of Free and Informed Consent signature request authorizing, or not, the research.

The students were individually evaluated only by the researcher, in their own school, in a location previously reserved and appropriate for such, with good brightness and without external interference in morning and afternoon shifts, and returning to the classroom shortly after the procedures. The tests application was performed in only one session of approximately 45 minutes, ranging from children due to individual differences. We tried always to maintain a courtesy environment with principals, and the teachers of the schools. During the implementation of the MDE was respected the pace of each child, and mainly, there was a great deal of concern about the researcher impartiality, or is sought to contain the anxiety of wanting to help the child, because it was not an interventional evaluation

The application of the manual was initiated by tests of reading (expressive language); the reading comprehension of the text (comprehensive language); then by tests of writing the copy, dictation and spontaneous writing. With the aim of checking the performance of children in the learning of reading and writing of this research, were used

the texts Level II of the MDE, directed to the third year of fundamental school for nine years. All the results were recorded on the sheet of answers and transferred to the Excel worksheet.

For this research realization, the project was submitted to the Committee for Ethics in Research with Human Beings – CEP / UDESC under reference number 103/2009.

In the analysis and interpretation of data were used programs SPSS for *Windows* 17.0. The descriptive analysis of the data was performed by average, variance, standard deviation, minimum value, maximum value, simple frequencies and percentages.

■ RESULTS

We tried by the instrument to perform a careful analysis to determine whether the students of the third year of fundamental school, that represents the final of the initial literacy block, are literate, i.e. reading, producing texts with clearance and autonomy.

The results of the descriptive analysis of the reading and writing evaluation performance are presented in terms of averages of percentage of the questions answered correctly.

The expressive language of the student was observed at different levels of development and oral acquisition. The great majority conducted the tests of **Category I** – reading of *letters, syllables* and *words* with success, obtaining an average of 96,93% of correct answers (Table 2). Besides the analysis of accuracy in reading the letters, the incorrect answers were also observed and classified. It was found that there were some errors related to the difficulty in distinguishing the sound of some phonemes that are called “phonemic substitutions”, characterized by sound confusions: /p/ x /b/, /t/ x /d/, /f/ x /v/ and /s/ x /z/.

On question of syllables reading, some children had difficulties or do not perform the reading, demonstrating “wavering”, “repeats”, “rectifications” and “substitutions”, perhaps because they are pseudo-syllables, i.e. syllables free of meaning. Other presented difficulties in the degree of phonetic complexity, with emphasis on syllables articulation and pronunciation that involve combinations containing “L” or “R” by between the letters and those ending with consonants.

The reading of words with simple syllabic structure – CV (consonant-vowel) was easy to read, while the words with more complex structure – CCV (consonant-consonant-vowel) and CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) occurred “omissions”, “additions”, “replacements” of letters and even “not reading”,

such as: /taxi/, /flora/, /hose/ and /Dog/. It is interesting to point out that children who presented numerous difficulties in the subtests of syllables reading, succeeded to read the words with fewer difficulties.

In **Category II** – *expressive language of text*, the students were asked to read the text “The adventures of Kat” – *Recreio, São Paulo, year 1, no. 13, jun/2000*, with approximately 119 words in length and level appropriate to the third year of fundamental school. The average score achieved by students was of 66,15% of correct answers in this category (Table 2). It was observed that a few students had to read fluently and with pace, the majority has played the reading of “slow”, “silabada”, “without respecting the score” and “without intonation or expression”.

As for **Category III** – *comprehensive language text* – , after a careful reading of the text, was requested to students who answered the 10 questions about the same. Some proposed questions were related to memory for events and characters described in their own history and other evaluated the inferential understanding. The evaluator read to the children the questions and was copying faithfully the answers on the manual answer sheet. It was noticed that the sample, in a general way, showed good performance, answering correctly 76.03% of the proposal questions (Table 2), however, a total of 11.87% (19) students have hit only $\leq 50\%$ of the ten comprehension questions of the read text.

Table 2 – Descriptive analysis of performance in the categories of reading and understanding, and the time (in minutes) of corresponding implementation

	Reading Letters, Syllables words	Time	Reading Text	Time	Compr. Text	Time	Score Reading	Time Reading
Media	9.6938	2.31	6.6156	2.07	7.6038	1.62	7.9683	6.26
Median	10.0000	2.07	7.0000	2.00	8.0000	1.30	8.0850	6.00
Deviation Default	.56493	.97183	1.57738	.88924	1.62786	.51647	1.06815	1.77151
Variance	.319	.94	2.488	.79	2.650	.26	1.141	3.13
Minimum	6.75	1.15	1.00	1.00	3.00	1.00	4.25	3.30
Maximum	10.00	6.30	9.00	6.45	10.00	4.00	9.67	15.00
N	160	160	160	160	160	160	160	160

Analyzing the performance of children in 3 reading subtests, it was found an average of 79,68% of correct answers in reading tasks (Table 2).

The written language of the child was analyzed in their different levels of development and acquisition.

Concerning the choice of the type of letter, “cursive” or “press”, from the total sample, 73,75% (118) chose to write with cursive letter, that is the letter used in the classroom for the learning of reading and writing, the remainder used press letter or mixed.

Various aspects were observed during the implementation of **Category IV** – *writing copy*, however, the students showed themselves excellent copycats seeking to make faithful copies of words and exposed sentence, obtaining an average of 95.62% of hits in tasks (Table 3). Perhaps because in copying the model is graphical, visual and is permanently present in front of the child. However,

some students had difficulties in carrying out this task and were observed occurrences of “substitutions”, “omissions” and “additions” of letters in the words, “rotations” of the letters /d/, /b/, /p/ and /q/ and “reversals” of letters or syllables of words. In addition, during the sentence copy, some children made copied leaving to put space between the words – “junctions of words” and/or dividing the word into two – “words fragmentation”.

In **Category V** – *writing from dictation*, the students were asked to write a text of Level II, with approximately 18 words and appropriate level to the third year of fundamental school. Then, they were instructed to listen carefully to the statement of small phrases and only then start writing. The average score achieved by the students in this category was of 60.87% of correct answers (Table 3), and unlike of the good performance in the copy exercises, students presented relevant difficulties

in dictation. In that category, the words must be broken down and differentiated aurally with relation to the grapheme-phoneme, in associations to the meanings and respect to the space-temporal sequential orientation.

The biggest difficulties presented by the students in the writing the dictation, are related to the spelling errors, such as: “replacements”, “omissions”, “additions” and “reversals” of letters and/or words, “lack of punctuation”, “junctions” and “fragmentation” of words.

The latest evidence, *spontaneous textual production* – **Category VI**, turned out to be the greater complexity of the manual. It is a skill that can be considered the final art of writing. Therefore, students were asked to write a small text from prints presented to them, or incentives and suggestions from the evaluator, such as: reporting a trip, a week-end, a ride , a dream etc. The production of a written text involves specific problems of structuring: the speech, cohesion, reasoning, organization of ideas, word choice, the objective and the recipient of the text. In spontaneous writing children organize their inner discourse and go after and choose words

that they dominate to write, which are usually the most known by them. The result of the spontaneous writing of students in this sample was similar to that of writing from dictation, showing an average score of 59,81% of correct answers (Table 3), however, as well as in the dictating, the spontaneous writing was also performed with some difficulties and generally relating to spelling errors similar to those of the dictation. It was also observed, a large number of students, 68.75% (110) that produced only short texts of approximately 3 sentences.

As for the graphic design of the students, 38.75% (62) held the writing presenting “irregular oscillations and abnormal lines spacing”, difficulties in handling “circular letters”, “low speed”, difficulty in “size of letters”, i.e. the presence of “irregular graphic design”.

One relevant fact that occurred during the evaluations, is that some children speak while they write, trying to find the letter or syllable corresponding to the sound. The result, as it is observed in Table 3, shows an average of 72,10% of correct answers on the performance of students in the achievement of and writing tasks.

Table3 – Descriptive analysis of performance in the categories of the writing and the time (in minutes) of corresponding implementation

	Copy	Time	Writing dictation	Time	Spontaneous Writing	Time	Score Writing	Time Writing
Media	9.5625	4.26	6.0875	2.46	5.9813	2.96	7.2105	9.76
Median	10.0000	4.00	6.0000	2.30	6.0000	2.30	7.3300	9.30
Deviation Default	1.10850	1.37998	1.83737	.93609	2.25001	2.58441	1.52042	2.92932
Variance	1.229	1.90	3.376	.87	5.063	6.67	2.312	8.58
Minimum	.00	.00	1.00	1.00	.00	.00	1.33	4.00
Maximum	10.00	10.30	9.00	7.00	9.00	22.00	9.33	24.10
N	160	160	160	160	160	160	160	160

In relation to the performance of students in the 6 subtests of reading and writing, it was found that students had an average of 75,88% of correct answers on general performance in MDE (Table 4).

It was also observed, that between the averages scores in the categories of the manual, the writing presented the lower percentage, 72,10% of correct answers.

Table 4 – Descriptive analysis of the overall performance of reading, writing and the MDE by the average of the scores and the execution time in minutes

	Score Reading	Time of reading	Score Writing	Time of writing	Overall Score L / E	Total Time in MDE
Media	7.9683	6.26	7.2105	9.76	7.5885	16.22
Median	8.0850	6.00	7.3300	9.30	7.7500	15.30
Deviation Default	1.06815	1.77151	1.52042	2.92932	1.17777	3.86343
Variance	1.141	3.13	2.312	8.58	1.387	14.92
Minimum	4.25	3.30	1.33	4.00	3.29	10.55
Maximum	9.67	15.00	9.33	24.10	9.50	31.15
N	160	160	160	160	160	160

The time taken for the execution of the tasks of reading and writing is modified in accordance with the skill and experience of the reader/writer. Thus, in accordance with the results presented in Table 4, the children have led, on average, 6 minutes and 26 seconds in the task execution of reading, an average of 9 minutes and 76 seconds in the exercises of writing and 16 minutes and 22 seconds in all the categories of the MDE.

Thus, the distribution of the sample participants in accordance with the percentage of correct answers on the performance of reading, writing and

the general performance of the manual, as well as their average score in categories, can be seen in Figure 1 and Table 5. It was found that, generally speaking, less than half of the students, 40% (64) obtained performance between 100% to 81% of correct answers of MDE tasks (average score of 88,83 %), the majority 50% (80) presented a performance in the range between 80.9% to 61% of correct answers (average score of 70.44 %) and a total of 10% (16) obtained performance ≤ that 60.9% of correct answers in tests (average score of 49,99 %).

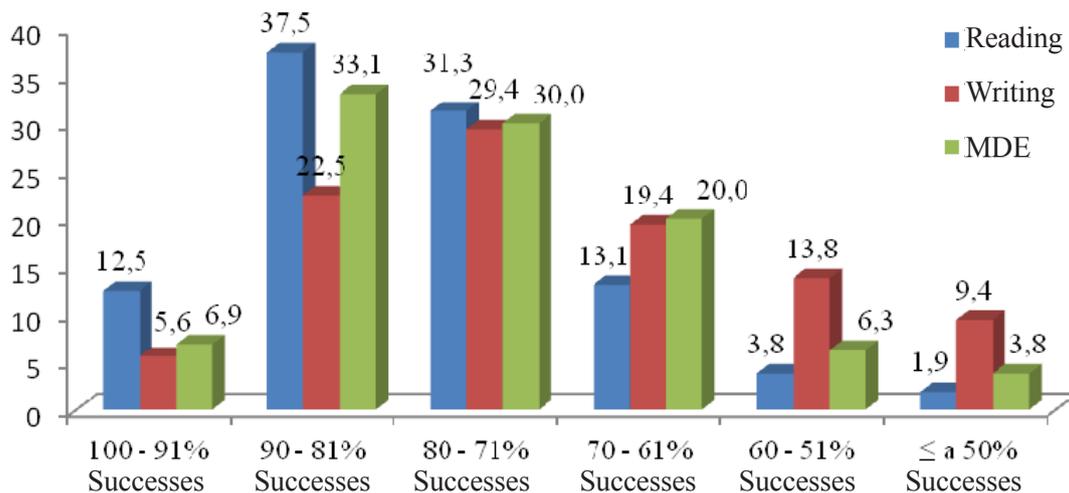


Figure 1 – Distribution of the sample according to percentage of correct answers on the MDE tests

Analyzing the performance of children in these subtests in function of gender, it was found that girls had better performance than boys, it was observed that 90% (144) of the students who were within the

range between 100% e 61% of correct answers on tests, 81 were girls and 63 were boys. And of 10% (16) students who have hit less than 60.9% in tests, 9 were boys and 7 were girls (Table 5).

Table 5 – Distribution of the study participants according to the percentage of correct answers in reading and writing tests, and the average score of students in MDE regarding gender

Percentage of correct answers on MDE	General Average Score (%)	Gender				Total	
		Male		Female		f	%
		f	%	f	%		
100 - 91%	Total = 92.66	3	4.2	8	9.1	11	6,9
90.9 - 81%	Total = 85.00	22	30.5	31	35.2	53	33,1
80.9 - 71%	Total = 75.02	20	27.8	28	31.8	48	30,0
70.9 - 61%	Total = 65.86	18	25.0	14	15.9	32	20,0
60.9 - 51%	Total = 56.36	5	6.9	5	5.7	10	6,3
≤ 50.9%	Total = 41.63	4	5.6	2	2.3	6	3,7
Total		72	100.0	88	100.0	160	100.0

About schools, it was noticed that the school “D” obtained, proportionally, the largest number of students 43.7% within the range of 100% to 81% of correct answers, i.e., school children who showed adequate performance and/or in the process of reading and writing learning. However, the school that had the largest number of children with performance below 60.9% of correct answers, i.e. below the expected for the educational level they were, it was the “A” school with 28.6% of students.

■ DISCUSSION

Before the reorganization of the fundamental school for nine years, is presented in this study, the results of the evaluation of school performance of reading and writing in school children who attended the third year of the initial block of literacy. It had as purpose to investigate the performance of the students who joined at age of six years old the fundamental school, in relation to the process of literacy, ie, read and understanding the reading and produce texts with clearness.

The choice for students of the third year of fundamental school was due to the fact that, in this stage of education, the expectation is that the students are fully literate. Which means that they must already dominate relations between graphemes and phonemes; read and understand syllables and words; to understand the overall meaning of the text, find information, make inferences and formulate hypotheses about the content of the text and read with fluency. They are able to write words under dictation and write short texts in a legible and understandable way⁸⁻¹⁰.

As well as, the 28 guidelines established at the Term of Adherence to the commitment “Education for All”, the compromise II deserves special attention because it launches as goal to municipalities that

accede to the agreement: “teach the children until, at most, eight years of age, checking the results by periodic specific test”¹¹.

In this age group the cortical areas are already well developed and integrated, enabling like that the proper motor function, sensory, visual and acoustic, which are fundamental for the production of written within the expected standards¹⁰.

The results of this study demonstrated that few students in this sample were fully literate at the end of the third year of Fundamental School. It was expected, therefore, that the school students had a better performance in this evaluation, which has already been addressed initial capacities of the literacy process.

As regards the first category of this protocol, reading letters, syllables and words, the findings of this study corroborate with other research conducted with students who were enrolled in the 1st and 2nd year of Fundamental Education¹². The authors verified the performance of 19 students in the reading of letters, syllables (simple and complex) and words and observed that the number of correct answers was increasing during the school year, demonstrating that the knowledge and recognition of letters and its positioning in the word improve with the increase of the use of reading and writing tasks in the classroom context. The abilities of letters recognition involve cognitive processes – similar to reading, which facilitates the development of reading in initial series of literacy¹².

Another study carried out with 74 children of 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades of Fundamental School of public school, without complaints of changes in the development and without learning difficulties observed that, as the reading of words test, the regular words were read more quickly than the irregular ones, and this behavior was demonstrated by the children

of all the series¹³. The same was observed in the current study with students of the 3rd year.

In a writing system with alphabetical basis, the ability of decoding is of great importance in the initial stage of the reader, because it provides the basis for the automaticity of recognition of the word and subsequent understanding of the reading material¹⁴.

The result described in this study shows that the students who had the best performance in reading letters, syllables and words, also showed a better score in a text reading. However, the reading comprehension depends on relevant knowledge that are associated with the vocabulary development, oral language, language skills, memory skills, ability to make inferences and the world experience of each individual¹².

A study with 76 students of the third year of Fundamental Education, of high average socio economic class, enrolled in a private school of Porto Alegre/RS¹⁵ evaluated the reading comprehension in the task of answering to the questions on the reading text. The authors understood that the students showed high performance, because answered correctly 81.71% of the proposed questions. This result may be due to the increase of linguistic abilities or meta linguistic and cognitive processes, such as memory and attention, because, in the course of schooling, the child is exposed to texts increasingly long, influencing directly the understanding reader. In the sample studied here, with children inserted in Municipal Public Network, it was observed that little more than half (61.4 %) of the students answered an average of about 75.24% of the 10 questions on the reading text.

The understanding of a text do not summarize the memory capacity, but also the ability to infer facts that do not appears clearly in the text. In this respect, according to the authors, the questionnaire on history seems to be the best way to evaluate the skills of students, because the task of answering to questions is punctual, focuses on only certain information and parts of the text¹⁵.

According to the study that analyzed the relationship between aspects related to reading and understanding patterns the same in 45 children in the 2nd year of the fundamental school, it was observed that the paused pattern does not affect the understanding of texts, however, the silabado pattern showed to be less efficient for basic understanding of narrative texts¹⁶. The study also revealed that the fluency interferes directly in reading comprehension in the first years of schooling, despite not being enough to guarantee it.

In this respect, Leo Blomert, from the Psychology and Neuroscience Department, from the University

of Maastricht (Holland), held the first project of European research (PROREAD)¹⁷ on the reading development of 3000 children originated from six Member States of the Union: Holland, France, Finland, Germany, Hungary and Portugal. It also found additional information about 6500 teachers (special education), with the aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the support system for children with reading problems. The obtained results has an immediate impact on both theoretical point of view but also in educational policies. It also pointed out that effective interventions with children who have problems in reading can be useful to various countries, independently of the language barrier

Suggests also, that a support system should be directed to both students and teachers, once that an exclusive focus in only one of the parts is not effective. Another characteristic of an effective system is the existence of a functional communication network between teachers and teachers of special education, as well as between teachers of special education and the professionals who make the diagnoses.

In that context, in a longitudinal study were evaluated 41 children identified as at risk for reading difficulties from the early childhood education until the third year of fundamental school¹⁸. All students were evaluated in the second semester of each school year, to assess the intervention need, and a small group of students who had low performance received supplementary intervention. The results indicated that, according to the studies, the majority of children identified as in risk at the beginning of the kindergarten, answered early and positively to the intervention. Only the performance of oral fluent reading did not improve for the majority of students.

The learning process is not similar for all children and the failure or success is related to individual factors which, in their turn, depend on the environmental influences or socio-economic and cultural. In addition, the child is also subject to social and educational conditions that may, if they are not favorable and appropriate, makes it illiterate or offer you a very precarious domain of the written language¹⁹.

However, it should be considered that the ownership of the writing system is an evolutionary process in which the learner elaborates hypotheses or ideas in respect of what is the writing, in which reveals different degrees of knowledge that are being formed. In this way, children are committing "errors" during the learning until, they dominate permanently the spell system²⁰.

In tasks that involved the writing of known words or with unknown spelling, it was noticed that, even those students who had a better performance in the

evaluation presented spelled words with omissions, additions or replacing of syllables or letters⁹. The same happened in the writing of small extension sentence, in which it was found absence of correct segmentation between words and total ignorance of the use of initial capital letters in paragraphs and punctuation at the end of the sentence. Such findings are consistent with the results of the present study.

The low frequency of errors originated from reversal of letters and confusion between similar letters suggests that the visual-spatial aspects of writing are elements more easily dominated and understood by those who learn how to write. However, in this study, although all the children are already enrolled in the third year of fundamental school, were observed reversal occurrences of letters and/or syllables in words in 12.65% (21) of the school children and 3% (5) of rotations of letters in the execution of the writing tests. Despite the great attention that is being given to those errors by inversion, by the fact that they can be regarded as a dyslexia mark, little research has been done about^{20,21}.

As for the performance in the written test²²the authors observed in many children concomitant oral production of written words, suggesting an influence of the first on the second. In the present study, this type of behavior was observed in 3% of the school children.

In a general way, regarding the school performance in reading and writing, a study⁹ with 153 children of the third year of fundamental school from two municipal schools, the authors took as its main reference the material from the Center of Literacy, Reading and Writing CEALE – Diagnostic Evaluation of Literacy⁸. The research aim was to diagnose the acquisition of basic capacities to literacy and it was verified that 52% of the students shown to be able to read and write simple syntax sentence and text of short extension, although with difficulty and a total of 48 %, i.e. almost half the school children presented a delay in appropriating the learning of essential skills of reading and writing.

The same occurred in other research about 164 children school performance on the initial years of Brazilians are listed under the worst place in both education². The authors found that 60% of students had low income in reading, writing and calculation. They also observed that the participants with good performance in reading also showed good performance in writing. According to the authors, the literacy process requires a series of skills and competences that are pre-requisites for the learning that will take place, and it is very usual that children face problems of various orders in the first years of schooling. It is worth remembering that the linguistic

and communicative skills develops throughout the process of schooling and, therefore, the occurrence of some spelling errors is normal in early literacy.

As for the academic performance of boys and girls, it was found that genders are different among themselves in the general result of MDE, where girls did it significantly better. Results like these agrees with other research studies that also show a higher prevalence of low school performance in male gender, i.e. indicate that boys are more often affected with learning difficulties^{10,22,23}.

According to the PNAD – 2009 (National Research by Sample Households), published by IBGE (2010) (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), between children from 6 to 14 years, the rate of schooling was of 97.6% in 2009. However, the results of the PISA (international indicator that compares the quality and improvement of education in each country whose results serve to subsidize policies for improvement in this area) disclosed at the end of 2010, of the 65 participating countries science and reading as in mathematics. This shows that some Brazilian students arrive at the end of fundamental school with serious difficulties.

Therefore, according to the national average of IDEB in 2009, the index obtained by Brazilian students was of 4.6. However, 6 is the index that the students should reach to catch up the students from developed countries. In the city of Florianopolis, the indexes obtained by the students in the 2009 academic year, referring to: approval rate was 99 %, score for Brazil Test was 5.24 and the Ideb index, in the early years of Fundamental School (1st, 2nd, and 3rd years) was of 5.2²⁴.

Of five schools that participated in this study, it was noticed that the children who have gotten better performances in reading and writing according to the MDE, belonged to the best physical structures institutions (library, computer room, gym sports, etc.), organization pedagogical support direction, proximity with families) and external stimuli (extra-curricular projects).

■ CONCLUSION

Having in consideration the analysis of the results, it was found that 40% (n= 64) of the sample are fully literate, i.e. able to read with fluency and understanding the overall meaning of the text, find information, make inferences and formulate hypotheses about the content of the text. In writing, are able to write with cursive letter and readable and comprehensible form of a small text, according to the expected pattern in written language for school children in the third year of fundamental school.

However, 50 %, (n= 80) of the evaluated school students on the third school year are still in the process of read and write learning. And (10% (n= 16) of children showed performance below of the expected for the educational level they were, i.e. during initial stage of literacy. These students showed delay in ownership and consolidation of essential capabilities of read and write learning

Thus, in a general way, on the basis of the adopted criteria to identify the school performance, some of the evaluated children had some sort of difficulty and the most frequent type was presented in writing tests. The results of this study show the

need to resume some capabilities that need to be consolidated by the students, and the introduction of others with the intention that these students will literate.

On what was presented about literacy in the Fundamental School, it becomes clear the importance of both the teacher as a facilitator in the learning process of the child as the periodic diagnostic evaluation of the students performance, emphasizing the need of more research related to the teaching-learning process of reading and writing in fundamental school in initial years

RESUMO

Objetivo: caracterizar o desempenho escolar da leitura e escrita em escolares matriculados no terceiro ano do Ensino Fundamental **Método:** participaram deste estudo 160 crianças com idades entre 8 e 9 anos (média 8 anos e 7 meses). Para coleta dos dados foi utilizado o instrumento de medida: Manual de Desempenho Escolar – Análise da Leitura e Escrita em Séries Iniciais do Ensino Fundamental – MDE (ROSA NETO, SANTOS, TORO, 2010). Para análise e interpretação dos dados foram utilizados os programas Excel e SPSS for Windows 17.0. **Resultados:** verificou-se que os escolares obtiveram uma média de 75,88% de acertos no desempenho geral do MDE, e entre as médias da pontuação nas categorias do manual, a escrita apresentou a porcentagem mais baixa, 72,10% de acertos. **Conclusão:** constatou-se que 40% (n= 64) da amostra estão plenamente alfabetizadas, ou seja, capazes de ler com fluência e compreender globalmente o sentido do texto, localizar informações, fazer inferências e formular hipóteses sobre o conteúdo do texto. Na escrita, são capazes de escrever de forma legível e compreensível um pequeno texto. No entanto, 50% (n=80) dos alunos avaliados se encontram ainda no processo de aprendizado da leitura e escrita e 10% (n=16) das crianças mostrou desempenho abaixo do esperado para o nível de escolaridade em que se encontravam, ou seja, no estágio inicial da alfabetização.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Leitura; Escrita Manual; Estudantes

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