

Follow-up report

Discussion evening "Longdrinks" on November 10, 2022

Topic: Reading promotion - every child can read?!

On Thursday, November 10, 2022, our discussion evening "Longdrinks" took place at 6 pm in the Mayence Quarter on the topic: "Promoting reading - every child can read?!".

The evening started with a short welcome by our Executive Director Dr. Julia Bangert and a short introduction to the topic by our intern Judith Theiß. Judith began by presenting a few facts and figures on the topic of reading promotion. For example, according to the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), about 6.2 million people in Germany can only read and write insufficiently.

In 2018, the author Kirsten Boie initiated a so-called "Hamburg Declaration" with the appeal "Every child must learn to read!" In it, reference is made, among other things, to the IGLU study of 2016, according to which just under 1/5 of 10-year-olds in Germany (18.9%) cannot read well enough to understand the text at the end. The IQB education trend of 2021 also refers to the same problem and determined that about 19% of all fourth graders fail to meet the minimum standards in reading. The Hamburg Declaration clearly emphasizes that children with a migration background or from socioeconomically weaker households are more frequently affected by this.

If children are not taught the necessary reading skills in elementary school, it will be very difficult for them to learn them in secondary school, where it counts as a prerequisite. The demands of the Hamburg Declaration are therefore directed primarily at education policy. There should be enough primary school teachers and enough places at universities for student teachers. In addition, there should be early support measures at elementary schools.

Against the background of these facts and demands from the Hamburg Declaration, the question was discussed as to what might be the reason that children do not learn to read properly. Many factors were gathered that could play a role in this: for example, visual impairments, ADHD, autism, learning disabilities, dyslexia, etc. Especially for children with such limitations, special support would be essential.

It was also discussed what to look for in children's books so that they are adapted to children with reading difficulties. In the plenary session, many points were raised that could be taken into account in the writing and design. These include, for example, easy-to-read fonts and simple writing (simple sentences and no difficult words or irony). There should not be too much "clutter" on the pages. It would be better to have little text and a lot of free space, so that even a child with reading difficulties can finish a whole page without getting tired or digressing. Such a sense of achievement could help prevent the child from giving up too quickly.

Finally, various projects to promote reading were presented and there was a lively discussion about how useful they were and what advantages and disadvantages they entailed. There were differing assessments of how contemporary it is to promote

reading in conjunction with soccer, for example, which is limited to boys. There was also disagreement about the fundamental question of who should be involved in reading promotion. Are schools and daycare centers responsible for this, or should parents be held more accountable? In the end, we agreed that commitment in the area of reading promotion from as many different sides as possible is important and that it would be desirable in the future if the numbers of those who cannot read or write sufficiently could be reduced.

All in all, it was a very nice evening with a lively exchange and we are already looking forward to your participation at the next event of our "Longdrinks" series.