



Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills 8th Edition

Benchmark

Grade 6

Student Materials

Helen Keller

One day when Helen Keller was nearly two years old, she developed a raging fever. By the time she woke up from it days later, she had become blind and deaf. Helen's parents couldn't speak to her or show her anything. They had no way to teach Helen, and Helen had no way to communicate.

Helen grew frustrated and threw violent tantrums, stamping and screaming. Once, in a furious rage, she tipped over her little sister's crib. Helen's parents were deeply concerned. They hired Anne Sullivan, a young teacher, to try to communicate with their troubled and angry daughter.

Sullivan had a unique approach to trying to teach Helen. She would use her finger to spell out words on the palm of Helen's hand and then place Helen's hand on objects. For instance, she would spell out tree and then place Helen's hand on a tree.

For a long time, Helen did not seem to understand. Then one day, Sullivan put one of Helen's hands under streaming water and traced the letters for water onto Helen's other hand. Sullivan did this rapidly, over and over. Helen stood still, absorbed in the rapid movements of Sullivan's fingertip on one hand and the rushing of the water on her other hand.

Then, like mist burning away in sunlight, she smiled as she came to understand that the word water was the name for the wonderful cool something flowing over her other hand. Helen let out a shriek of joy. But this was only the beginning.

That afternoon, Helen learned more than a dozen new words. Before long, she also learned to read books printed in Braille, a system of raised dots that could be used to read by touch instead of by sight. After many years, Helen became a world-famous author.