National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASET)

THE PRACTICAL TEACHER

This Month's Topic:

Is There Only One Way to Teach Reading? Learning to Read in a Different Way

By

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Some students learn to read nearly on their own. But most students need reading instruction. That instruction is often phonics based. Although phonics works well for most students, it does not work for all students.   In spite of giving their best effort, some students cannot grasp phonics as initial reading instruction. Is there only one way to teach reading? This issue of **NASET's Practical Teacher** (written by Matthew Glavach, Ph.D. and Warren Pribyl, M.A.) will look at the issue of learning to read in a different way. In their article, they present a successful reading instruction program that uses a different way to teach these students, one that is compatible with the way they learn. Unlike reading programs in which students struggle to sound out words, the program builds on students' natural language abilities to develop word recognition and reading fluency in the context of interesting reading books. It includes a list of books used in the program. It also includes the books grade levels for teachers to use in designing a program.

We had great success with the program. Most of the students had tried many reading programs with little success. It was as if they were so caught up in the skills of reading that they had no idea of the joy of reading. How could something so painful bring joy? From the program's start students heard reading with expression. Expression brings out the magic of reading. The students were responding. Soon they were reading on their own with expression just as they had heard the book read to them.

INTRODUCTION

Some students learn to read nearly on their own. But most students need reading instruction. That instruction is often phonics based. Although phonics works well for most students, it does not work for all students.   In spite of giving their best effort, some students cannot grasp phonics as initial reading instruction. These students often exhibit the following characteristics:

-Experience difficulty blending sounds,
-Read letter by letter, word by word,
-Have delays in cadence and rhythm,
-Need a sense of the whole story before reading, and
-Have strong verbal skills and weak written language skills.

Most teachers see one or more of these students in their classrooms.

THEY LEARN IN A DIFFERENT WAY

While teaching students with the above reading characteristics, the authors' found that those students learn in a different way. They respond better by going from the whole to the parts. In phonetic reading instruction, students go from the parts to the whole. They dissect unfamiliar words into parts and then join the parts to form words. By learning the letter-sound relationships, students learn a decoding formula to apply to unfamiliar words. This is great instruction for students who respond to it. But in phonics, students rely on one cuing system, one that for these students may not be well developed.

A SUCCESSFUL READING INSTRUCTION PROGRAM

We present a successful reading instruction program that uses a different way to teach these students, one that is compatible with the way they learn. Unlike reading programs in which students struggle to sound out words, the program builds on students' natural language abilities to develop word recognition and reading fluency in the context of interesting reading books. It includes a list of books used in the program It also includes the books grade levels for teachers to use in designing a program.

READING PROGRAM STRATEGIES

With each book we used the following reading strategies.

Repeated Reading
The authors used repeated reading to provide the exposure necessary to put the words into long term memory. In repeated reading, a passage is orally reread until students read the passage at a mastery level. [1]

Phrase-Cued Reading
Phrase-cued reading is breaking the text into meaningful phrases to help with reading expression and comprehension. Phrases also help students who have difficulty grouping words that go together. This difficulty limits comprehension because the meaning of a passage is carried more by phrases than by individual words. [2]   An example of a phrase-cued reading passage follows.

> Some bears / sleep all winter.// Bears sleep in
> dens.// The dens / can be caves.// They can be /
> tree stumps.// They can be / holes under rocks.//

Imitative Reading

In imitative reading students read a phrase, a sentence, or a paragraph right after it is modeled by the teacher. Students track under the words with their writing hands. An example of imitative reading follows.

Part 1

Teacher Reads: Horses, horses, horses

Student Reads: Horses, horses, horses

Teacher Reads: crowded the streets of
Student Reads: crowded the streets of

Teacher Reads: cities and towns.
Student Reads: cities and towns.

Part 2

Teacher Reads: Horses, horses, horses
                        crowded the streets of
                        cities and towns.

Student Reads: Horses, horses, horses
                        crowded the streets of
                        cities and towns.

Slower Reading

To slow the reading presentation, the teacher reads the text at a slower pace. In studies, researchers found that 80 percent of language-impaired students had auditory cortex neurons that were firing too slowly; therefore, they lost large amounts of language information. These students also could have problems hearing changes in pitch and speech inflections, the emotional part of speech. 3 Slowing the presentation is one way to help students keep pace with the reading and to strengthen weak auditory neurons.

<p style="text-align:center">BUILDING A READING PROGRAM</p>

STEP 1: Book Organization

The authors began the reading program by choosing popular books and organizing them into reading levels for a smooth transition from one book's reading level to the next. They began at pre-primer reading level and go through fourth grade reading level. They looked for certain features in the books. At the early levels, those features were highly predictable stories with repeated phrases and rhymes. Rhyme patterns and repeated phrases provided valuable language cues that assisted in developing independent reading skills. A complete list of the chosen books is at the end of the article.

STEP 2: Phrase-Cued Reading

To add phrase-cued markers, the authors simply read the text and marked the natural phrases and pauses they heard as they read. To add slash marks in the book, read the text, and mark phrases and pauses heard as you read. Make slash marks, /, between phrases and sentences. This is done because students read in phrases rather than word by word. There is not a right or wrong way to add slash

marks. Just read the text, and mark where you make a slight pause. Commas and periods are natural pauses.

An example of a phrase-cued reading passage follows.

(NOTE: DO NOT ADD PHRASE-CUED MARKERS UNTIL BOOK 7, IN SET 1, *Katy Did It*. AFTER THAT THEY WILL BE ADDED TO EACH BOOK.)

Katie Did It (Set 1, Book 7)

Katie / was little. /

Her brother Kris / was bigger. /

And her sister Jenny / was even bigger. /

Whenever / milk was spilled, /

Kris and Jenny said. . . / "Katie did it!" /

Whenever the ball / was left out, /

Kris and Jenny said. . . / "Katie did it!" /

When the light / was left on, /

Jenny and Kris said. . . / "Katie did it!" /

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PREPARING TO START THE PROGRAM

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-If you know the students' reading levels, begin with the book that corresponds to that level.
-If you are not sure of the reading levels, begin with the book where the students experience difficulty with word recognition, with fluency, or with comprehension.
-Use an easy to administer oral reading test or inventory such as the *Fry Oral Reading Test*[4] or the *Slosson Oral Reading Test (SO T)*[5]

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PRESENTING THE READING PROGRAM

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(FOR THE TEACHER)
STEP 1 : Introduce Story

-Look at the pictures in the book with the student. Ask student to tell what he/she thinks the story will be.
-This step is important because it builds a network of information that will develop student comprehension and word identification.
-It is also important to connect information to things the student knows. For example, if there is a picture of a zoo, ask: *Have you ever been to a zoo?* or say*: Tell me about the zoo.*

STEP 2 : Read Story, Slow Pacing

-Read the story to student (with slow pacing). For very short stories, read the whole book. For longer stories, divide the book into parts.
-While you read at a slow pace, but not so slow as to lack expression, the student   listens to the story and tracks under the words with his or her writing hand. (This gives student a clear target, keeps his/her eyes from straying all over the page, and helps establish left-right progression.)
-To start the teacher sits facing student and tracks above the words with student (Initially, monitor student tracking. Then, monitor as needed.)

STEP 3 : Read Story, Normal Pacing
-Read the story to student (with normal pacing).
-While you read, student listens to the story and tracks under the words with
 his/her writing hand.
-sits facing student and tracks above the words with student (Initially, monitor student tracking. Then, monitor as needed.)

STEP 4: Student Reads Story Aloud
-Student reads the story or story part. If student hesitates or stumbles, tell the words to him/her.
-The goal is fluency, not sounding out words. Practice until student reaches a 70%
 fluency or better.

STEP 5: Practice Imitative Reading with Student as Needed
Read difficult passages while student listens and then immediately reads.

STEP 6: Timed Reading (Start Timed Reading with BOOK 7, IN SET 1, *Katy Did It*.)

-Choose 50 or 100 words from the story or story part to use for timed reading.
-Type on a sheet of plain paper. (Use larger type and space at one and half .)
-Review the story or story part with the student.

-Time student for 1 minute.
-Tell student the words if he/she hesitates or stumbles. Minimum timed reading proficiency is 70%.

STEP 7: Expressive Reading Practice
-Read the story with expression as the student follows.
-Student reads the story with expression.

The program can be adapted for use with small groups of struggling readers.

PROGRAM CONCERN

One concern about the program was addressed: Are students learning to read or are they only memorizing the passages? As the authors worked with the program, they observed students acquiring word recognition skills while they practiced the graded reading passages. Some students began to recognize words out of context almost immediately. Other students took months, but word recognition happened naturally, or automatically, for most students who used the program.

PROGRAM ASESSMENT RESULTS

"A review of the assessment results from a sample of participants indicates an average improvement in their reading performance of 1.8 grade levels. We used the CTBS scores as our criteria to assess the results. . . . Thank you again for your assistance in implementing this terrific program in our school." M.A., Private School Director

PROGRAM READING BOOK LISTS

A complete list of books is at the end of the article.

For information about the reading instruction program or for help in setting up the program at your school, please contact the authors.

Contact Warren Pribyl at e-mail: fluencyreading@gmail.com

Contact Matthew Glavach at e-mail: info@strugglingreaders.com or at his website
www.StrugglingReaders.com

BUILD YOUR OWN READING PROGRAM

Build your own reading program with the same books used in the article. The authors have listed the book sets and alternative books (in case some books are not available). All of the books are found on Amazon and other booksellers. New books average two dollars to six dollars. Used books average one cent to three dollars.

READING BOOK LISTS

SET 1   PREPRIMER-PRIMER (ALTERNATIVE TITLES)

Where's Jake?, Mary Packard   (*Wait Skates*, Mildred D. Johnson)

Fast Draw Freddie, Bobbie Hamsa   (*Eat Your Peas* Loise, Pegeen Snow)

Dirty Larry, Bobbie Hamsa   (*Addition Annie*, David Gisler)

Hot Rod Harry, Catherine Petrie   (*A Pet for Pat*, Pegeen Snow)

Oh No! Otis, Julie E. Frankel

Paul the Pitcher, Paul Sharp

Katie Did It, Becky Bring McDaniel

Too Many Balloons, Catherine Matthias

SET 2   PRIMER – GRADE 1   (ALTERNATIVE TITLES)

Katie Can, Becky Bring McDaniel   (*Messy Bessy*, Patricia and Frank McKissack)

The Three Little Bears, Patricia, Frederick McKissack   (*Messy Bessy's Closet*, Patricia, Frank McKissack)

Country Mouse/City Mouse, Patricia, Frederick McKissack   (*Katie Couldn't*, Becky Bring McDaniel)

Three Billy Goats Gruff, Patricia and Frederick McKissack   (*Jasua James Likes Trucks*, Catherine Petrie)

The Ant and the Dove, Mary Lewis Wang   (*I Am an Explorer*, Amy Moses)

The Frog Prince, Mary Lewis Wang

SET 3 GRADES 1.5 -2.5   (ALTERNATIVE TITLES)

Horses, Allan Fowler   (*Hill of Fire*, Thomas P. Lewis (1.6)

What If Everybody Did That? Ellen Javernick   (*Wagon Wheels*, Barbara Brenner (1.6)

How Two-Feather Was Saved from Loneliness, C. J. Taylor (***Daniel's Duck***, Juan Sandin (1.6)

Uncle Nacho's Hat, Harriet Rohmer **(*Whales*, Joyce Milton (1.8)**

What Is Martin Luther King, Jr., Day?, Margot Parker (***Balto***, Natalie Standiford (2.0)

SET 4 GRADES 2.5 -4.0   **(ALTERNATIVE TITLES)**

Bears, Mark Rosenthal   (***Deborah Sampson Goes to War***, Bryna Stevens (2.4)

Dangerous Fish, Ray Broekel   (***Barry, the Brave St. Bernard***, Lynn Hall (2.8)

The Navajos, Alice Osinski   (***Jackie Robinson***, Jim O'Conner (3.0)

Martin Luther King, Jr., Carol Greene   (***Helen Keller***, Stewart and Polly Ann Graff (3.2)

Magic Johnson, Richard Levin   (***Stone Fox***, John Reynolds Gardiner (3.5)

Parent and Teacher Comments about the Reading Program *Using Children's Reading Books*.

> I can honestly say that as a principal of 17 years and as a former reading specialist, I have never before seen such positive results with so many children who have had severe reading problems.
>
> *M.B. Principal*

The schools, teachers, and my husband and I had explored many avenues trying to help him learn to read - two years of a special reading program, being retained, rewards, hours of reading to him, private consulting, and counseling. But still his progress was minimal.... He tried very hard...but just could not grasp reading.... During the middle of 4th grade we consented to try a different approach.... At that point in time we felt we had nothing to lose as his progress had been minimal and we felt his self-esteem was becoming an issue.... Not only has he made tremendous gains reading, his self-confidence has developed greatly. We cannot recommend this program highly enough!
B.K. Parent

Through the years as I have worked in education as a teacher's aide, we have tried many reading programs.... This program is one of the most exciting experiences of all.... The books are interesting and varied. There was such joy for them and for me when they discovered "Hey I can read!"
I.M. Teacher's Aide

Two years ago, while I was teaching the first grade, I had a student who is the victim of a stroke at birth. One of the consequences of this condition is a severe memory loss, both short and long term. I attempted to teach David to read and every system that I used was unsuccessful.... In the second grade he was introduced to your program and in a very short time he was reading... His eyes sparkled and his whole posture improved.... Today he continues to do very well and I directly attribute the success to your program. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Sincerely,
M.J.H. School Principal

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...Before we knew what Jerry's problem was, he used to hate going to school.... His grades were way below average.... He wouldn't get along with anyone.... He felt negative about everything, even about himself.   Then we found out he had a reading problem. Once he started in your program we could see his reading skills picking up, his self-confidence and grades improved. He plays with other children now. This program does a lot more than just helping children learn to read.
Mrs.Y. Parent

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