



Lisa Subers

**KAREN TRUNCCELLITO**, a teacher who lives in Exton, takes an innovative approach to teaching younger children to read in her new book, *Easy Steps to Reading*.

# Learning to read from inside out

BY LISA SUBERS  
Staff writer

Reading may be the one life skill which people most take for granted. But if reading problems are not overcome at an early age, learning to read can become a nightmare which could result in illiteracy.

Karen Truncellito, a teacher who lives in Exton, recently devised a new method designed to combat reading difficulties. Truncellito has published *Easy Steps to Reading*, which provides parents and teachers with an alternative approach to the education of their children and students.

"If they do this early enough, everybody could read," said Truncellito.

Starting early is the key to a worthwhile education, said Truncellito. Parents and teachers need to be equally observant and supportive in a child's education.

Her book educates the educators with an innovative approach to learning for children who have difficulty with the traditional phonetics methods.

About 13 years ago, the mother of one of her students pleaded with Truncellito to help her learning disabled son. Truncellito had successfully tutored the woman's older child and hoped she could help teach the younger child to read. The boy's regular teachers could not help him to learn, said Truncellito.

Because of his severe memory problem, the tutoring process was very frustrating for both Truncellito and her young student, until she experimented with an unconventional method. She taught the boy to sound out words starting with the vowels rather than from the beginning of the word.

"It's cutting the process from four steps to two steps," said Truncellito.

She explained that through mnemonic devices, such as the phrase "The Big Dog Sat Up And Begged," the child can remember the pronunciation of simple sounds. Truncellito starts children out with small words and gradually builds up their ability to recognize and to comprehend words at their appropriate reading levels.

In the traditional phonetic approach, which is beneficial to some children, the child is taught to sound out the word starting from the left in a four-step process. This method is not always successful and could leave some children struggling.

"I don't like to see children in a catch-up process in the classroom," said Truncellito.

Her alternative method can also help avoid the "labeling" that occurs during the education process. Children who struggle to learn sometimes feel a loss of self-esteem and begin to doubt their abilities.

She stresses that parents and

teachers should be aware of the signs of learning problems in children as early as three to four years of age, and be prompt in acting on them. If the child is sluggish or hyperactive, forgetful, easily distracted, or slow in acquiring a language skill, adults should start working to correct the problem, she said.

If the problems are not attended to early, the child's best interests are not being met, said Truncellito. Children can develop negative feelings toward school in general if they are frustrated with learning.

"They're the ones who start to fall farther and farther behind," said Truncellito.

Her book is designed to help children learn to read before they

struggle to comprehend words below their expected reading levels. She believes her method could help raise literacy percentages across the country.

Truncellito attended St. Joseph's College in Brooklyn, N.Y. and received her M.S. in education from Fordham University in New York City. She has taught in New York City and the Exton area for more than 18 years.

So far, Truncellito is not aware of any reading instruction method that is similar to hers. She is confident of the benefits parents and teachers can gain from her book.

"Everybody that I've used it on, it's worked," she says.

For more information on *Easy Steps to Reading*, call Karen Truncellito at (800) 285-3017 or 363-1484.