

Novel reading teaching

Filed under: [News](#), [Reading](#) — JohnL @ 7:14 am

What appears to be a home-grown approach to teaching early decoding has remarkable effects, according to Michael Crist of *Daily Local News* (Philadelphia, PA, US). There's a feature to the method—sounding out words “from the inside out”—that I'm struggling to understand. Here's Mr. Crist's introduction:

While they might not be ready for the national spelling bee, the kindergarten class at Ss. Philip and James School may be on their way.

The students showed off their skills reading words like embellish, terminate, skeptical and indulgent.

They also read full sentences ranging from a first- to third-grade level.

The success of the students is credited to a system developed by Karen Truncellito, a former teacher who has tutored children over the past 25 years, called “Easy Steps to Reading.”

“It uses a multisensory approach and teaches children to sound out words from the inside out, instead of right to left,” Truncellito said.

In cases such as this it is important to remember the words of Og Lindsley to which I referred in an earlier entry in [LD Blog](#): “Show me your data!” Mr. Crist reported that Ms. Truncellito has assessed performance with DIBELS. That's a plus, but we need to know more.

It would be important to understand the basis for claims that Easy Steps to Reading works. How was it tested? What are the characteristics of the students with whom it was tested and how were they selected for study and assigned to group? How many teachers participated in the studies and what are their characteristics? Against what alternative methods has it been compared? How was student performance assessed and how were the assessments conducted? Were the results replicated with other students, other teachers, other measures? If that sounds like a research project, it should.

This is in response to questions raised about Michael Crist's article, “Hooked on Easy Steps to Reading”.

How was the program tested?

The pilot program for Easy Steps to Reading was done in the kindergarten of a Catholic Elementary School in the suburbs of Philadelphia. The students were not selected or screened from the class but consisted of the total kindergarten class. Of the many schools that I approached over the last 13 years, this was the only school and the only class that allowed it to be done with the approval of three open minded people – the principal, one teacher, and her assistant. The 25 students were tested by me, Karen Truncellito, the creator of the program as nobody else was available to do the testing. I tested each child privately in a separate room for his/her ability to distinguish letters, their sounds, and blends along with the ability to read nonsense syllables, one syllable words, and 2 brief 2nd and 3rd grade level Dibels paragraphs. The children were also tested for the ability to write letters, words, and a sentence. In math, I tested for forward and backward counting along with counting by 5's and 10's. Besides that, I tested for their ability to add, subtract, tell time, and count money. I did the testing at the middle of December when I received permission to start.

What were the characteristics of the students tested?

The children were of mixed ability. One had learned to read at home. Most, at the time of the initial testing, were able to identify the consonant letters along with their sounds and count to 10.

Like any average classroom, there were several hyperactive boys and a few children with difficult learning issues who knew very few of the test items. In doing the program, I was allowed to work with the class for 20 minutes per day, 3 days per week. At times, I came in earlier and worked with children who were having problems, and the teacher and her assistant also gave additional time when possible to the children who needed it. I started teaching the week before Christmas break, and with this simplified two step method, the children were attacking one syllable words by the end of the first week in January. From there, they progressed to two and three syllable words and learned to add, subtract, tell time, etc... By mid-May, I tested each child with the same assessment. Every child made remarkable progress. Most of the children went from knowing their consonant letters and sounds to being able to read a paragraph. Children with learning issues progressed from not being able to identify most letters or sounds to being able to read one syllable words. We were not able to compare them with other classes because most of the math I taught is not in the kindergarten curriculum in that school or any other. Likewise in reading, kindergarten children are considered to have done well if they emerge knowing their letters, sounds, and some basic sight words. Kindergarten children do not usually leave with the ability to read 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade paragraphs.

At the end of May 2006, Congressman Gerlach and the local press observed the children sounding out words from the high school SAT list, adding, subtracting, etc..

Statistics from the before and after testing are on my website <http://easy-steps-to-reading.com> . The improvement rates ranged from 80% to 400% from December to May after only 20 hours of total instruction.

Will the program be repeated?

The teacher who worked with me this past year will be teaching the program again every year. I will not be teaching but consulting, and we expect the children to be reading words by late September. The children made unbelievable progress using no books – only made up games, chalk, and a blackboard. Money was spent only for small candy prizes and a few games and charts. Another teacher in Utah heard about it and will be doing it there. I will be doing phone consultations with her. Also, a principal in Buffalo will be using it in her school as an English Second Language Program. She started using it in a summer program, and her teachers say the children love it! I hope that I have adequately addressed your questions and concerns. If there is anything further, please feel free to contact me at EZSteps2Reading@aol.com