Reading Research and the Sonday System®

How the Sonday System® aligns with Reading Research and how Winsor Learning programs and professional development help schools apply scientifically based strategies in their classrooms.

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Linking Reading Research, Orton-Gillingham and the Sonday System®

The National Reading Panel (NRP) conducted meta-analysis on over 2500 reading studies conducted since 1966 (*National Reading Panel: Report of the subgroups, 2000*). Based on this analysis, the panel identified five elements of instruction (phonological awareness, phonics instruction, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension) that need to be included in reading programs for them to be successful with struggling students. The National Reading Panel and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development worked with organizations like the University of Oregon and the Florida Center for Reading Research to provided tools to evaluate instructional programs for the five elements.

Educational experts in industry leading organizations such as the National Center for Learning Disabilities, the International Dyslexia Association and Reading First offices in several states have evaluated the Sonday System® and deemed that the program contained the required elements identified by the NRP. Information on how to access the analysis reports from NCLD and IDA are attached to this document.

Reading Research studies conducted over the past 70 years have included the Orton-Gillingham method. Studies sited were in 1940, 1956, 1969, 1979 and 1984. NRP identified Orton-Gillingham as one of the effective methodologies that address the needs of struggling students (*National Reading Panel, Report of the subgroups, 2000*).

Careful analysis shows that the Sonday System® follows the teaching methodology of Orton-Gillingham closely. The Author of the Sonday System®, Arlene Sonday is a Founding Fellow and first president of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators, the only Orton-Gillingham credentialing organization. She is an adjunct professor at Hamline University and Fairleigh Dickinson University, two institutions that are leaders in Orton-Gillingham instruction training.

Ms. Sonday tutored students, consulted with schools, and authored as well as taught Orton-Gillingham courses over 35 years and found that competent teachers and tutors were experiencing difficulty transitioning into classroom settings. They did not have time to write the learning plans and create the curriculum. For this reason she wrote the lesson plans and, with Winsor Learning, created the Sonday System®. Providing these tools enables teachers to shorten training time and continue the learning process while delivering quality instruction.

References

Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read. Report of the Subgroups. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, NIH Pub. No. 00-4754, April 2000.

The Sonday System® and the Reading Research

The Sonday System® has been successful because the materials and training have been carefully crafted to <u>incorporate the essential components of reading.</u> For example, <u>phonological awareness</u> is necessary for children to be able to manipulate phonemes used in rhyming, segmenting, and blending words—a skill that must be automatic for later reading comprehension to occur (Samuels, 1994). Phonological awareness can be fostered by engaging children in such activities as listening games, rhyming games, syllable clapping, and sentence segmentation that engage children in playing with verbal language and help build the foundation for mapping sounds to letters and words and learning the purpose and form of print (Fernandez-Fein & Baker, 1997; Adams et al, 1988; Pressley, 1998). The Winsor Learning training consultants ensure phonological awareness knowledge by showing teachers, with the strategies in the instructional materials, how to directly teach students to develop phonological listening skills, recognize onset sounds and rimes, segment and combine sounds into words, separate sentences into words and words into syllables and sounds, and begin to manipulate speech sounds. Sonday System® materials include flash cards, songs, listening activities, and games to help students master these skills.

<u>Systematic synthetic phonics instruction</u> has been shown to produce a significant impact on reading growth (National Reading Panel, 2000). In the Winsor Learning training, activities are provided to teach students to develop the sound-symbol correspondences needed for basic word reading. Through the structured and systematic use of tools in the Sonday System® such as flash cards, words lists, word games, phrase and sentence reading, and short stories, teachers are able to teach students to effectively blend phonemes and letters, master the sound-symbol relationships needed for basic reading, and apply effective word reading strategies to unfamiliar and sight words.

The system integrates a systematic spelling component throughout the program so that students routinely practice spelling the words they read. This reading-spelling connection is critical because when "reading and spelling are taught together progress is faster, learning is more secure, and the learner becomes a writer as well as a reader. It offers an opportunity for kinesthetic/tactile practice through tracing and writing and it provides immediate diagnostic information regarding which sounds, rules and concepts have been learned" (Sonday, 2002). This intentional integration between spelling and reading reinforces the reading-writing connection, allows students to become more proficient at spelling, and strengthens students' confidence in writing. Teachers can then expand the spelling activities to extended writing assignments for students. Furthermore, reading phrases, sentences, and stories allow students to apply the phonics skills they are learning to meaningful contexts rather than relying exclusively on isolated word reading. Teachers can also integrate the materials into word walls, pocket charts, or other

language-based strategies that are currently a part of their school program.

For reading to be meaningful, children must be able to read fluently. This automaticity is critical for later reading comprehension (LaBerge and Samuels, 1974). Teachers are trained to incorporate fluency into instruction by using Rapid Naming, single word reading, sentence reading, and repeated oral reading of text. Fluency is introduced systematically, first with automaticity exercises (Rapid Naming), sometimes requiring the simplicity of shapes, colors, numbers, letter names, and letter sounds particularly in Early Childhood instruction. Then students start fluency practice for sounds and words at Level 1 of Sonday System® 1. Beginning in Level 5 of Sonday System® 2, the teachers are trained to use repeated oral reading to practice and monitor reading fluency. In addition, teachers are trained to use the Mastery Check for reading and spelling, used with every third level of instruction as an in-classroom benchmark or progress monitoring tool. Students practice guided reading, choral reading, partner reading, and monitored oral reading on controlled texts and leveled readers to build student success and ensure mastery. In order to build fluency, automaticity skill drills are incorporated in the program.

Students need to be able to understand the vocabulary they read to obtain meaning from the text. Research shows students learn vocabulary best when they have repeated exposures to new words (Senechal, 1997; Daniels, 1994, 1996) and when these words are learned in appropriate contexts (Beck, McKeown, Beck, Hamilton, & Kugan, 1988; Dole, Sloan, & Trathen, 1995). Vocabulary is stressed in on-site follow-up coaching (National Reading Panel, 2000). Winsor Learning coaches train teachers to use both direct and indirect instructional strategies and help teachers know when to restructure vocabulary tasks for low-achieving readers. Indirect methods for students include listening to text, engaging in daily oral language, and reading books, stories, or word lists. Direct methods include teaching word meanings through prefixes, roots, suffixes, and understanding of language origins, e.g. Latin, Greek, Anglo-Saxon, and Germanic. Additional strategies covered in the training model include: analysis of word parts, comparison, opposites, synonyms, multiple meanings, semantic and relational categories, word relatedness, visualizing and game playing. Winsor Learning understands, practices, and recommends using a combination of strategies rather than relying on one strategy for teaching vocabulary.

Finally, teachers need to include comprehension strategies to help children become independent readers. Winsor Learning coaches, by means of ongoing, sustained professional development, train teachers to use a variety of strategies through explanation, demonstration, and role-play. These strategies are covered in the initial training and progress throughout follow-up coaching sessions. These explicitly taught strategies include cooperative learning, mnemonics and mental imagery, question generating and question answering, psycholinguistic strategies and summarization, defining picture and listening comprehension, developing critical thinking skills, retelling, clarifying, predicting, and story structure. These strategies are consistent with those recommended by the National Reading Panel (2000).

Written response to reading can greatly enhance comprehension, but poor readers must have their writing skills developed sequentially and cumulatively. Writing improves when students practice answering specific question types, elaborating subjects and predicates, combining simple sentences, constructing clauses, and linking sentences into organized paragraphs. These are the building blocks of clear writing (Moats, 2001). Winsor Learning provides instructional materials and training for systematic, explicit writing instruction. The writing instruction is incorporated into lesson plans early to reinforce writing skills, vocabulary and comprehension.   Even as students develop the building blocks for writing, shared and modeled writing helps them transcend the daunting challenges of generating and organizing their thoughts. Rather than turning students loose to face a blank piece of paper, the instructor models and demystifies the composition process. Students are thus guided to compose independently.

The Winsor Learning methods and materials have been compiled to support teachers to effectively use all of these strategies and to bring students to grade level. The methods are based on Orton-Gillingham instruction principles that have been well documented over time in raising student achievement.

Bibliography

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Research Memo

Topic: Programs Referenced in the National Reading Panel Report

Issue Statement: Proven Instructional Practices as per the Reading Research.

BACKGROUND

Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read. Report of the Subgroups. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, NIH Pub. No. 00-4754, April 2000. This is a 480-page report.

- (There is also a 35- page summary report of the National Reading Panel: *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read*. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, NIH Pub. No. 00-4769, April 2000.)

- "In 1997, Congress asked the 'Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), in consultation with the Secretary of Education, to convene a national panel to assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching to read.'" (Summary report, p. 1)

- "An examination of a variety of public databases by Panel staff revealed that approximately 100,000 research studies on reading have been published since 1966, with perhaps another 15,000 appearing before that time. . . .Selection of prioritized topics was necessitated by the large amount of published reading research literature relevant to the Panel's charge to determine the effectiveness of reading instructional methods and approaches." (Summary report, p 1)

- Following the regional hearings [where the Panel received oral and written testimony from approximately 125 individuals or organizations representing citizens], the Panel considered, discussed, and debated several dozen possible topic areas and then settled on the following topics for intensive study: **(1) Alphabetics** (Phonemic Awareness Instruction and Phonics Instruction),**(2) Fluency (3) Comprehension** (Vocabulary Instruction, Text Comprehension Instruction, Teacher Preparation and Comprehension Strategies Instruction), **(4) Teacher Education and Reading Instruction,** and **(5) Computer Technology and Reading Instruction.** (Summary report, pp 2 - 3).

- "**Findings and Determination-**The meta-analysis revealed that systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for students in kindergarten through 6th grade and for children having difficulty learning to read. . . . Systematic synthetic phonics instruction [teaching students explicitly to convert letters into sounds (phonemes) and then blend the sounds to form recognizable words.] . . .had a positive and significant effect on disabled readers' reading skills.
    - "Moreover, systematic synthetic phonics was significantly more effective in improving low socioeconomic status (SES) children's alphabetic knowledge and

word reading skills than instructional approaches that were less focused on these initial reading skills."(Summary report, p. 9)

- o "The conclusion drawn is that specific systematic phonics programs are all more effective than non-phonics programs and they do not appear to differ significantly from each other in their effectiveness although more evidence is needed to verify the reliability of effect sizes for each program." (*Report of the Subgroups*, p. 2-132)

SPECIFIC READING PROGRAMS EVALUATED BY RESEARCH GROUPS

"**Methodology**": The following phonics programs ". . . were evaluated in at lease three different studies (Direct Instruction; Lippincott; Orton Gillingham; Sing Spell Read and Write; Benchmark Word ID; New Primary Grades Reading System)" (*Report of the Subgroups*, p. 2-91)

- "In the database were seven phonics programs whose effectiveness was assessed in at least three different treatment-control group comparisons. All but one of the programs, Lovett's analogy program, taught synthetic phonics. These programs together with the dates of publications are listed below:

  - o Direct Instruction, also referred to as DISTAR and Reading Mastery (1969, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1987, 1988)
  - o Lovett's adaptation of Direct Instruction (1994)
  - o Lovett's adaptation of the Benchmark Word Identification program (1994)
  - o The Lippincott Basic Reading program (1963, 1981)
  - o Beck and Mitroff's New Primary Grades Reading System (1972)
  - o Orton Gillingham programs (1940, 1956, 1969, 1979, 1984)
  - o Sing, Spell, Read, and Write (1972)"
    (*Report of the Subgroups*, p. 2-105)

- "The conclusion drawn is that specific systematic phonics programs are all more effective than non-phonics programs and they do not appear to differ significantly from each other in their effectiveness although more evidence is needed to verify the reliability of effect sizes for each program." (*Report of the Subgroups*, p. 2-132)

- "Findings provided solid support for the conclusion that systematic phonics instruction makes a more significant contribution to children's growth in reading than do alternative programs providing unsystematic or no phonics instruction." (*Report of the Subgroups*, p. 2-132)

National Center for Learning Disabilities Report

Research Roundup

Early Reading Instruction:
So What Exactly am I Supposed to Do?

By Dr. Sheldon H. Horowitz
NCLD Director of Professional Services

Back in October 2004 my column introduced "CBM" (Curriculum-Based Measurement) as a way for educators to gather precise information about what their students know; record (chart) these data, and measure their learning progress over time. The good news about CBM is that by targeting and sampling performance in specific skill areas, teachers can choose instructional materials and implement teaching strategies that attack students' areas of need. Less guesswork, more purposeful instruction, better results. Sounds like a plan, right?

So let's take the next step together and ask some guiding questions:

- Once we've identified skills that are lacking, what exactly are we supposed to do?
- How do we select materials (from the thousands of choices available) that have the best likelihood of helping students learn?
- What conditions (in school and at home) are likely to enhance the acquisition and retention of newly learned skills?

The answers to these questions are your keys to success:

- Decide what your students need to learn and let this be your explicit focus of attention.
- Select appropriate materials, provide systematic and explicit instruction, and use data to monitor progress.
- Engage EVERYONE who is close to these children in opportunities to provide practice and reinforcement and support.

Let's decide, for example, that reading in pre-kindergarten and the early grades is your explicit area of focus. A good place to start might be to address the five components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel (NRP) as "necessary" (but not sufficient) to the reading process. Once you know where children are in their mastery of skills in the areas of *phonemic awareness (PA), systematic phonics (PH), fluency (F), vocabulary (V), and text comprehension (C)*, you can begin to select materials and instructional approaches that will assist you in helping students develop competencies in these essential areas.

Here are a few research-based strategies and approaches to teaching reading that have been mentioned in the professional literature. They are offered as possible options as you search for products and programs to assist you in achieving your goals with students in your classrooms. These products are not endorsed or recommended by NCLD. That's your decision to make based on your individual classroom needs. And be sure to reach out to others including:

- Professionals in your local school community (i.e. reading specialists, psychologists, special educators, speech -language pathologists, school administrators and counselors).
- Experts who have published studies or presented at conferences. (They are often available by e-mail with contact information found on the Web.)
- Educational publisher representatives. (They are usually eager to provide information and technical assistance about their products.)

National Center for Learning Disabilities Report (cont.)

Program or Strategy	NRP Components					For More Information
	PA	PH	F	V	C	
Earobics	✔					http://www.earobics.com
Fundations		✔	✔	✔		http://www.fundations.com
Great Leaps			✔	✔		http://www.greatleaps.com
Language!	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	http://www.language-usa.net
Let's Play Learn	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	http:www.winsorlearning.com/winsorshop/10Expand.asp?ProductCode=sslpl_kk
LIPS: The Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program	✔	✔				http://www.agsnet.com/Group.asp?nMarketInfoID=42&nCategoryInfoID=2659&nGroupInfoID=a11420
Open Court	✔	✔			✔	http://www.sraonline.com/index.php/home/curriculumsolutions/reading/ocr/622
Orton - Gillingham Institute for Multi-Sensory Education	✔	✔				http://www.orton-gillingham.com
Project Read		✔			✔	http://www.projectread.com
Reading Recovery			✔	✔	✔	http://www.readingrecovery.org
Read, Write & Type!			✔	✔	✔	http://www.readwritetype.com
Reading Mastery Plus	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	http://www.sraonline.com/index.php/home/curriculumsolutions/di/rmplus/101
REWARDS		✔	✔			http://www.rewardsreading.com
The Slingerland Approach		✔	✔			http://www.slingerland.org
The Sonday System	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	http://www.sondaysystem.com/products/ss1.shtml
The Spaulding Method		✔	✔		✔	http://www.spalding.org
Voyager Passport	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	http://www.voyagerlearning.com/passport/index.jsp
The Wilson Reading System	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	http://www.wilsonlanguage.com/w_wrs.htm

Other helpful resources:
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Henry, Marcia K. (2003). Unlocking Literacy: Effective Decoding & Spelling Instruction. Paul H. Brookes Publishing. Baltimore, MD.
Moats, Louisa Cook, (2000). Speech to Print: Language Essential for Teachers. Paul H. Brookes Publishing. Baltimore, MD.
Shaywitz, Sally. (2003). Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level. Alfred A. Knopf. New York, NY.
Wood, Tracey. (2004). Teaching Kids to Read for Dummies. Wiley Publishing. New York, NY.

International Dyslexia Association Report

Matrix of Multisensory Structured Language Programs
The document is available at the following internet address:
http://www.interdys.org/InsInt.htm