

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

5-3-2004

What is the effectiveness of the SRA Direct Guided Reading in promoting phonological awareness skills

Linda A. Ewing
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Disability and Equity in Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ewing, Linda A., "What is the effectiveness of the SRA Direct Guided Reading in promoting phonological awareness skills" (2004). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1144.
<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/1144>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact graduateresearch@rowan.edu.

WHAT IS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SRA DIRECT GUIDED READING IN
PROMOTING PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS SKILLS

by
Linda A. Ewing

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Masters of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
Spring 2004

Approved by
Professor

Date Approved May 3, 2004

© 2004 Linda A. Ewing

ABSTRACT

Linda A. Ewing

WHAT IS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SRA DIRECT GUIDED READING IN PROMOTING PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS SKILLS

2003-2004

Dr. Stanley Urban

Masters in Learning Disabilities

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the SRA Direct Guided Reading program in promoting phonological awareness skills in multiply disabled Kindergarten and first grade students. The effectiveness of this program was measured by a pre-assessment test from the SRA program and Mastery Tests spaced throughout the program.

The subjects for this study consisted of seven students from a diverse social and economic background all placed in the same multiply disabled classroom, because they were so severely disabled that this placement was considered the least restrictive environment. The teacher was experienced in the use of this program and provided SRA direct guided reading to the subjects in individual and small group instruction of no more than two children.

The results of this study indicate positive gains in all the subjects, as indicated by assessment tests throughout the program. The progress of each student is shown in the bar graphs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express her appreciation to the following people for their support in the completion of this thesis. First, I want to thank Dr. Stanley Urban for his guidance, time, encouragement and willingness to assist me in completion of this project. Next, I want to thank my students, who have worked hard for me during this study. Lastly, I want to thank my loving family for their continued encouragement, understanding and support of me over the past 5 years while pursuing my Masters of Arts Degree and the completion of this thesis. Without your encouragement and support I could not have done it.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Chapter	
1- Statement of Problem.....	1
Background.....	1
Theory.....	3
Need and Purpose for the Study.....	3
Value of the Study.....	3
Research question.....	4
Limitations.....	4
Definition of terms	4
2- Review of Current Literature	6
Introduction	6
Phonemic Awareness.....	6
The “Great Reading Wars” Whole Language verses Phonemic Awareness	11
Instruction Methods for Teaching Children with Disabilities and Those at Risk for Reading Failure.....	15
Effectiveness of Direct Instruction (SRA Reading Mastery) Compared to Other Reading Programs and Their Effectiveness	17
The Benefits of the SRA Direct Guided Reading Program for Special Needs Children	22
Summary.....	22

3- Design of the Study.....	24
Sample	24
Instrumentation	25
Collection and Analysis of Data	26
Research and Analysis of Data	26
4- Analysis and Interpretation of Data	27
Analysis of the Data	27
Graph Student 1	30
Graph Student 2	31
Graph Student 3	32
Graph Student 4	33
Graph Student 5	34
Graph Student 6	35
Graph Student 7	36
Graph of Overall Progress	37
5- Summary, Conclusions, and Discussion	38
Summary	38
Conclusions	38
Discussion	39
Comments	39
References	40

Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem

Background

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is educational reform legislation designed to improve student achievement. President Bush described this law as the cornerstone of his administration's education policy. Bush stated that, "Too many of our neediest children are being left behind" (Retrieved November 4, 2003 [http://www.ed.gov./ print/nclb/overview/intro/index.html](http://www.ed.gov./print/nclb/overview/intro/index.html), para. 1).

Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), because of the passage of No Child Left Behind. This act effects students in Kindergarten through high school. It is an effort to support education in both elementary and secondary education.

The NCLB Act targets resources in the early childhood years in order to prevent learning problems as the child gets older. For example, if a child understands the pre-reading skill of moving from left to right when reading, they will be more likely to succeed in later years. According to Snow, Burns, and Griffin, (1998), many of the reading problems adults and adolescents encounter are the result of problems that could have been remediated in the early childhood years ([http://www.ed.gov./ print/nclb/overview/intro/index.html](http://www.ed.gov./print/nclb/overview/intro/index.html)).

This act keeps parents informed of their child's progress regardless of their background. The NCLB Act requires the state to develop plans for teachers to be

highly qualified by the end of 2005-06. Also, the NCLB Act focuses on implementing educational programs that have been proven effective through research. Through annual tests, teachers are able to create lessons to make sure students meet the core standards. Local school districts are receiving more federal funding for programs under the NCLB Act. This helps improve education for disadvantaged students.

The Department of Education has created publications to help educate parents about the provisions provided for their child by law under this act. Education Reform Subcommittee Chairman Michael Castle (R-DE) called states “laboratories of education innovation. No Child Left Behind gives them the freedom and flexibility they need to implement innovative education reform plans that have been proven successful in improving student achievement” (Boehner, 2002, para. 12). He further concluded that it is up to “parents, teachers, school officials, business leaders and lawmakers to work together at all levels to ensure that no child is left behind.”

Snow, Burns, & Griffin (as cited in Foorman & Torgesen) stated that basic research on reading growth over the past 20 years shows that, “Instruction that builds phonemic awareness and phonemic decoding skills, fluency in word recognition and text processing, construction of meaning, vocabulary, spelling and writing skills is generally more effective than instruction that does not contain these components.”

There are many reading programs that effectively use phonemic decoding skills to successfully teach reading skills. SRA is one such program that has produced a Reading Mastery Program of direct guided reading at different levels of abilities, where teachers read scripted texts that elicit explicit, comprehensive phonemic awareness

skills at a slow pace as to ensure success in children with disabilities or at risk for reading.

Theory

The fundamental theory is that an effective phonemic awareness program, such as SRA Reading Mastery, direct guided reading, will provide a solid foundation for children at risk for reading to be successful. In this program progress is insured because children move at a slow pace that gives individual or small-group attention as to guarantee success.

Need and Purpose of the Study

There has been much controversy between the “whole word” or “whole language” approach verses the phonemic awareness approach. Even though children are able to learn through both methods, the effectiveness of a phonemic awareness program has been established by research to be a more effective way to teach reading skills to students having difficulty with reading and comprehension (Sensenbaugh, 1996).

The purpose of this study is to provide information on the effectiveness of the SRA reading Mastery program on the phonemic awareness skills of a group of multiply disabled children enrolled in a self-contained classroom in a public separate day school.

Value of the Study

This study will evaluate the effectiveness of the SRA Reading Mastery program in improving the phonemic awareness of the special education first grade at Bankbridge

Elementary School. The results will indicate the effectiveness of this program for these special needs students with multiple disabilities.

Research Question

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, the data obtained will be used to address the research question:

What is the effectiveness of the SRA Reading Mastery Program of directed guided reading, in promoting phonological awareness skills as measured by Mastery Tests and assessment tests throughout the program?

Limitations

The following limitations restrict the generalizability of this study. The subjects were not selected randomly, but represent a convenience group and may not be a true representation of the majority of children learning to read through phonemic awareness. The overall ability levels of the children are low and generalizing results to children of higher ability should be done cautiously. One student has had one year of direct guided reading, one has had six months of prior directed guided reading and four have just begun this program at the beginning of this year.

Definition of terms

The following terms have specific meaning within the context of this study:

Phonemic awareness- It refers to an awareness of words that consist of syllables that are made up of “onsets and rimes” and phonemes. It means to become aware of different aspects of the spoken language such as timing, intonation, and syllables and focuses on smaller units of sound (Sensenbaugh, 1996).

Explicit instruction- This refers to clear and simple ways of delivering instruction to students (Retrieved November 2, 2003 from <http://www.auburn.edu/~murraba/sra.html>).

Direct guided reading –The teacher uses scripted text to deliver instruction to the students (Retrieved September 3, 2003 from <http://www.ifs.org/SRA%20Mastery.htm>).

“Whole language”- This is where the children are immersed in a print-rich environment to help promote reading. It incorporates language and literature rich activities enhancing meaning and understanding of language (Sensenbaugh, 1996).

Chapter 2

Review of Current Literature

Introduction

Researchers have debated the meaning of phonemic awareness and how it is to be measured. Many different phonemic awareness programs have been developed to help teach children to read. This paper will address the effectiveness of the SRA direct guided reading in promoting phonological awareness skills in children with disabilities. To fully understand the effectiveness of this program this chapter will address:

- * The Meaning of Phonemic Awareness
- *The “Great Reading Wars;” Whole Language verses Phonemic Awareness
- *Instructional Methods for Teaching Children with Disabilities and Those at Risk

for Reading Failure

- * Effectiveness of Direct Instruction (SRA Reading Mastery) Compared to Other Reading Programs and Their Effectiveness

- *The Benefits of the SRA Direct Guided Reading Program for Special Needs

Children

Phonemic Awareness

Even without any direct instruction, most children will have the ability to understand spoken language. However, they do not understand that language is made up of discrete words, with syllables. These syllables are made up of the smallest units of sound called “phonemes.” Phonological or phonemic awareness as defined by Stanovich, is the

ability to deal explicitly and segmentally with sound units smaller than the syllable (cited in Sensenbaugh, 1996). Phonological awareness sometimes calls these words consisting of syllables, onsets and rimes. The onset is the initial consonant, while the rime is the consonant and following consonants. Because of the regularity of onset-rime over individual letters, this approach is effective for teaching children with learning disabilities, dyslexics with poor phonological skills, and children who are beginning to read and spell. Children enjoy learning catchy jingles and rhymes.

Phonemic awareness is important because it is the best predictor of the ease of early reading. Over 180 research studies showed that phonics was the best way to teach children how to read. Stanovich stated that phonological awareness is based on spelling sound correspondences. Those who advocate for phonemic awareness need to admit that just teaching letter sounds is of no meaning if the children don't understand that individual letter sounds paired together make words. According to authors Goswami and Bryant, phonemic awareness is the awareness of individual phonemes, and phonological awareness that includes rhyme and syllables. Beginning readers need to first understand that words are sounds. This awareness is a sequence of development going from simple to concrete (as cited in Hempenstall, 2002).

There appears to be a chronological sequence of phonological awareness, beginning with the recognition of words, then to words that share endings called rhyme. Children learn that words have similar end-sounds known as rhyming. Next, there is awareness that words can be broken into syllables, which leads to sub-syllabic units called onset and rime. Finally, there is an awareness of individual phonemes.

In learning to read, the children need to learn individual sounds in phonemic awareness. This is what language is about. For example, “kuh” is the sound for “c”. In phonics, which is letter-sound relationships, “kuh—aah—tuh” means “cat”. When meaning is added to the written word in reading and being read to, “kuh—aah—tuh” sounds “cat”, but know has meaning of, “a furry mammal that purrs” (<http://www.child-reading-tips.com/phonics1.html>). When children finally become aware that sounds can be manipulated they are developing phonemic awareness. This will help them to manipulate the sounds that eventually make words.

The International Reading Association has researched issues in phonemic awareness and has tried to clarify some of them. As part of a literacy program in the school setting, teachers can provide an environment that uses the spoken word through the use of nursery rhymes, riddles, songs, poems and reads-aloud books. The Association has concerns that some of the research findings about phonemic awareness will be misunderstood. They suggest the balanced approach to reading that consists of comprehension and enjoyment as discrete language skills (<http://www.reading.org/positions/phonemic.html>).

Spector (1995), made some recommendations to teachers for instruction of phonemic awareness. At the preschool level, children learn sounds in words known as rhyming and alliteration games. Another recommendation is to teach students to segment and blend. Then combine these two with letter-sound relationships with blending and segmentation, sequence examples. Next transfer these to novel tasks and contexts. Another author, Yopp, (1992), also offered the following recommendations for phonemic awareness activities: make it fun, encourage the children to interact with

each other and allow them to experiment with language (as cited in Sensenbaugh, 1996).

According to The National Reading Panel Report, the phonemic awareness training that they found to be most effective for preschool and kindergarten age children is five to 18 hours of small group instruction with one or two tasks of manipulating phonemes with letters. The panel further found that research-based practices such as shared reading of books that use sounds invented spelling writing and teaching onsets, does not help children learn phonemic awareness. According to James A. Cunningham, “One view holds that phonemic awareness is pre-requisite to learning phonics well; the other view holds that phonemic awareness is taught when combined with systematic phonics instruction” (<http://www.learnnc.org/index.nsf/doc/NRP0403-2?OpenDocument>).

Members of The National Reading Panel hold to the first view when encouraging teaching systematic phonemic awareness in preschool and kindergarten and the second view when phonemic awareness is done with letters. Cunningham viewed that a better approach would have been to admit to the two views, and taking one side or the other would be premature.

The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) researched instructional practices to develop phonemic awareness and alphabetic knowledge in young children. Investigations included contextual child-constructed experiences to scripted teacher-directed instruction. Contextualizing instruction means implementing clearly planned phonological awareness and alphabetic skill and strategy instruction. This research study examined contextual instruction and compared its effectiveness to a field-tested program of metalinguistic games.

The elementary school selected for this study was predominantly a white, middle class population. Eighty-seven children were studied from four half-day kindergarten sessions. The children were divided into two instructional groups of about four to five, according to similar abilities. They met outside the classroom with an experienced literacy teacher for 20 minutes, four times a week, for 16 weeks.

Tests that were used consisted of: Snider's Test of Phonemic Awareness (1997), Hearing Sounds in Words (Clay, 1993), Developmental Spelling Test (Tangel & Blachman, 1992), Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised Word Attack subtest (1987), Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised Word identification subtest, Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised Passage Comprehension sub-test, and a word reading development measure based on Ehri's (1995) four phases of word learning (as cited in Craig, 2003).

Pre- and posttest data was taken to analyze phonological awareness, spelling, and reading measures. The children were also evaluated for a literacy level. Children's real word and pseudoword reading measures were combined to analyze word reading development.

Analysis of the two groups showed that the interactive writing plus group, matched or exceeded the group of children's performance on the metalinguistic games-plus group. There were no differences between the two groups in regards to phonological awareness. In the results of the three reading measures, an advantage was shown for the interactive writing plus group. There were significant differences between the two groups on word identification, passage comprehension, and word reading development.

The test suggests that the contextual approach allows teachers to advance students to new levels of competence in phonological awareness, spelling, and reading. Writing instruction encouraging segmentation and invented spelling helped with the development of phonological awareness and alphabetic knowledge required for early reading. The results showed evidence that interactive writing did enhance the children's word reading and comprehension. Suggestions for future research to be done in several different directions from this study were noted.

Some readers don't have phonemic awareness. No one knows why. Studies on dyslexic children reveal that their brains process things differently, but compare this to the old saying, which came first, the chicken or the egg? Compare this to phonemic awareness. Did the dyslexic not develop phonemic awareness because their brain works differently or did their brain develop differently because they weren't able to pay attention to the sounds of language (<http://www.reading-comprehension-expert.com/phonemic-awareness.html>)? There are other factors as to why people are not able to learn phonemic awareness. Hearing problems or those people with many ear infections and colds have difficulty with phonemes in language.

The "Great Reading Wars" Whole Language verses Phonemic Awareness

According to statistics only 80% of our nations schools do not use the phonics approach for reading instruction. A whole word approach is used where the child will see the word and then say it, or a combination of phonics and whole word is being used in classrooms. Even though the whole word method is successful in teaching reading, it is not the best or most efficient way to learn how to read. It is a method that uses memorizing of words and incorporates guessing. The English language is made up of

44 different sound units, but there are about 1 million words. Our language is made up of phonetic sounds which is much different from that of the Japanese and Chinese languages, which use pictures. This shows that it is more effective to learn 44 sounds, rather than trying to memorize hundreds of thousands of words when learning to read.

When children learn to talk they imitate sounds. Our brains are programmed to learn language in this way. Phonics is therefore, the most effective way to learn to read because this is the way children learn to talk. According to studies done by the National Institute of Health, there are three aspects of reading: (1) identifying letters, (2) identifying sounds associated with letters, and (3) reaching for the meaning of the written word. This is accomplished in different parts of the brain (<http://www.child-reading-tips.com/phonics1.html>).

The subject of phonics verses the whole word method is still a controversial subject. In today's schools about 80% still use the whole word method. Even though research in education and the medical field show that phonics is the only way to teach individuals with learning disabilities how to read and the best way to teach anyone to read, school districts still use the whole word method.

The California school district had started the "whole language" approach in teaching reading in 1989. At that time Gayle Cloud's twin boys were in first grade and were being taught with the "whole language" approach. They were given a few tools, but were not taught sounds, word families or rules of phonics. Results from that school district revealed that spelling skills dropped, homework was returned with many errors, reading scores in the first grade dropped 7 per cent that year, and have been falling ever since (Hancock and Wingert, 2003).

Mrs. Cloud took a stand against the “whole language” approach and started a movement to get phonics back into the schools. Because of low testing scores in reading, many states are returning to the phonics approach to learn to read. GOP presidential candidate Bob Dole voted for phonics to be used in teaching reading, because of the “disastrous results” of using the “whole language” method in California. California recently passed the “ABC” bill to include texts including lessons in spelling and alphabet sounds.

Up until the late 1930’s, phonics was being used to teach reading, until Scott Foresman published the “Dick and Jane” series of books. These books taught children to learn simple words to learn to read (Hancock and Wingert, 2003). Whole language advocates still believe that by immersing a child in real books is the best way to learn reading. Their theory is that the children learn what the words mean by their use in context and are encouraged to skip words they don’t know. So, the goal is understanding what is being read, verses word-by-word accuracy.

The “whole language” advocates need to admit that not all children learn through reading books. Some children need the direct instruction in phonological awareness. Those who advocate “phonic first,” need to admit that only teaching letter sounds if students aren’t familiar with individual letters and that when these letters come together they make up words. Honig (1996) expresses his opinion that many educators already implement the balanced approach to reading, integrating whole language principles with foundation reading skills (as cited in Sensenbaugh, 1996). That is an approach combining language- and literature-rich activities associated with whole language activities.

According to Professor Kenneth Goodman, from the University of Arizona, decoding skills should be taught as one of many strategies. Reading methods are still a controversial issue in the educational field. “Goodman believes that whole language has become just another easy target for right-wingers intent on narrowing the scope of public education. There is more to schooling than reading, he says, and more to reading than phonics” (Hancock and Wingert, 2003).

In a study done by Griffith et al. (1992), children who had high phonemic awareness outperformed those who did not have good phonemic awareness on all literacy measures. It didn’t matter if they were taught using a “whole language” approach or basal instruction (as cited by Sensenbaugh, 1996).

Another educator, former California school superintendent Bill Honig says, “There is strong evidence that a lot of kids just aren’t getting it with whole language.” Dr. Frank Vellutino, director of the child-research center at SUNNY-Albany says, “The brain has no inherent knowledge of the alphabet. It has to be taught” (Hancock and Wingert, 2003).

“Research suggests that different children may need different amounts and forms of phonemic awareness instruction and experiences. The research findings related to phonemic awareness suggest that although it might be necessary it is certainly not sufficient for producing good readers. One thing is certain: We can not give so much attention to phonemic awareness instruction that other important aspects of a balanced literacy curriculum are left out or abandoned” (<http://www.reading-comprehension-expert.com/phonemic-awareness.html>).

Research findings support the conclusion that the most successful schools are those that compromise, using a combination of phonics and “whole language.” One school in New York, after realizing that whole language was not enough by itself, decided to develop a system incorporating both phonics and “whole language.” They saw an improvement in reading skills in just two years and found that fewer children needed remedial reading.

Instructional Methods for Teaching Children with Disabilities and Those at Risk for Reading Failure

The primary difference between instruction for children without disabilities and those at risk for reading difficulties is in the way that instruction is provided. Instruction for children with difficulties in reading need more explicit and comprehensive, and more intensive and supportive, than those without reading difficulties. With children who are at risk in reading, there involves a disparity between the child’s characteristics and the instruction that is provided. “Failure in reading” is defined as the performance of a child in the lowest quartile on a nationally standardized reading test. The reading skills of children who perform below the basic level are poor and interfere with the child’s ability to read at grade level. According to Torgesen, there are many children that enter school with weaknesses in reading that will require instruction that cannot be met by a regular teacher (Foorman and Torgesen, 2000).

One instructional method of teaching children with disabilities is with explicit instruction. Research that was evidence-based showed that by using explicit instruction in teaching reading there was a dramatic reduction in reading failure by focusing on phonemic awareness, phonemic decoding skills, fluency in word recognition and text

processing, meaning, vocabulary, spelling, and writing. Even more intensive explicit instruction in small-group or one-on-one basis is needed for children with disabilities or those at risk for reading. By using this explicit method of instruction literacy needs of all students can be met.

Recent intervention research has shown evidence that children at risk for reading failure learn better with phonemically explicit interventions than those that not. Phonemically explicit means direct, systematic, and comprehensive instruction in building phonemic awareness and decoding skills in children.

Another form of instruction is that it needs to be more intensive. That means that more skills and knowledge must be taught directly. These students need more repetition. They also need individual or small-group instruction. Findings of Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes & Moody (1999), found that “Meta-analysis consistently show positive effects of grouping practices that increase instructional intensity” (as cited in Foorman and Torgesen, 1999, p.208).

Supportive instruction is also necessary for at risk students. Instruction must be supportive both emotionally and cognitively. This is given with encouragement, feedback, and positive reinforcement. The need for more cognitive support for at risk students is called “scaffolded” instruction. This instruction involves interactions between student and teacher that supports the child in accomplishing a task that was not able to be done without direct assistance. There are two types of scaffolding. One involves sequencing, building skills gradually. The second involves dialogue that prompts the child to think, process, and other needs that are required to complete the

task. This helps the child to discover the information without being directly told the solution. (Foorman and Torgesen, 1999, p. 209).

In conclusion, research shows again and again that instructions for teaching students with disabilities and those at risk for reading need to be explicit, comprehensive, intensive, and supportive.

Effectiveness of Direct Instruction (SRA Reading Mastery) Compared to Other Reading Programs and Their Effectiveness

Reading Mastery is designed to help students at risk in reading to learn to read. It was originally called DISTAR. The curriculum material and instructional sequence is written in a manner that attempts to get students to mastery at the fastest pace possible. Basic decoding and comprehension skills are taught. Beginning readers are taught through intensive, explicit phonics instruction that helps them to master letter sounds, sounding out words, and then immediately use these words as they read the stories. The Corrective Reading program remediates errors immediately. Level I uses four basic steps.

- * To establish a strong base for decoding skills, segmentation and blending of sounds are taught.
- * A special alphabet is taught and sequencing helps to reduce confusion between letters.
- * Stories that are decodable develop fluency and confidence.
- * Through the use of literal comprehension skills, a foundation for understanding is built (<http://www.cedu.niu.edu/pride/web7.htm>).

Through this program, at risk students are able to become independent readers. They gain confidence in reading, with the pacing of stories as they gradually increase in length and difficulty.

Each program has four levels. They all work to instruct in decoding and comprehension skills. Placement tests are provided so the student begins at their level of instruction. This direct guided reading program provides scripted lessons for the teacher to reach students having trouble learning reading skills. This cumulative program allows students to build on what they have learned. They then apply these skills to new contexts. There are spaced assessments to help adjust pacing, allowing the teacher to go back and review skills not mastered. It provides immediate feedback, and reinforcement.

Reading Mastery is usually initiated in the first grade; however it has been used at the Kindergarten age. This program introduces consonants as well as vowels. New letter sounds or words are introduced at approximately 2 per week. Vowels are introduced more slowly. Reading Mastery teaches letter sounds and symbols that go into explicit instruction on blending sounds into words. Blending sounds are taught thoroughly. This is done by sliding the finger under the line with an arrow from a left to right progression. The sound is sustained as long as the teacher's finger is under it.

The phoneme symbol /a/ is not typed as /a/, but rather /a/, as to allow the student to write in invented spelling. This letter is then discriminated from other pictures of a tree, dog, etc. They are also learning to combine words into compounds, e.g., peanut and butter is pronounced peanutbutter. They write letters with dotted lines and learn to cross out letter sounds. The first actual word is not introduced until Lesson 28. This is

approximately one month after the onset of the program. This is necessary to establish the groundwork needed for success. There is no application to reading in the entire first book which has 56 lessons. After Lesson 56, words are introduced which are then put into sentences using the guided line in the left-right progression. However, beginning sentences are not capitalized until later. This was a concern for me in the beginning, but having used this program with older children, they just flowed right into using capitals when it was introduced (<http://www.auburn.edu/~murraba/sra.html>).

The Remediation Plus System is based on phonemic awareness training, multisensory systematic language, and Orton-Gillingham methodology. This program is a complete curriculum. Therefore teaching quality and efficiency is guaranteed. The tests are the Orton tests. Others include IOTA for reading, Criterion Referenced Spelling Tests, and Phoneme Charts. After testing, students are placed at appropriate concepts within the lesson plans. There is no preparation at all in this program. Success for students and teachers are guaranteed.

This is an intensive program geared to students who are no longer able to cope in the school system. If the child has not grasped a concept they go back and learn it in a multisensory way. This is an intense remediation program costing \$2400/month for individual 1:1 basis at 3 hours a day. Each part of the program is a separate expense. There are tests for Individual treatment, Academic therapy, Multisensory grammar, and Early Language Programme for ages 4-5 years. (<http://www.remediationplus.com/>).

The Lindamood Phonemic Sequencing Program (formerly called the ADD Program, Auditory Discrimination in Depth) is another program that used phonemic awareness. Students are taught to become aware of mouth movements that produce speech sounds.

This becomes the way that the student verifies sounds within words. It allows the student to become self-correcting in reading, spelling, and speech. The students quickly make gains in decoding ability. It is not uncommon for a student to gain several grade levels in decoding in about a 4 to 6 week period of intensive training. They also make successful gains in speech.

One problem identified with reading disorders is incompletely developed auditory conceptual function. This is a treatable problem. The results are significant improvement in reading and spelling for dyslexics, and for students who have less severe reading and spelling problems. The primary cause of these problems is neurophysiological. Problems in adding, omitting, substituting and reversing sounds and letters in reading and spelling are known as secondary symptoms. People who cannot understand the sequence of phonemics i.e., they spell “gril” for “girl.” They cannot match what they say with what they hear.

According to the Lindamood Program, the solution is in conscious input to the brain from feeling. That means the action of the tongue, lips, and mouth to produce speech sounds. “A ten-year longitudinal study shows that stimulation in the primary grades results in a wave of higher literacy development, which is reflected annually in language arts test scores in the eightieth percentile range from kindergarten into high school” (<http://www.lindamoodbell.com/phonemicawareness.html>).

Reading by Ear is a method of learning to read by listening. In this program children gain awareness of sounds and then attach them to corresponding written symbols.

When children are able to separate sounds they form the skills necessary for decoding, which is reading, and encoding, which is writing.

Music is a big part of the program. It uses multisensory techniques through the use of color, music, movement and oral motor awareness. An example of how the program works is through phonemes. The child hears a sound of a phoneme and then a musical track is played using that phoneme in a rap or rhyme. In oral motor awareness, they repeat the song by looking into mirrors and observe how their mouths look and feel as they sing the song or rap. Then the song is sung with the artist on the CD. Rhyming, alliteration, segmenting and blending are skills used with this program. Then the child is shown the symbol and taught to write it. Movement is also used to re-create the story through gestures and mimes. This leads to retelling a story in sequence which is an important part of reading comprehension. Just as a child has learned to sing about the phoneme rap, and is able to find the tune on the piano by ear because it is familiar, when a child knows the story, has sung it, moved to it, and investigated it through movement, is ready to read it. "Reading by Ear," begins with phonemics, then progresses to phonics, writing and ends with reading (<http://readingbyear.com/TheBigPicture.htm>).

Orton-Gillingham reading techniques are taught within special education classes. It is an intensive, sequential phonic-based system. This program teaches basic word formation before whole meanings. It uses three learning models—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. "The International Dyslexia Association (formerly The Orton Dyslexia Society) is an international organization that focuses on the issues associated with dyslexia" (<http://www.jwor.com/orton.htm>). This curriculum is based on eight essential instructional elements needed to teach dyslexic students. These instructional elements are multisensory, alphabetic/phonetic, synthetic/analytic, structured, sequenced,

cumulative, repetitive, and cognitive. It is a language-based approach oriented with auditory, visual, and kinesthetic elements.

First students learn sounds in isolation. Then these sounds are blended into syllables and words. They then advance to syllable types, blendings, and diphthongs. As new skills are learned, old skills are reviewed. The students learn to apply language knowledge to help learning to read and write. In every lesson there is a high degree of success.

The Benefits of the SRA Direct Guided Reading Program for Special Needs Children

Explanations used in the SRA Direct Guided Reading program are very clear and simple. It is explicit and extremely slow paced, which is essential in helping special needs children with reading skills. Children are grouped according to their level of ability. This program is beneficial because it is an intense, reading program with constant student interaction. The group does not move to the next lesson until everyone in the group understands the material. Direct instruction is effective because it uses a systematic, phonics-based approach. "It is one of only three methods that the AASA and NEA describe as showing clear evidence of producing higher student achievement, and it is one of only two that are applicable in primary school (K-8), where reading instruction is generally assumed to take place" (<http://www.projectpro.com/ICR/Research/FI/Summary.htm>).

Summary

Phonemic awareness is important because it is the best predictor of the acquisition of early reading skills. Research studies show that phonics was the best way to teach children how to read. According to the National Reading report phonemic awareness

training is beneficial for teaching reading in small groups with one or two tasks of manipulating phonics with letters. Benefits of the Direct Guided Reading program are that it is explicit, comprehensive and supporting, slow-paced, clear and simple. It is especially good for students with disabilities because it can be taught in small-group or one-to-one according to their ability level. Through direct instruction students at risk for reading are able to become independent readers.

The subject of phonics verses the whole language method is still a controversial subject. Even though research shows phonics to be the best way to teach reading, school districts are still using the whole word approach.

The Remediation Plus System is an intensive multisensory reading program based on phonemic awareness. However, this program is very expensive. The Lindamood Phonemic Sequencing Program also uses phonemic awareness, but it stresses more speech. It centers on speech sounds and movements of the mouth. "Reading By Ear" uses music to teach phonemes and sequencing skills that progress to writing and reading. Orton-Gillingham is also an intensive sequential phonic based system that is geared toward dyslexic students.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

Sample

The population for this study consisted of seven multiply disabled students enrolled in a self contained classroom housed in a separate day school. The subjects are six years old and are graded as kindergarten to first grade. During instructional periods they are grouped according to their abilities. Four of the children have noticeable speech communication disabilities in addition to very low pre-academic skills. The students are being taught using a phonetic approach to instruction utilizing the SRA Reading Mastery Program. Four of the students began the program for the first time this year. During the previous year to the current study, one student received instruction using the program for five months and one student received instruction using the program for one year. One of the students started in the program in December.

The subjects of this study represented a convenience group that was available to the researcher. They represented diverse social and economic backgrounds, but all are considered so severely disabled that a separate day school program was considered the least restrictive environment.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was the Placement Test of the SRA Mastery Program which is given to each student at the beginning of the year. The results of this test indicate whether a child begins with Lesson 1 or Lesson 11. In task 1, the students say letter sounds. For the second task, the teacher asks whether or not the letter is a certain sound. Task 3 identifies whether a child is able to say two words as a compound word. In task 4, students say a word slowly, then fast. Each task earns a certain number of points. Students earning less than 14 points start at Lesson 1. A student needs to earn 19 or 20 points to be able to go to part 2. In task 1, students have to identify the sound. In task 2, the students say a word slowly, then fast. Scores of 0-7 begin Lesson 11, while scores of 8-11 start the Fast Cycle I. This helps in the placement of the students within the most appropriate individual group. If a child has ended a year at a specified lesson, administration of the test sequence 20, 40, 60 and so on starting with test closest to that lesson, is advisable to determine placement for the beginning of the year.

Planning pages are presented every twenty lessons to help evaluate the progress the students have made. According to the manual 25-30 minutes of group instruction should be allowed for reading. Since the attention span of the students is short, instruction is limited to about 8 minutes each day to accommodate for their disabilities. Lessons are alternated, one day an oral lesson is presented and the next day a take home paper is reviewed. Each day instruction is given in groups of two children, giving them as much individual attention as possible.

Collection and Analysis of Data

Data for the research was collected by administering the assessment tests presented throughout the SRA program. The consecutive tests helped place the children in the groups and refines instruction to develop appropriate objectives. Lessons one through nineteen have assessment tests every seven lessons. If a student did not correctly answer any part of the test, the child does not progress until that section is reviewed and mastery was achieved. Mastery is achieved when criterion is met at the top of each test. After the twentieth lesson, assessment tests were every fifth lesson.

Assessment tests consisted of saying sounds that were presented in the previous lessons. The lessons progress very slowly for the first nineteen lessons. After that, letter sounds were added more quickly with two, and then three sounds blended together. As the lessons progress, the sounds are blended into words. At the end of the year the children's progress will be assessed as to which lesson they are on.

Research and Analysis of Data

Assessment is completed after every five lessons for each student. Progress will be described for each child at five week intervals. A graph will be constructed for each subject to display progress from initial pretest to the end of the year.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

Analysis of the Data

The purpose of this study was to determine the amount of progress each student made through the use of the SRA Reading Mastery program from the beginning of the year to the end of this study. The children were scored on their ability to make the sequenced sounds and then being able to blend them together to make words. At the beginning of the year the students were given placement tests. Two of the students started in the program last year. The rest started this year. Four of the students started from Lesson one. One started at Lesson 16 and one started at Lesson 60. The one who came in December started at Lesson twenty, but caught on quickly and was moved up to fit in with one of the other groups.

Data for this assessment was through oral and written lessons and a 2/6/2 grading system which represents oral/written/behavior. After test eight there is a Mastery Test 1. If there is more than one student in a group this test is administered individually. If more than one third of the group is weak then firming procedures as prescribed in the book are reviewed before proceeding to the next lesson. After Lesson 15 there is Mastery Test 2. Then after every five lessons there is another Mastery Test. At the end of twenty lessons a test is given. If the student passes with 80% the student continues to the next lesson. If not the material that is weak is repeated and reinforced again before moving to the next lesson.

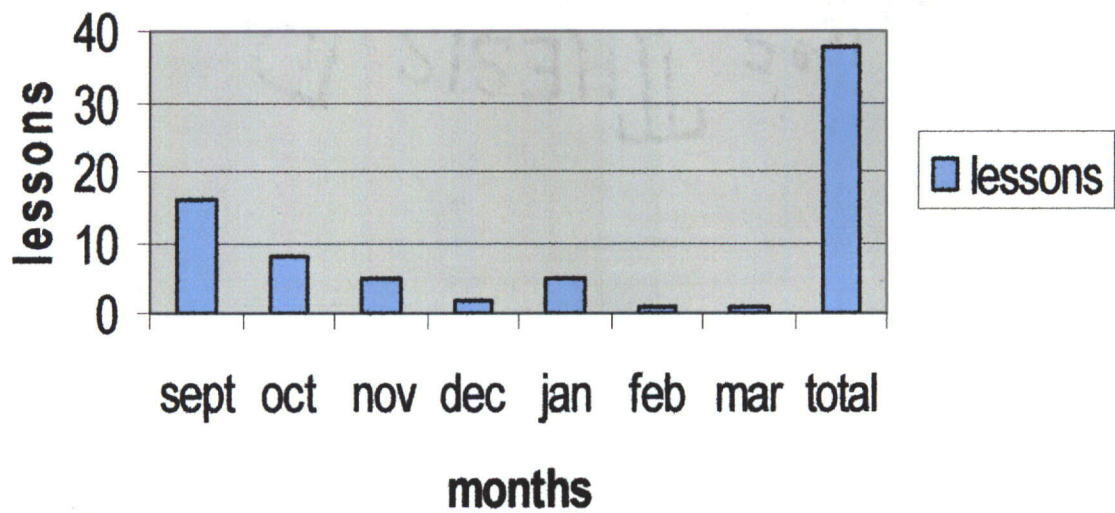
Through the use of seven tables, the data will be presented to measure the gains of each student from where they began to where they ended at the end of this study. A table will also provide information on the total percentage of gain.

All of the students showed progress through this program. The student who started at Lesson 60 is now at Lesson 98 and has just started Storybook 1. He has progressed through 38 lessons. The student who started at Lesson 16 has progressed to Lesson 42. He has progressed through 27 lessons. Due to excessive absences and behavioral issues he was placed at the same level as two of the other students. The one student that started at Lesson 1 progressed through Lesson 42. This was a progression of 42 lessons. Several lessons were skipped because he was able to master the Mastery Tests. Two of the students with Down Syndrome started at Lesson 1 and progressed through Lesson 24. They were struggling with the sounds because they had limited vocabulary. They had progressed to Lesson 30, but they did not understand that the letter had a specific sound, nor the concepts of rhyming words and blending the sounds together. So I stopped and took them individually. I reinforced the sounds by putting each sound on a card. Then I used sign language to show them the letter as I made the sound. I made the sound and they had to hand me the card with the correct sound. After three weeks, they both had mastered the a, m, s, e and r sounds. I was then able to go back and start at Lesson 20 and they were able to focus on the letter and identify the sound of the letters as pointed to them. They are now starting to put two sounds together. They progressed through 24 lessons. The student who started in December progressed from Lesson 20 to Lesson 42. He progressed through 22 lessons. The student

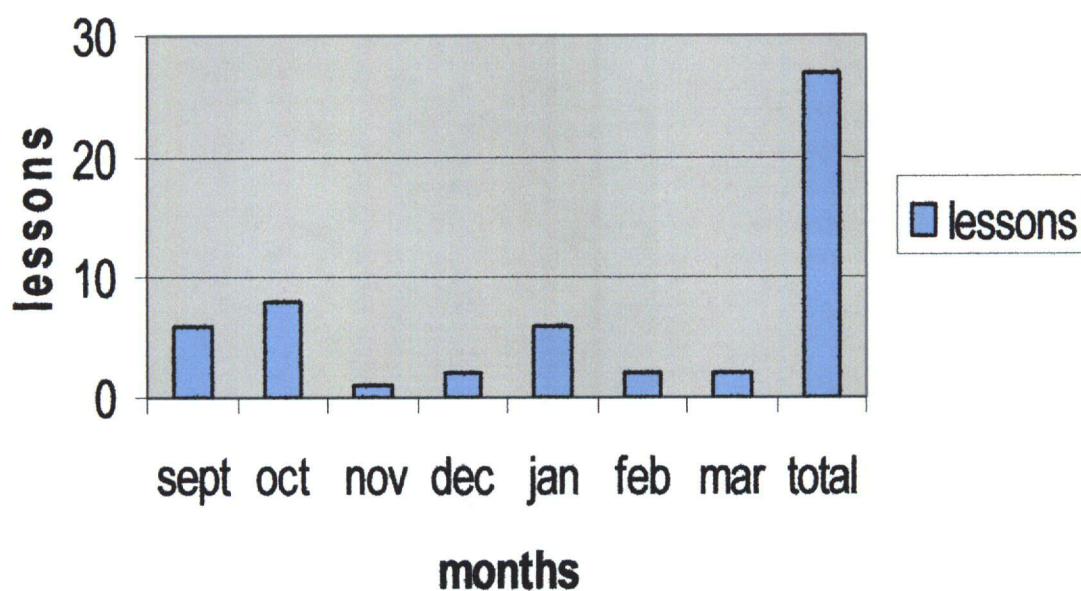
who moved to another school progressed through Lesson 35. He progressed through 35 lessons.

Progress in Reading Lessons Student

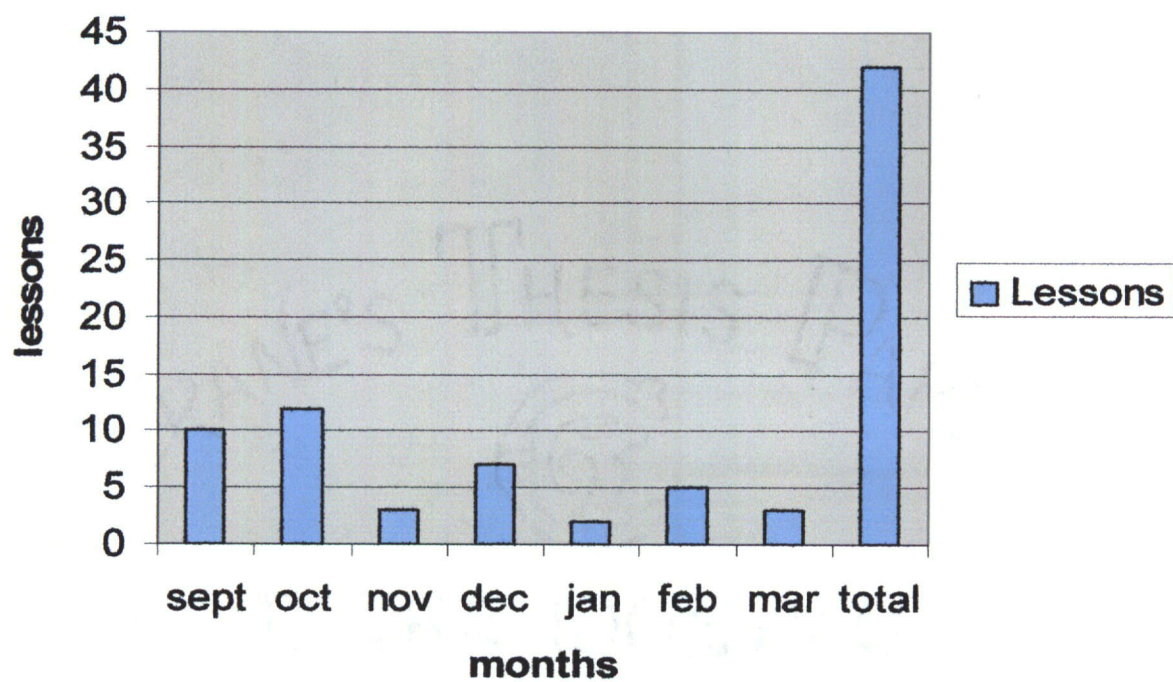
1



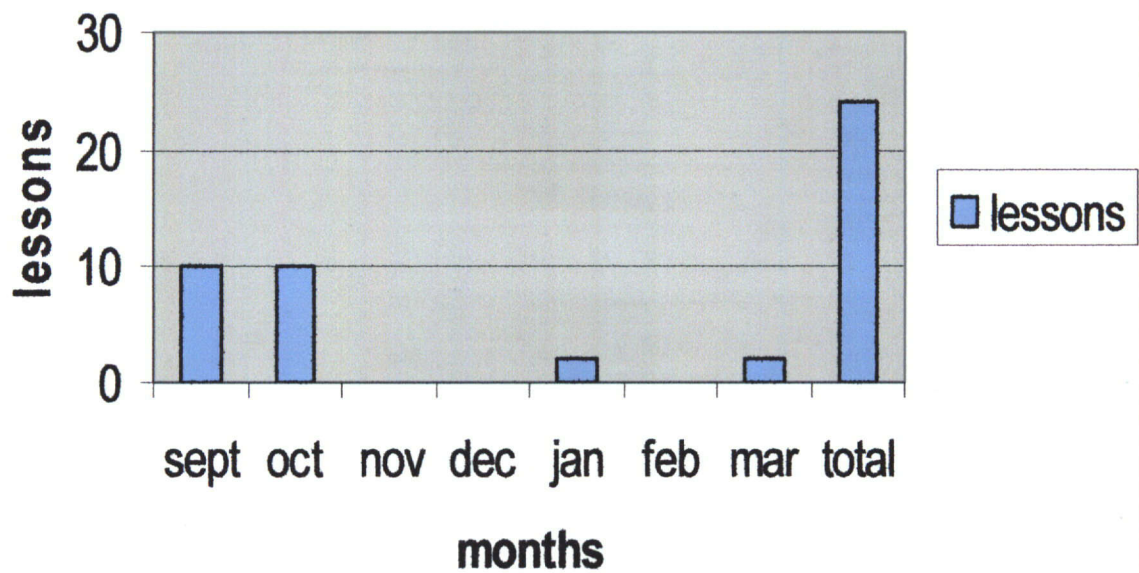
Progress in Reading Levels Student 2



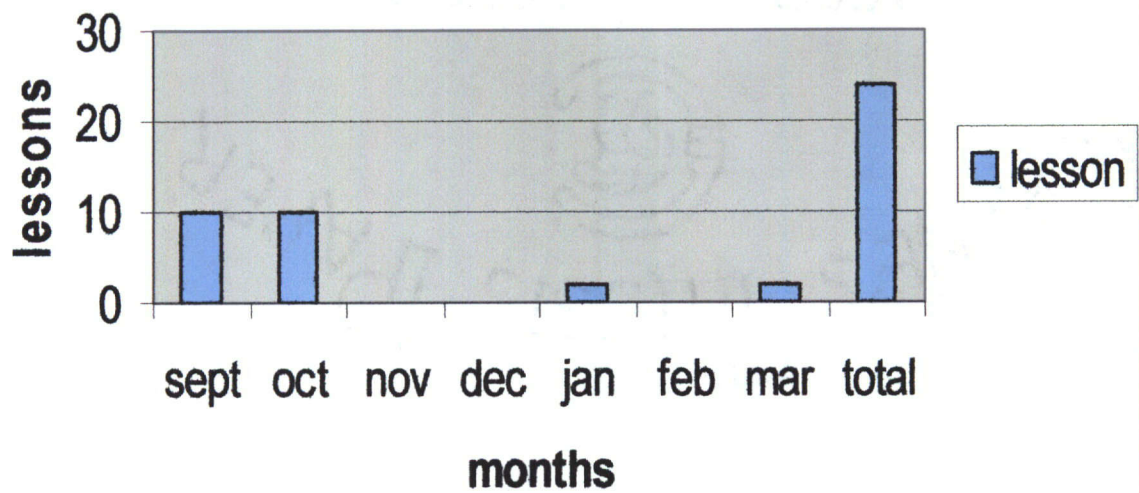
Progress in Reading Levels Student 3



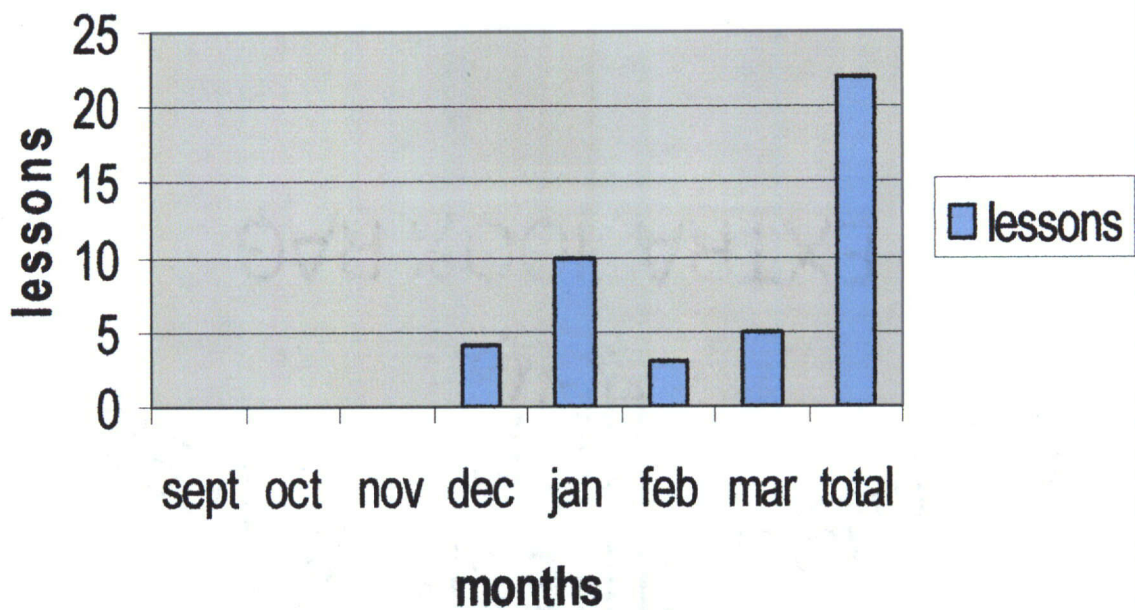
Progress in Reading Levels Student 4



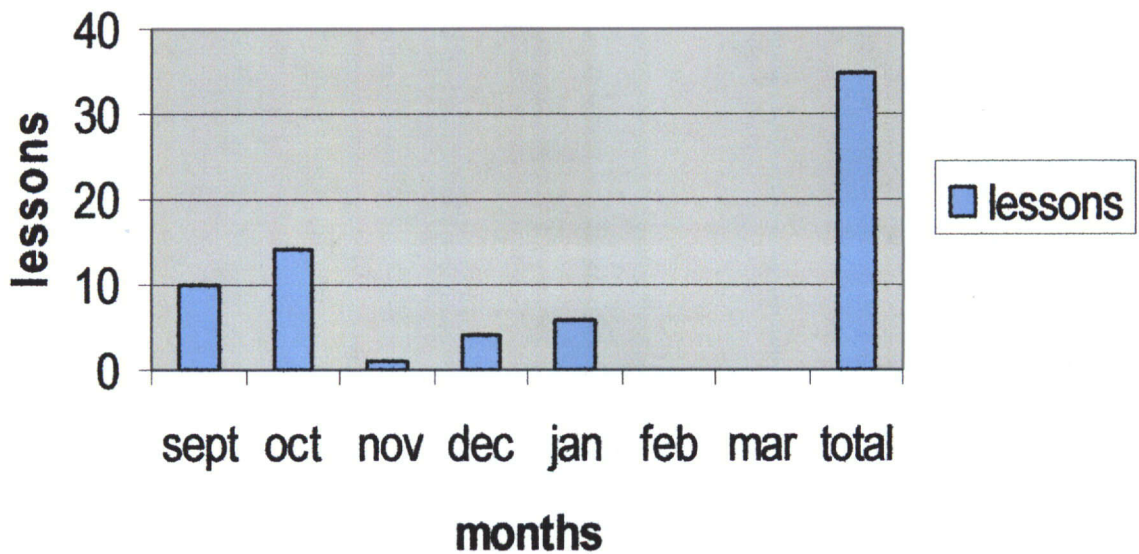
Progress in Reading Lessons Student 5



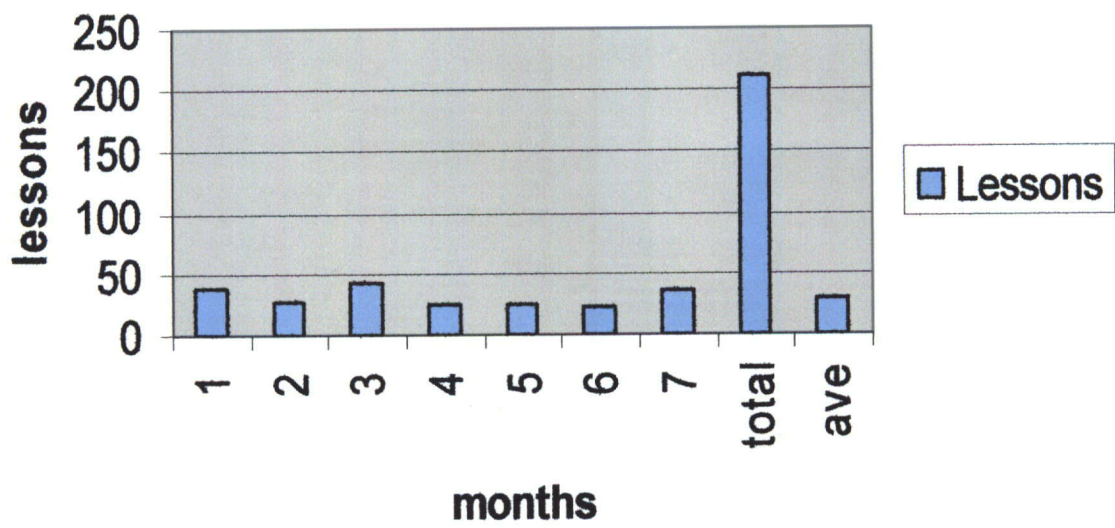
Progress in Reading Levels Student 6



Progress in Reading Levels Student 7



Class Overall Progress



Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusion, and Discussion

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the SRA Direct Guided Reading program in promoting phonological awareness skills in multiply disabled Kindergarten and first grade students. The effectiveness of this program was measured by a pre-assessment test from the SRA program and Mastery Tests spaced throughout the program.

The subjects for this study consisted of seven students from a diverse social and economic background all placed in the same multiply disabled classroom, because all were so severely disabled that this placement was considered the least restricted environment. The teacher was experienced in the use of this program and provided SRA direct guided reading to the subjects in individual and small group instruction of no more than two children.

The results of this study indicate positive gains in all the subjects, as indicated by assessment tests throughout the program. The progress of each student is shown in the bar graphs.

Conclusions

The overall conclusion of this study is that the SRA Direct Guided Reading program was successful in improving reading in a diverse group of children ages six and seven who had moderate to severe special needs. In order to have some children benefit from

this program it was necessary to create teacher made material for reinforcement and demonstration. Several non-verbal children were able to demonstrate acquisition of letter sound correspondences by pointing to correct choices. Overall, the implemented methodology yielded meaningful gains.

Discussion

All the students in this study made significant gains in the SRA Guided Reading Program. One advantage of the program is that it moves very slowly at first with continual review of the letter sounds. As the student progresses the lessons begin to add more letter sounds. Success is noted immediately by the teacher.

Some deviation was needed with several of the non-verbal students in order to continue success. Visual pictures of the individual letter sounds along with the signing of the letters reinforced the sound to the letter. Through the use of task analysis, the students were able to grasp the concept of letter sounds and eventually blending the sounds together to form words. The signing of the letters helped them to understand that each letter had an individual sound.

In the program silent letters are written smaller than the sounded letter. As the letters formed words rhyming words were written in red and beginning sounds in black. All these visual cues make the program successful.

Comments

Since this program moves slowly the children have a good chance for success. Each child moves at his/her own pace. Therefore, whatever gains they make show progress. Through the use of simple teacher made materials, even children with severe disabilities have a chance to succeed.

REFERENCES

- Boehner, John, Chairman. (July 24, 2002). *Committee Gets Update on Implementation of President Bush's No Child Left Behind Education Reforms* News from the Committee on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved December 9, 2003, from <http://edworkforce.house.gov/press/press107/nclbimplentation72402.htm>
- Craig, Sharon A. October, (November, December 2003). *IRA Outstanding Dissertation Award for 2003*. Reading Research Quarterly, 38(4), 438-440.
- Cunningham, James, W. *The National Reading Panel Report: A Response*. pp. 1-2. Retrieved September 23, 2003, from <http://www.learnnc.org/index.nsf/doc/NRP0403-2?OpenDocument>
- ED.gov. *Introduction: No Child Left Behind*. Retrieved November 4, 2003, from <http://www.ed.gov/print/nclb/overview/intro/index.html>
- Foorman, Barbara R. & Torgesen, Joseph. *Critical Elements of Classroom and Small-Group Instruction Promote Reading Success in All Children*. pp. 203-210.
- Hancock, LynNell, & Wingert, Pat. *The Great Debate that can affect your children's reading ability*. Report from "Newsweek." Retrieved November 1, 2003, from <http://www.child-reading-tips.com/greatdebate.html>
- Hempenstall, Dr. Kerry. *Phonemic Awareness What Does it Mean*. (November 2002). *Education News.org*. Retrieved September 13, 2003, from http://educationnews.Org/phonemicawareness_what_does_it.htm
- Language Tune-UpKit Phonics Orton-Gillingham*. Retrieved November 3, 2003, from <http://www.jwor.com/orton.htm>
- NRRF - - A Synthesis of Research on Reading from the NICHD*. Retrieved November 2, 2003, from http://www.nrrf.org/synthesis_research.htm
- Phonemic Awareness*. (July 1998). Retrieved September 22, 2003, from <http://www.reading.org/positions/phonemic.html>
- Phonemic Awareness for Reading & Spelling & Speech*. Retrieved September 13, 2003, from <http://www.lindamoodbell.com/phonemicawareness.html>
- Phonemic Awareness: The Miracle?* Retrieved September 23, 2003, from <http://www.reading-comprehension-expert.com/phonemic-awareness.html>

Publisher: SRA Reading Mastery. Retrieved November 11, 2003, from <http://www.auburn.edu/~murraba/sra.html>

Reading Mastery. Retrieved November 2, 2003, from <http://www.cedu.niu.edu/pride/web7.htm>

Research Regarding Direct Instruction. Retrieved November 3, 2003, from <http://www.projectpro.com/ICR/Research/DI/Summary.htm>

Rico, Gabriele, PhD. *Reading by Ear.* Retrieved September 16, 2003, from <http://readingbyear.com/TheBigPicture.htm>

Sensenbaugh, Roger. (1996). *Phonemic Awareness: An Important Early Step in Learning To Read. EIRC Digest.* Retrieved September 13, 2003, from http://www.indiana.edu/~eirc_rec/ieo/digest/d119.html

SRA Reading Mastery. Published by SRA/McGraw-Hill. Retrieved November 2, 2003, from <http://www.ifi.org/SRA%20Reading%20Mastery.htm>

The Remediation Plus System with teacher training on videos. Retrieved September 13, 2003, from <http://www.remediationplus.com/>

Why phonics instruction is an important part of your child's reading program. Retrieved November 1, 2003, from <http://www.child-reading-tips.com/phonics1.html>