



Research-Based Reading

RECIPE FOR READING **Frances Bloom and Nina Traub**

By Concetta Russo, Ed.D.

In 1974 Congress initiated a Federal Demonstration Program Grant for the development of innovative educational programs (ESEATitle IV-C). The grant was awarded primarily for the improvement of the education of children with disabilities. *Recipe for Reading* was one of the reading programs identified by Congress as exemplary and has been funded since that time throughout the United States.

Recipe for Reading is a multisensory, Orton-Gillingham (O-G) based program for teaching decoding, spelling, and handwriting in the primary grades. Multisensory approaches date back to the 1920s when Grace Fernald had reading impaired students trace letters or words while saying the words aloud (Fernald & Keller, 1921). This procedure came to be known as the VAKT (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile) approach. Fernald maintained that by incorporating multiple modalities, a memory schema could be more readily achieved for the stimulus information.

Dr. Samuel Orton's hypothesis followed this initial premise as a result of his studies of dyslexic individuals. He proposed that dyslexia was caused by incomplete cerebral dominance, resulting in reversal and sequencing problems, both visually, auditorially, or in combination. His rationale for multisensory remedial training was that kinesthetic activities help establish visual-auditory associations in grapheme-phoneme correspondence learning, as well as to reinforce left-to-right letter progression (J. Orton, 1966).

Fernald and Orton's research led to the adoption of multisensory instruction for dyslexic children who lack primary sound-symbol associative skills (Cox, 1984; Gillingham and Stillman, 1960; Slingerland, 1971; Traub and Bloom, 1975).

Recipe for Reading was developed by Nina Traub and Frances Bloom in the 1970s. Initially, it was implemented in the Ossining, New York Public Schools as a tutorial program addressing sound-symbol associative skills in reading. The

Recipe for Reading is a phonics-based reading program that is aligned with the research cited in the National Reading Panel frameworks. It comprises a teacher's manual, 39 storybooks, and 9 workbooks. This proven Orton-Gillingham program is unique in its ease of use, which allows both specialists and general classroom teachers access to expert multisensory, synthetic, systematic, direct phonics instruction.



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program enabled teachers, as well as teacher assistants, to use O-G methodology with minimal training. Because of its simplicity, *Recipe for Reading* became popular not only in special education programs but also in remedial and regular classroom programs.

The *Recipe for Reading* Curriculum

Recipe for Reading is designed as a two-year continuum of reading and language arts skills. As in all O-G programs, *Recipe for Reading* starts with the simplest unit of written language (the sound/symbol association) and progresses incrementally to full texts. Using the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (VAK) modalities, students begin with learning individual sounds, then blend sounds to read words, phrases, sentences, and stories.

In all O-G programs, review is essential, and *Recipe for Reading* is no exception. Every one of the 105 lessons in the *Recipe for Reading* manual reviews all sounds students have been taught, along with one new concept. In this way, each lesson builds on the previous one. And each lesson follows the same procedure. Students respond to sound cards, write spellings for the sounds, make real or nonsense CVC words from letter cards, spell those words as they write them, read those words, spell and read review words, write one or more dictated sentences, read other sentences from flash cards, and read a book at an appropriate level.

The *Recipe for Reading* manual is the core of the program. Included in the manual is the Pretest, an individually administered skills inventory. The Pretest is separated into seven sections: isolated sounds; CVC words using only consonants and short vowels; CVC words with consonant blends plus short vowels; silent e words; vowel teams; diphthongs and r-controlled vowels; and multisyllabic words. The Pretest determines where in the program the student should begin.

There are two other major components of the *Recipe for Reading* program: three volumes of storybooks *The Alphabet Series* (18 books in Volumes 1 and 2; 3 chapter books in Volume 3), and nine workbooks.

In Volume 1 of *The Alphabet Series*, phonic elements from initial consonant *c* through final double consonants are introduced and reviewed. In Volume 2, word elements from consonant blends through the *-ing* ending are introduced and reviewed. In Volume 3, VCV and VCe spelling rules through spelling with affixes are introduced and reviewed.

All of the stories also introduce and review sight words. This repetition of decodable words and sight words increases automaticity of word recognition and fluency of story reading as the series progresses. Students also answer questions at the end of each book to practice comprehension skills.

There are nine workbooks for *Recipe for Reading*, which range across the program skills from phonemic awareness and phonics for initial consonants and initial short vowels (Workbook K) to multiple sounds for vowel spellings and root words and affixes (Workbook 8). For each of the program skills covered, 4 to 7 pages of reinforcement are available in the workbooks. Automaticity and fluency are again reinforced since each set of workbooks pages reviews all skills taught previously. The workbooks can be used for supported instruction, independent work, or homework.

Reading First and Recipe for Reading

In January 2002, President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act, mandating that states formulate reading standards for each grade with the goal of having all children reading proficiently by the end of third grade. Federal monies through Reading First funds have been made available to help achieve these goals for the states' adopted reading programs that explicitly teach the reading skills of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Phonemic Awareness

Tallal, Miller, and Fitch (1993) acknowledge the importance of proper phonological processing for skilled reading. They suggest that language learning impairments and specific learning disabilities result from phonological processing problems, which include phonemic awareness, sound-symbol relations, and the storage and retrieval of phonological information in memory.

The nature of phonological awareness is a reciprocal one; that is, the greater the student's awareness of the phonological structure of words, the greater the success in learning to read (Blachman, 1997; Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Liberman, Shankweiler, Tisher & Carter, 1974).

Researcher Dr. Sally Shaywitz posits that the key to dyslexia is a deficit in the phonological module of the brain. Operations within this language area must be rapid and automatic or otherwise it impairs decoding skills (Shaywitz, 2003).



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The role of phonological awareness in reading acquisition, however, can seem counterintuitive to children. Liberman, Shankweiler, and Liberman (1989) believe that it must be confusing to children to be told that the word bag is spelled with three letters, when their auditory perception tells them bag is one sound.

Liberman et al. go on to say that there is no real way to synthesize the word bag by putting the letter sounds together, and that what a letter or groups of letters represents is not the sounds themselves, but abstract segments that underlie the word.

How Does Recipe for Reading Address Phonemic Awareness?

Recipe for Reading methodology requires the phonological processing of words and auditory processing of language that includes auditory discrimination and auditory memory. In the first segment of every lesson, students are introduced to a phoneme through a presentation of a concrete object or key word, such as egg or thin. Students are asked to give the initial sound they hear when they say the name of the object. Then students listen to an alliterative sentence, something like a tongue twister, to identify the repeated sound. Additional words and sentences for reading aloud to the student for phonological awareness can be found in Appendix B, Focus on the Sound.

Phonics

Phonics instruction programs involve children in a systematic approach in sound/symbol association skills. There are two types of phonic approaches: synthetic and analytic. The Orton-Gillingham method (Gillingham and Stillman, 1960) utilizes synthetic phonics, which requires systematic letter-by-letter decoding. It also requires direct, multisensory instruction.

Research has long confirmed the efficacy of direct, explicit, systematic teaching of phonics. In *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* (1967), an extensive review of classroom, laboratory, and clinical research, Jeanne Chall concluded that code emphasis programs, including those with a synthetic phonics methodology, produced better results than whole word programs.

Chall's findings have been confirmed by many other researchers (Bond and Dykstra, 1967; Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin, 1990; Adams, 1990). The National Reading Panel found in studies published since 1970 comparing phonics

instruction with other kinds of instruction, that for children from kindergarten through sixth grade, systematic phonics instruction enhanced children's ability to read, spell, and comprehend text. These results were especially evident for disabled readers and low socioeconomic students. (*Put Reading First*, 2001)



How Does Recipe for Reading Address Phonics?

Recipe for Reading introduces each sound in isolation and then incorporates that sound and the previously learned sounds into words, phrases, and stories. The manual provides a scripted model lesson that enables a teacher to provide direct, explicit instruction. Within the model lesson, there are ample opportunities for multisensory phonics practice as students repeat teacher-modeled sounds, words, and phrases, and then write them.

After the manual lessons, additional coordinated phonics practice is available in the workbooks, and in *The Alphabet Series*. Each of these components reinforces sound identification, and word and phrase reading.

Fluency

Fluency is the ability of a reader to read effortlessly, making written language sound much like speech. Although the ultimate goal of skilled reading is an understanding of the printed page, achieving this understanding requires that a reader's decoding skills are automatic, occurring instantly and without effort. As Adams (1990) states, "It is their overlearned knowledge about the sequences of letters comprising frequent words and spelling patterns that enables skillful readers to process the letters of a text so quickly and easily" (p. 410). Continuous encounters with words reinforce the access to memory and meaning until simply seeing the word accesses pronunciation and meaning (Ehri, 1991). Conversely, poor readers, who have not developed this level of automaticity, also typically have difficulty understanding what they read, at least in part due to fluency roadblocks.

Shaywitz defines fluency as "the reading of a word accurately, quickly, smoothly, and with good expression which is acquired by practice" (2003, p.105).

The findings of the National Reading Panel concerning the most effective methods for developing fluency for all kinds of readers emphasizes repeated oral reading with teacher



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feedback and guidance (2000). In other words, the same words, sentences, and paragraphs must be read over and over again in order to gain speed, accuracy, and fluency (Shaywitz 2003, pp. 268–270).

How Does *Recipe for Reading* Address Fluency?

Repeated reading practice is integral to *Recipe for Reading*, where fluency is addressed in every lesson. Every previous sound is reviewed while introducing a new one, so the words, phrases, and sentences from previous lessons are repeated extensively. Appendix B of the manual, *Focus on the Sound*, provides even more practice with words, sentences, and little stories, all of which target a particular sound and may be used for repeated readings.

Repetition continues into the workbooks and *Alphabet Series* storybooks. For additional practice, words (both decodable and sight) and phrases from each storybook that lend themselves to automaticity and fluency practice, either as drill or repeated readings, are provided at the end of the book.

Vocabulary Development

Word knowledge is essential if students are to make meaning from the printed page. Studies reveal that word knowledge and comprehension are inextricably linked. Even students who are skilled in phonics will read with diminished comprehension after third grade unless they are exposed to a wide range of vocabulary words (Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin, 1990). Juel and Roper/Schneider found that students also benefit from repeated exposure to new words in a variety of contexts (1995). Shaywitz posits that readers have an internal dictionary of stored words, but that the struggling reader has an additional burden—some reliance on phonology to activate the stored words (2003).

How Does *Recipe for Reading* Address Vocabulary Development?

In *Recipe for Reading*, students are explicitly taught the meaning of individual words when discussing the words chosen for phonics instruction. As with other O-G programs, the volume of words needed for thorough and lengthy word practice requires lists of words, some of which are not yet part of students' listening-speaking vocabularies. Therefore, definitions for words such as lam, cam, chit, fob, and shim are provided in the manual. In the workbooks, illustrations provide support for much of this new vocabulary that is new

to both decoding and meaning. In addition, *The Alphabet Series* storybooks provide a full context and illustrations for the decodable words, to further reinforce word meaning.



Comprehension

One of the National Reading Panel's research questions was, "Does systematic phonics instruction improve children's reading comprehension ability as well as their decoding and word-reading skills" (*Put Reading First*, 2001)? The Panel found that first graders in systematic phonics programs outperformed their nonphonics peers in the area of comprehension as did older disabled readers (defined as "children with average IQs but poor reading"). This was not the case for older readers in second through sixth grade (Shaywitz, p. 267).

Comprehension skills rely to a great extent on students' decoding skills, a level of fluency, and a broad vocabulary. Perfetti (1985) suggests that evidence supports the hypothesis that word-processing efficiency leads to better comprehension, rather than merely being a by-product of comprehension.

But even when decoding skills are good, "text comprehension can be improved by instruction that helps readers use specific comprehension strategies" (*Put Reading First*, 2001, p. 49). One instructional strategy is answering questions, "which helps students to review content and relate what they have learned to what they already know" (*Put Reading First*, 2001, p. 51).

How does Recipe for Reading Address Comprehension Skills?

Comprehension, described by Dolores Durkin (1993) as the essence of reading, is addressed in the *Recipe for Reading Alphabet Series* storybooks. Each of the 39 storybooks contains a set of questions at the end. These questions tap vocabulary knowledge as well as a range of reader responses, with an emphasis on inferential comprehension as well as personal response. Questions such as "Where do you think Jeff could keep a yak?" invite readers to push beyond the literal events in the story. The inclusion of personal response questions such as "Would you like a yak for a pet?" is also important because comprehension is enhanced when readers are encouraged to link life experiences to literature. An added benefit of the questions is that they are vocabulary controlled and can be read independently by students.

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Conclusion

Recipe for Reading's main goal for at-risk readers is to help them develop a solid foundation in phonics that will allow them to read fluently, increase their reading and listening-speaking vocabularies, and understand what they read. The techniques and the sequence in which reading, spelling, and handwriting skills are taught in *Recipe for Reading* have been carefully designed to ensure that at-risk readers succeed. *Recipe for Reading* is based on O-G principles and is aligned with the research cited in the National Reading Panel frameworks.

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Dr. Russo is a frequent presenter for the Dyslexia Society, Reading Reform, and the Brain Expo. She has trained teachers in *Recipe for Reading* since 1985 and has authored the *Recipe for Reading* workbooks.

Frances Bloom received her B.S. in education from Skidmore College. She served as a consultant to the Ossining Public Schools in Ossining, New York. She has also done private tutoring for dyslexic children. In addition to *Recipe for Reading*, Bloom is also the primary author of *Recipe for Spelling*, a comprehensive program with 450 varied learning activities designed to sharpen spelling, language arts, and thinking skills. She is the co-author of *The Alphabet Series*.

Nina Traub developed the *Recipe for Reading* curriculum in the 1950s in Ossining, New York and first used the program with parents serving as tutors for learning-disabled students in the community. Traub was dedicated to the needs of dyslexic children and to training volunteers in the Orton-Gillingham approach.



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