

Evaluation of Sonday System: Learning to Read
Within A Second Grade Classroom

by

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A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
in

Education

Approved: 2 Semester Credits


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July, 2007

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Title: *Evaluation of Sondag System: Learning to Read within a Second Grade Classroom*

Graduate Degree/ Major: MS Education

Research Adviser: Carolyn Heitz, Ph.D

Month/Year: June, 2007

Number of Pages: 31

Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 5th edition

ABSTRACT

Many of today's students are struggling with the process of learning to read. The high rate of student failure is alarming to our president. In 2001, President George W. Bush implemented the NO Child Left Behind Act, (NCLB). This act delivered a strong message to schools nationwide. The Reading First initiative is trying to reduce the number of students needing special education services based on a lack of scientifically based reading instruction during early elementary years. The Amery School District in Northern Wisconsin is striving to meet the requirements of NCLB. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of Sondag System: Learning to Read at addressing the needs of struggling readers at the elementary level. The Sondag Program claims to solve and prevent reading failure.

The Soday System enables teachers to use multisensory, structured phonics quickly and successfully because the design is streamlined and uncomplicated, while the directions are explicit and easily understood...Winsor Learning can prepare any teacher to correctly identify and effectively remediate students at every level of intervention, Pre-k to adult. (Winsor, 2007)

Another purpose of this program evaluation is to investigate Soday System in regards to meeting the scientifically based research regarding how children learn to read. The results of this study do provide evidence of increased student achievement. The study also provides evidence of the need for a balanced reading program.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank a few people who have helped me in my education. First of all, I would like to thank my husband, Brian, and my three children, Joshua, Ethan, and Ariana for their patience and encouragement. The completion of this program evaluation would not have been possible without their support and understanding.

I would also like to thank my advisor, Dr. Carolyn Heitz. Her knowledge and expertise in the area of teaching children to read kept me motivated and focused.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Many of today's students are struggling with the process of learning to read. The high rate of student's failing is alarming to our president. In 2001, President George W. Bush implemented the No Child Left Behind Act, (NCLB). This act delivered a strong message to schools nationwide. School districts are making a conscious effort to find appropriate educational tools that will ensure they are meeting the requirements of the NCLB. President George W. Bush stated; "These reforms express my deep belief in our public schools and their mission to build the mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America" (US Department of Education, January 2001).

NCLB affirmed President Bush's commitment to ensuring that every child can read by the end of third grade. To accomplish this goal, the new Reading First initiative would significantly increase the Federal investment in scientifically based reading instruction programs in the early grades. One major benefit of this approach would be reduced identification of children for special education services due to a lack of appropriate reading instruction in their early years. (US Department of Education, January 2001).

The Amery School District in Northern Wisconsin is striving to meet the requirements of NCLB. The city of Amery has a population of 2,828. The median household income is about \$34,000. The district enrollment in 2005-2006 was 1,788. Ethnic make-up of the district is 96.6% White, 1.2% Hispanic, .7% Black, .4% Asian,

and 1.1% American Indian. Approximately 26.4% of student population fit into the low socio-economic status.

The intention of this study is to evaluate Lien Elementary School's reading programs by gathering data throughout the school year regarding student reading acquisition. Specifically evaluating Sunday System: Learning to Read (Sunday) will involve establishing baseline data, collecting ongoing assessment data, and end of the year data to determine student progress. Conducting this program evaluation will help administrators, teachers, and parents make educated decisions regarding the use of Sunday.

Is it worth the time and effort to conduct a program evaluation on Sunday? Yes, there are several reasons. These include providing evidence the program accomplishes its publicized goals, verifying its approach to balanced reading instruction, investigating the program's strengths and weaknesses, and to gain a better understanding of how children learn to read.

Once the data is collected it can be used to evaluate the success of the program. The most important purpose is to examine the effectiveness of the utilization of Sunday within the Amery School District regarding the needs of struggling readers at the elementary level. The school district has decided all students will participate in Houghton Mifflin Basal Reading Program. Struggling students will also receive Title One services supplemented with Sunday or Reading Mastery/Direct Instruction which is determined by the level of intervention needed. The combination approach to reading acquisition has been known to increase confusion for struggling students. Students participating in more

than one program are receiving mixed messages regarding skill development and strategies. Table 1 p. 16 displays the comparison of the two programs.

As a result of conducting a program evaluation of Sonday it will be evident whether struggling readers make significant gains that reduce the gap in learning to read effectively. The analysis of program evaluation data will be used in the development of more effective and efficient program systems that will help identify quality, researched based remedial reading programs.

The importance of conducting a program evaluation on Sonday was reinforced when no research could be located on the program. The closest research found was related to Orton-Gillingham based reading instruction programs. Arlene Sonday created the Sonday Learning to Read Program based on Orton-Gillingham's reading programs for at-risk and students suffering from dyslexia. A review of literature shows that conducting a program evaluation for remedial reading programs help teachers, students, parents, and administrators better understand the program implementation and outcomes. Therefore, the research hypothesis for this study is that teachers, students, parents, and administrators will benefit from participating in a program evaluation of Sonday.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the utilization of Sonday within the Amery School District in addressing the needs of struggling readers at the elementary level.

Objectives

- 1). To evaluate the effectiveness of Sonday in improving struggling readers' ability to read, write, and spell.
- 2). To compare Sonday to Houghton Mifflin Basal Reading Program.
- 3). To assess the compatibility of Sonday and Houghton Mifflin.

Definition of Terms

In 2000, the National Reading panel was given the responsibility of reviewing research regarding reading instruction and identifying the tried and true methods relating to reading achievement. The following terms have been labeled the five areas of reading instruction.

Decoding. The ability to transform written words into spoken words using phonics.

Fluency. The ability to read a text accurately and quickly. Fluency also focuses on expression and grouping text into meaningful parts.

Multisensory learning. Learning by seeing, hearing, touching/feeling.

Phonemic awareness. The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds, phonemes, in spoken words.

Phonics. Children learn the relationships between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language. It leads to an understanding of the alphabetic principle, the systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds.

Text comprehension. The construction of the intended meaning of communication: correctly understanding what is written or said.

Vocabulary. The words we must know to communicate effectively. Readers must know what most of the words mean before they can understand what they are reading.

(Put Reading First, 2001).

Chapter II: Literature Review

A program evaluation determines the needs of the programs, measures goals and often determines continued program use. There are several models of evaluation that could be used. The Objective-Based Evaluation Model is most appropriate for the Sunday program because it would first allow the external evaluator to understand the purpose and intent of the program. The evaluator is then able to return to these goals throughout the evaluation process. The original objectives provide a sustained framework for the evaluation.

The Objective-Based Evaluation Model does have some limitations. The model assumes that the internal evaluators were careful in their original planning of the program and considered the greatest needs and interests of program participants and stakeholders.

Hiebert, E., Martin, L.A., Menon, S. (2005) research used the objective-based evaluation. "The first-grade components of three textbook programs-mainstream basal, combined phonics and literature, and phonics emphasis-were compared on cognitive load...and linguistic content...Three levels of three components of a program-literature anthologies, decodable texts, and leveled texts-were compared" (p. 7).

Another study by Joshi, R.M, Dahlgren, M., Gooden-Boulware, R. (2002) used the objective-based model of evaluation.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the efficacy of the multisensory teaching approach to improve reading skills at the first grade level. The control group was taught by the Houghton-Mifflin Basal Reading Program while the treatment group was taught by the Language Basics: Elementary, which incorporates the Orton-Gillingham based

Alphabetic Phonics Method. The results showed that the treatment group made statistically significant gains in phonological awareness, decoding and reading comprehension while the control group made gains only on reading comprehension. (p.229)

The Improvement Focused Model should also be used in tandem with the Objective-Based Model in the evaluation of the Sonday. Not only would this model identify the degree to which the program was meeting the stated objectives, but it would also discover inconsistencies between program objectives and the needs of the intended population and propose options for reducing these inconsistencies. The Improvement Focused Model is a progressive evaluation model because it does not merely state the current status of the program; rather, it drives the program forward by suggesting new avenues for exploration and development.

In *Building on the Best, Learning from what Works: Five Promising Remedial Reading Intervention Programs* the improvement model of program evaluation was used.

Why are some schools effective at educating most students, even those from disadvantaged, high poverty areas, while others struggle fruitlessly to fulfill their academic mission? How can schools replicate the successes of their more effective counterparts?...Given these and similar research findings, we developed the criteria below to help identify promising programs for raising student achievement, especially in low-performing schools. You will find descriptions of five reading intervention programs...Although each particular program has its own strengths and weaknesses, all show evidence of: high standards...effectiveness...

replicability...support structures.

(American Federation of Teachers, 1999)

After President Bush's NCLB Act was approved, top educators and academic researchers throughout the nation were called upon to study and report their findings regarding effective teaching strategies in the area of reading acquisition.

The work of the National Reading Panel builds on existing knowledge about what types of skills children need to acquire to become independent readers. Specifically, the Panel addresses the evidence about what those skills are and adds further knowledge about how those skills are best taught to beginning readers who vary in initial reading abilities. The Panel identified a number of instructional approaches, methods, and strategies that hold substantial promise for application in the classroom at this time.

(National Reading Panel, 21)

The panel's research focused attention on the following areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.

Arlene Sondag (2006) states:

Research by the National Institutes of Health suggests that successful reading programs incorporate a spelling component and involve multisensory reinforcement. Students with weak phonological awareness ability often experience difficulty sequencing sounds accurately. Touch Spelling provides a way to simplify the process and enable learners to spell. Research indicates that the following are key components in

successful reading programs. These components are included in the Souday System.

Phonological awareness: The ability to play with language by rhyming, isolating the beginning or ending sound of a word, deletion and substitution of parts of a word into syllables. Print is not involved.

Phonemic awareness: Understanding that words and syllables are made up of speech sounds which are represented by alphabetic symbols or letters.

Systematic, explicit phonics: Direct instruction in the sound-symbol correspondences, with practice reading and spelling sounds in isolation, in the context of words, and in sentences.

Spelling: Teaching consonant sounds and clusters, vowel spellings, syllables, affixes and the rule base needed for correct use. Spelling strengthens concepts and skills needed for reading.

Multisensory reinforcement: Practice using three pathways of learning through eyes, ears and sense of touch. Students simultaneously see the letter(s), hear the sound, feel how it is formed with their lips, tongue, and throat, and feel the form as the sound is traced or written.

Controlled reading with decodable text: New sounds and spellings must be practiced in the context of words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs which emphasize those new sounds. Books written with controlled text are often less than inspiring but provide necessary practice of new

material taught. Beginning readers should read a variety of text at appropriate levels.

Vocabulary: Adding new words, word definitions and practicing using those words appropriately should be built into reading programs.

Understanding new words comes faster to those with a well developed vocabulary. Nothing increases vocabulary faster and more efficiently than reading.

Comprehension: The most valuable activity for increasing comprehension is reading itself. Practice. The very first step in developing reading comprehension is the ability to read words.

Progress testing: Regular testing, monthly or quarterly, using informal measures will determine progress in reading and spelling.

Teachers, students and parents should know if there is growth or if intervention is indicated. (Winsor Learning)

In *Accountability for Reading and Readers: What the Numbers Don't Tell*, the authors stress test scores that assess discrete skills cannot be the only way to describe readers and the ability to comprehend what is read. The authors followed three students in three different reading programs: Reading Mastery, Open Court and Guided Reading. Students involved in Reading Mastery and Open Court participated in systematic, teacher directed instruction. Guided reading students were instructed using authentic texts. Students that were taught with systematic, direct instruction had lower comprehension scores when tested using authentic texts. Guided reading students scored much higher in the area of comprehension.

They had a better understanding of the process of reading-comprehension and strategy use. “The children in commercially produced programs are learning that decoding is important --more important than meaning -- while the children at the Guided Reading school are learning that figuring out what the text says and means is valued” (Wilson, P., Martens, P., & Arya, P. 2005, p. 630).

Chapter III: Methodology

The Amery School District has focused on putting reading first. The inverted pyramid in Appendix A, p. 29 shows the efforts the district has taken to meet the need of all learners in the area of reading. The district has adopted several reading programs that include all or parts of the National Reading Panels recommendations for a balanced reading program that strengthen skill strategies and makes connections with text.

There are currently thirty-three students in second grade that are receiving Title One services. Six students are receiving targeted instruction through Reading Mastery/Direct Instruction. Twenty-seven are receiving Houghton Mifflin basal reading series along with Houghton Mifflin Early Success and Sonday as the selected literacy program.

Subject Selection

In the second grade classroom being studied, there are six out of seventeen students receiving specialized reading instruction. Three students are receiving classroom Houghton Mifflin (second grade) along with Houghton Mifflin Early Success (Title One) and Sonday. One student is receiving minimal Houghton Mifflin instruction (second grade) along with Reading Mastery/Direct Instruction and Sonday System. Two of the students are receiving minimal Houghton Mifflin instruction (second grade) along with Reading Mastery/Direct Instruction.

Two Reading Programs

What is Houghton Mifflin Reading? Houghton Mifflin Reading is a scientifically based basal reading program. The Nation's Choice series claims to meet the needs of all learners in today's varied classrooms. The program focuses on comprehensive step-by-

step instructions in the five strands of reading, diagnostic tools, comprehensive assessments, and built-in resources to support every student. (Houghton Mifflin, 2007)

What is Sonday System? Sonday was created by Arlene Sonday. The framework for the Sonday System is based on Orton-Gillingham teaching strategies that have been used for struggling readers, especially those suffering from dyslexia. Ritchey, K. & Goeke, J.L. (2006) state “A key characteristic of the Orton-Gillingham reading instruction is that it is a multisensory, involving visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile learning pathways, often referred to as the Language Triangle” (p. 171). The Sonday Program claims to solve and prevent reading failure.

The Sonday System enables teachers to use multisensory, structured phonics quickly and successfully because the design is streamlined and uncomplicated, while the directions are explicit and easily understood...Winsor Learning can prepare any teacher to correctly identify and effectively remediate students at every level of intervention, Pre-k to adult. (Winsor, 2007)

Comparisons. Students in second grade Houghton Mifflin progress through each theme in approximately a five-week time period. Sonday students progress through a level in about a two-week time period. Sonday students are tested every third level by reading a word list of twenty words. Students must score 90% accuracy on the reading word list in order to move to the next level. They also take a twenty word spelling test which needs a score of 85% before moving to the next level. Both areas of reading and spelling must be passed before moving on. A simplified example is: Houghton Mifflin focuses lessons on long vowel (CVCe) words the first five weeks of school. Sonday

studies this skill second semester of second grade. During a Houghton Mifflin reading lesson they are learning about long vowel words. In another part of the day they may be studying short vowel words with Sonday. The sequence of skill development does not match. Students participating in both programs become confused and their struggles with reading are increased.

Multisensory learning. Houghton Mifflin incorporates multisensory learning in first grade on a daily basis in lesson plans. Students are able to make words from letter tiles such as c, a, s, p, l, n, and t. Students manipulate the letters to make words such as cat, cat, pat, slap, plant. Students also participate in numerous interactive learning activities such as shared writing experiences and literacy center activities throughout first grade. Second grade students begin the year reviewing phonemic awareness through a variety of interactive activities such as sound songs, chants, letter box races, tongue twisters, and word games. Phonemic awareness is phased out as the second grade basal continues to strengthen phonics and vocabulary instruction, fluency and comprehension. Opportunities for writing through reader-writer workshops are also incorporated into each theme. Extra support for students needing continued practice with phonemic awareness and phonics experience this through literacy centers and one-to-one practice with the teacher. Houghton Mifflin includes an Extra Support Handbook as a resource for preteaching and reteaching lessons.

Sonday moves at a slower pace regarding multisensory learning activities. Each phonemic awareness and phonics lesson is scripted and routines are established early in the program.

Example of a lesson:

Part 1

- 1) Introduce three new sight words
- 2) Students repeat the words
- 3) Students trace the letters while saying the name, repeat the word, and write the word

Part 2

- 4) Introduce a new sound “ay.” Teacher explains the rule; “ay is always used at the end of a word.”
- 5) Students read the ay words from the wordlist
- 6) Teacher then dictates the words
- 7) Students repeat the words and touch spell the words while writing it on paper.
- 8) Students read the words they wrote.

Lesson Wrap-up

- 9) The lesson is finished by choosing an activity such as reading sentences, playing a game with short vowel word cards, or reading a book at their level.

Fluency and comprehension. It is difficult to comparing fluency and comprehension instruction between Houghton Mifflin and Sonday. Houghton Mifflin has authentic texts that allow for daily fluency and comprehension practice. Students practice story structure, predicting outcomes, compare and contrast, fact and opinion, categorize and classify, monitor and clarify, and making inferences. Students participate in discussions, teacher modeling, guided practice, and individual practice throughout the series. Students read stories and participate in guided practice in retelling stories with

beginning, middle and end. After guided practice, students are directed to read a story independently and organize it by beginning, middle and end.

Sonday supplements fluency through additional wordlists and sentence practice. There is no documentation throughout the teacher materials stating fluency rates. Teachers use their own judgment to determine fluency. Comprehension strategies are not available using Sonday. The sentence practice sheets are full of sentences that lack connections from one to the other. Winsor (2006) states; “The most valuable activity for increasing comprehension is reading itself. Practice. The very first step in developing reading comprehension is the ability to read words.”

Spelling. Houghton Mifflin provides for spelling practice throughout each theme. Each weekly spelling test is based upon a word family or spelling rule. There is also reader-writer workshop spelling tests along with theme review test. Students are able to move on to the next theme regardless of their spelling test score.

Sonday students take a twenty word spelling test. Students must score 85% on spelling in order to move to the next level.

Data Analysis

Table 1

Comparison of Second Grade Instructional Material

	Houghton Mifflin	Sonday
CVC: a, i, o, u, e short vowels patterns (cat, pin, top, bun, pet)	Theme 1	Level 1 through 9
CVCe: a, i long vowel patterns (bake, time)	Theme 1	Level 25
Base words and -s, -ed, -ing endings (bikes, biked, biking)	Theme 1	Level 30

CVCe: a, i, o, u, e long vowel patterns (clue, bone, Steve)	Theme 2	Level 25
Consonant clusters (r,l,s) (brown, play, fast)	Theme 2	Level 16, 17
Two sounds for g (go, giraffe) Two sounds for c (cat, space)	Theme 2	Level 33
Double consonants (full, cuff, jazz)	Theme 2	Level 12
Consonant digraphs:th, wh, sh, ch, tch (them, when, fish, church, catch)	Theme 3	Level 11, 19, 31
Base word endings:-er, -est (bigger, biggest)	Theme 3	Level 30
Vowel pairs ai, ay, ow, ou, ee, ea (rain, day, blow, trouble, see, tea)	Theme 3	Level 6
Suffixes -ly, -ful (hopeful, cuddly, hopefully)	Theme 3	
Common syllables: -tion, -ture (action, picture)	Theme 3	
r-controlled vowels (car, bird)	Theme 4	
Words with nd, nt, mp, ng, nk (jump, hand, king, thank)	Theme 4	Level 26

A few conclusions can be drawn from comparing the scope and sequence chart.

- 1). Short vowels (CVC) are focused on at the beginning of each program. Houghton Mifflin reviews this skill quickly. Sonday expects mastery of each short vowel before moving on.
- 2). Long vowels (CVCe) are introduced quickly with Houghton Mifflin. Sonday students do not focus on long vowels (CVCe) until lesson 30 which is quite late for second grade students.
- 3). The skills studied in Sonday are not a perfect match with Houghton Mifflin.
- 4). Both programs use spiraling of skill and strategy development throughout their respective programs. Sonday spirals at a slower, teacher directed pace due to repetition of the skill focus.

Chapter IV: Results

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the use of Sunday within the Amery School District in addressing the needs of struggling readers at the elementary level.

The six students have been in Title One Reading since first grade. As of May, 2007, boy 1 and boy 2 are no longer eligible for Title One services for the upcoming school year based on grade level performance in comparison to other Title One students. Girl 1 and girl 2 will be moving from Reading Mastery Direct Instruction to Houghton Mifflin Soar to Success. Boy 3 will continue with Soar to Success along with Sunday. Girl 3 will remain in Reading Mastery Direct Instruction.

All seventeen second grade students were assessed in September, 2006 using *Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory* to determine reading level. Eleven students were recorded at or above grade level for word recognition and passage comprehension. Students were tested again in January, 2007 and May, 2007 to monitor progress. Table 2 p. 19 shows the scores related to Level A and Level C Reading Passages. For the six Title One students being studied, the scores reveal instructional reading levels based word recognition and passage comprehension.

Table 2 Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory

Student	September, 2006	January, 2007	May, 2007
Boy 1	Pre-Primer	Grade Two	Grade Two
Boy 2	Pre-Primer	Grade Two	Grade Two
Boy 3	Pre-Primer	Grade One	Grade Two
Girl 1	Pre-Primer	Grade One	Grade Two
Girl 2	Pre-Primer	Grade One	Grade Two
Girl 3	Pre-Primer	Primer	Grade One

The same six Title One students were assessed using Fry High Frequency Words. The list includes the most common used words in the English language. It is very similar to the Dolch Sight Word List. For the beginning and mid-year assessment, the first 100 words were used. Mid-year and end of year assessment consisted of the first 200 words. Students in second grade are expected to score 180/200 Fry words by the end of second grade. Figures 1 and 2 p. 20 display progress made by the six Title One students.

Figure 1

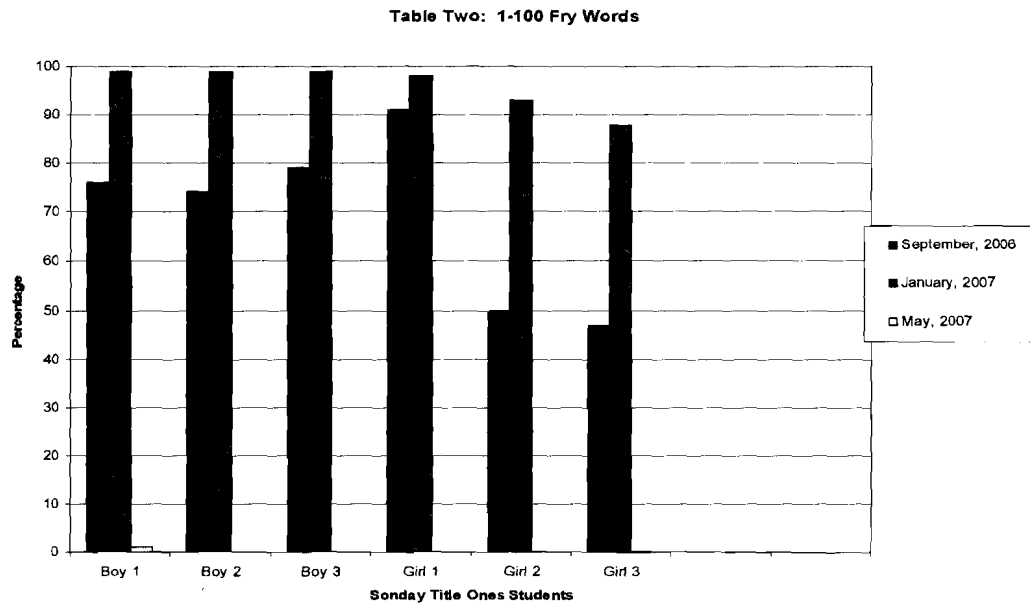
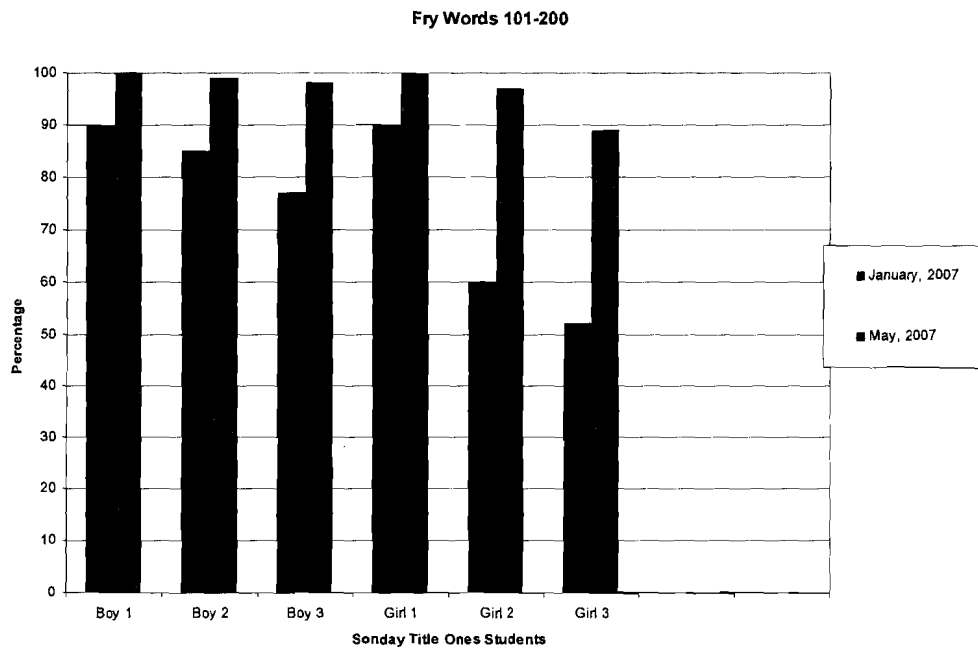


Figure 2



The most alarming results become evident when analyzing final testing using Sonday. According to the Mastery Check for Reading Graph, "The learner should have 90% accuracy on Mastery Check for Reading and 85% accuracy on Mastery Check for Spelling before moving to the next level" (p6). The end of the year final results are displayed below in Table 3. The table presents information which confirms the restrictive learning process of Sonday. The students were able to read at a higher level of efficiency than they were able to spell. A teacher following Sonday's curriculum would not move to the next reading level until the student has mastered the spelling. Holding students back in their ability to read because of their spelling level is not developmentally appropriate.

Table 3 Sonday Reading and Spelling Levels

Student	Reading Level	Spelling Level
Boy 1	Level 33	Level 18
Boy 2	Level 30	Level 21
Boy 3	Level 24	Level 12
Girl 1	Level 24	Level 18
Girl 2	Level 21	Level 21
Girl 3	Level 9	Level 6

Chapter V: Discussion

Does supplementing Houghton Mifflin basal reading program with Sonday effectively improve struggling readers' ability to read, write and spell? The final testing results shown above indicate that all six students did make progress in the area of reading. Each student's progress is summarized below.

Boy 1 started his second grade year as the ninth neediest student in the area of reading. His scores have dramatically increased throughout the year. He received Sonday and Houghton Mifflin basal instruction. He is now no longer eligible for Title One services and is labeled a grade level reader.

Boy 2 started his second grade year as the nineteenth neediest student in the area of reading. His scores have dramatically increased throughout the year. He received Sonday and Houghton Mifflin basal instruction. He is now no longer eligible for Title One services and is labeled a grade level reader.

Boy 3 started his second grade year as the twelfth neediest student in the area of reading. His scores have increased throughout the year. He received Sonday and Houghton Mifflin basal instruction. Although he scored grade level on Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory, he continues to struggle and will continue to receive Title One services in third grade through Sonday and Houghton Mifflin.

Girl 1 started her second grade year as the sixteenth neediest student in the area of reading. She is an English Language Learner. Her scores have dramatically increased throughout the year. She was taught using Reading Mastery Direct Instruction supplemented by Sonday and Houghton Mifflin basal instruction. She will continue to receive Title One services with a program change to Sonday and Houghton Mifflin.

Girl 2 started her second grade year as the eighth neediest student in the area of reading. Her scores have dramatically increased throughout the year. She was taught using Reading Mastery Direct Instruction supplemented by Sonday and Houghton Mifflin basal instruction. In third grade, she will receive Sonday instruction supplemented with classroom Houghton Mifflin basal instruction.

Girl 3 started her second grade year as the neediest student in second grade. Although her numbers and scores continue to place her among the lowest four of the second grade class, she has made tremendous gains during her year as a second grade student. She was taught using Reading Mastery Direct Instruction supplemented by Sonday and Houghton Mifflin basal instruction. Her third grade year reading instruction will include Reading Mastery Direct Instruction supplemented with classroom Houghton

Conclusions

All six students monitored throughout their second grade year did make progress. Five out of six are now considered grade level readers. Two of the students tested out of Title One due to grade level test scores. The four remaining will continue to receive supplemental reading services in third grade.

The scores are only one indicator of a student's ability to read. As teachers, we need to consider all areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Wilson, P., et al. (2005) stated

In an effort to simplify administration and increase reliability, tests often used for accountability - such as phonics tests and those for accuracy and fluency - separate the act of reading into discrete skills so that are treated as individual entities. In doing so, the relationships between the various

parts of reading are not taken into account. The complete story of the child (reader) in the act of reading in a particular setting using strategies (mental and physical tools) for a specific purpose is lost. Reading is not a simple collection of skills; it is a complex action that occurs in a sociocultural setting with readers purposefully and intentionally using strategies and their knowledge of language and the world (tools) to engage in transacting with texts. (p. 630)

Sonday has a requirement of 90% accuracy on reading word lists and 85% accuracy on spelling tests. Students are to achieve these levels of mastery in both areas before moving to the next level. This type of rigid programming is limiting student reading development. Table 3 p. 21 displays student scores related to Sonday Mastery Checks. All student reading levels are above spelling levels. It is not ethical to hinder the reading process based on a low spelling score, or one's inability to spell.

Recommendations

With the presence of NCLB and high stakes testing, students are being placed into supplemental commercially produced programs that claim to meet high standards of reading that have been established by reading experts. There has been no research found regarding Sonday. School districts looking at a supplemental reading program need to conduct their own research about the programs before purchasing. School districts need to consider the five areas of reading instruction that have been established by the National Reading Panel. Supplemental programs need to include instruction that covers phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.

Programs such as Sonday claim to support the available research from the reading experts and studies. Sonday stresses explicit instruction in reading and spelling. Yes, students will learn to read the words. They will memorize them. They may even learn to spell. Sonday claims the first step toward reading comprehension is the ability to succeed at word attack. What is slighted as a result of explicit phonetic instruction is fluency and text comprehension.

Students in these supplemental commercially produced programs are not offered authentic text reading experiences. Students in programs such as Sonday need to be offered daily experiences with reading that offer opportunities for practice with fluency and text comprehension. Students who continue to struggle, such as girl 2 and girl 3, need to be included in guided reading or whole group instruction where there are opportunities to interact with authentic texts. Teachers need to make instructional decisions that support the whole child, provide strategies that will help achieve reading success and prevent the consequences of reading failure.

Differentiated instruction has also surfaced as a positive approach to teaching in which teachers create learning environments that are based on student need and interest. Tomlinson, C. (2003) states;

The philosophy of differentiation proposes that we bring to school as learners matters in how we learn. Therefore, to teach most effectively, teachers must take into account who they are teaching as well as what they are teaching. The goal of a differentiated classroom is to plan actively and consistently to help each learner move as far and as fast as possible along the learning continuum. (p.1)

Children participating in Sonday and Houghton Mifflin are not receiving differentiated instruction. They are being loaded down with two very different approaches to teaching reading. It would be more beneficial to place these struggling students into one program and differentiate that curriculum based on student needs and interests. Teaching with one program would eliminate the confusion students face while learning to read.

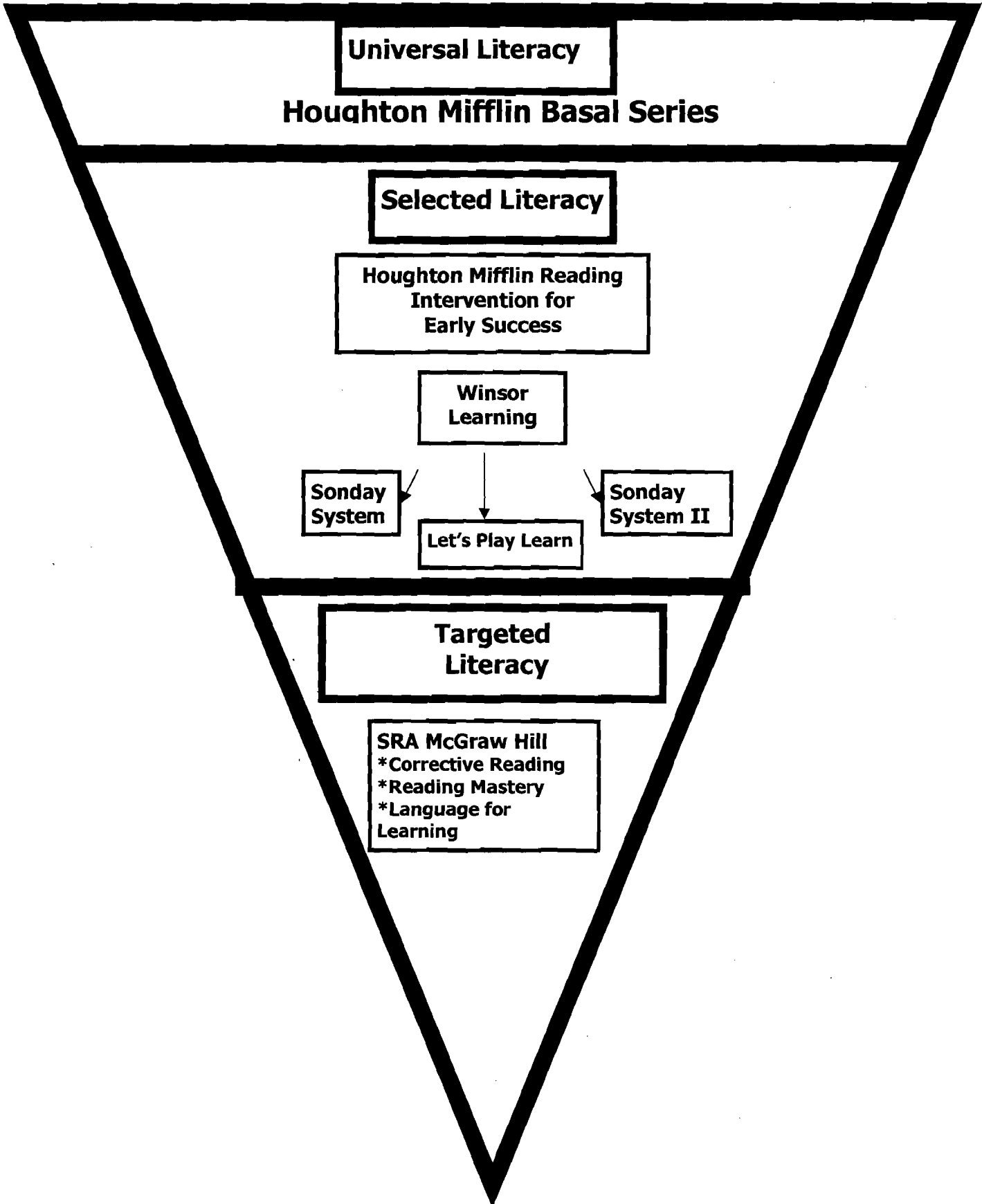
The goal of NCLB is for all students to achieve reading proficiency by the end of third grade. School districts such as Amery are striving to meet this goal. Changes need to be made in the approach to teaching reading with supplemental reading programs. Simply adding another program is not the answer. Children need to experience a well-rounded reading curriculum that teaches skill development and strengthens fluency and comprehension.

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Appendix A: Amery School District's Reading Pyramid



Appendix B: Fry Words 1-200

Fry Words 1-100

the	or	will	number
of	one	up	no
and	had	other	way
a	by	about	could
to	words	out	people
in	but	many	my
is	not	then	than
you	what	them	first
that	all	these	water
it	were	so	been
he	we	some	call
was	when	her	who
for	your	would	oil
on	can	make	now
are	said	like	find
as	there	him	long
with	use	into	down
his	an	time	day
they	each	has	did
I	which	look	get
at	she	two	come
be	do	more	made
this	how	write	may
have	their	go	part
from	if	see	over

Fry Words 101-200

new	great	put	kind
sound	where	end	hand
take	help	does	picture
only	through	another	again
little	much	well	change
work	before	large	off
know	line	must	play
place	right	big	spell
year	too	even	air
live	means	such	away
me	old	because	animal
back	any	turn	house
give	same	here	point
most	tell	why	page
very	boy	ask	letter
after	follow	went	mother
thing	came	men	answer
our	want	read	found
just	show	need	study
name	also	land	still
good	around	different	learn
sentence	form	home	should
man	three	us	America
think	small	move	world
say	set	try	high