

WOWAC

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AND THE PENDULUM SWINGS AGAIN THIS TIME IT'S CALLED "SCIENCE OF READING"

EDITORIAL COMMENT BY JOHN PFEIFER, PRESIDENT, VOWAC PUBLISHING CO.



Education listservs and buzz words are exploding with today's hot term, *science of reading*. So move over 'balanced literacy', and make room for research-based reading instruction.

It seems the educational pundits have managed to trip over their own feet....again. But this time they seem to be falling over some old school ideas.

The term "science of reading" refers to the research conducted by reading experts on how we learn to read. It seems some 50 or 60 year old idea (probably more) that explicit instruction is essential to learning how to read. That includes phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension instruction.

You can call it whatever you want. The "science of reading" as defined by today's education vernacular leans heavily toward a phonics based approach. There! I said it. PHONICS!

You can take all of your Reading Essentials, Daily 5's, Reading

Recovery's, Words Their Way and a host of other programs; without a solid, sound phonics based approach, you will hardly attain the desired results needed for the kids that need it the most. yes, I just put my foot in it....and it's deep!

The balance literacy approaches claim to incorporate some phonics, but they rarely, if ever, align with the more sequential approaches of a phonics-based program. That's one of the main reasons why VoWac schools have the success rates they have. We have never been a proponent of "just a little phonics". On the contrary. Doing so is not only less effective - it's not effective at all.

Ok....this is where we hear..."Phonics just isn't fun to teach." And you know what? You're right. But then neither is math, or civics or grammar. Y'all took strategies classes....create some strategies! Make it fun! That's your job. I'll go out on a narrow

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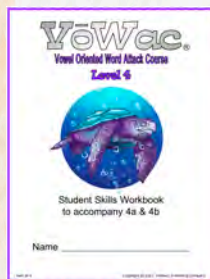
We Asked & We Listened

Over the years, VoWac has made many changes in order to accommodate the needs of teachers and students.

In early spring, 2021, VoWac posted a questionnaire about changing the binding of the workbooks. This came about due to numerous voiced concerns about students not being able to easily remove the perforated pages from the workbooks. We know in many classrooms, teacher assistants or classroom volunteers tore out pages in advance.

When students tried to remove the pages, they would often tear their work in half or mutilate the edges. It doesn't have to be a tear causing event but sometimes it just happens.

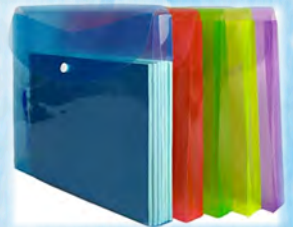
As a result of the input received VoWac will be offering a shrink-wrapped student



packet, just as we have done with Level K. Level Four will be in the lead to see the initial change. The remaining levels (One, Two, and Three) will see the change as existing inventory is depleted.

Storing the packets may be problematic. We would suggest an expandable storage envelope. They are inexpensive and can be purchased at any office supply store or other locations such as Target, Walmart, etc. We will continue to scrutinize this change and will make modifications when and where needed.

We sincerely hope this makes everyone's life, especially our young students, a little easier. Please contact VoWac with any problems you have with any of our products.



SCIENCE OF READING continued from page one

limb here and state the obvious. The teacher, first and foremost, has to make it fun for him or herself. When you do that, your students will see it as fun. There is nothing in a teaching recipe book that will cook that for you.

That's how I've always done it! It's how I learn!

Teachers will tend to teach using one method over another. How do we make that choice? We don't teach how we were taught. We teach how we, ourselves learn. The strategies we use, the mnemonics, the crutches....all the little quirks we've acquired over the years....THAT'S how we determine our teaching methods.

Teaching methods and learning styles go hand-in-hand. That notion is something most programs fail to mention, yet alone use. That's another reason why teachers using VoWac see the success they do. They understand learning modalities. It's something VoWac builds into its program.

Other influences of how teachers teach include the training they received and the curriculum purchased by their school district. On a bright note, institutions of higher learning are feeling increased pressure to teach research-based strategies. The college bastions of whole-language philosophies are crumbling. This is a win-win for schools and children. Schools will typically adhere to the philosophies of the the leading higher institutions. As they change - so will public schools.

There's so much more

Back to this science of reading beast - there's a lot more to it. There is more than phonics. First, reading comprehension, that complex task that hinges on cognitive and language processes. The researchers have included two more needed skills that need our attention - working memory and auditory processing.

Working memory is not the same as simple memory. An

example of the latter is children memorizing sight words, as well as the letters and sounds used to make up those words. Part of their brain becomes their personal file clerk - tapping into the brain parts to access what is needed for word recall.

Working memory is a higher order process. It allows children to use phonetic rules and memorize strategies needed for phonics and decoding. This is the 'how' and 'why' words are spelled and sounded out the way they are....mechanics and construction of the language. A phonological working memory that is NOT developed will typically show in children with developmental language problems.

Processing speech sounds is the fastest thing the brain does. It is not safe to assume that a child's auditory processing is fully developed, even though most reading instruction assumes it is. There are many factors that would contribute to this error in thinking. Any history of ear infections or other auditory processing disorders can and will have a negative impact on a child's ability to process sounds.

These factors can effect the ability to decipher small changes and nuances in sounds. And this will cause a struggle to learning phonics.

And we're back....almost full circle

And back to the pendulum....the science of reading. Call it what you will....it's merely another buzz word that will be turned and twisted over time. Let's hope the the swing toward phonics and the explicit instruction needed to go with it catches on for a long time. If you go back 50 or 60 years (maybe more), those kids learned how to read using phonics based instruction. They weren't ahead of their time.... no, not at all.... but they did set a pretty good pace to follow.

i got some cool stuff!

... and it was all free!

When VoWac started posting to Facebook a decade ago, we weren't sure where it would go, how long it would last, the impact it could have....we were just told to have fun and don't always try to sell stuff! And with that, we decided to submit posts that teachers could actually use....almost all of it - FREE!!!

To be honest, it is often frustrating. VoWac has spent quite a bit of time coming up with promotional items and we are unable to give them away. In some cases, the promotion is state specific, but usually it's open to all. Often, the only thing a person need do is dial up the telephone. In other instances, a simple email is required.

Even now, there are give-a-ways that have been posted for months, and set there today!

Facebook posts include free teaching tools, games, printouts, lists, seasonal coloring pages ...there's even paper dolls with various themes! Most of it is FREE!

One of the coolest things posted is a complete set of



alphabet wrist bands. These are great for PreK and K as children learn the alphabet.

And they are available in both the Upright and *Slant*.

Someone asked for a complete list of VoWac's spelling words for Levels One and Two. We posted them for everyone Paper craft projects are scattered throughout the posts. You'll find everything from origami animals to 3-D pop-up greeting cards, preschool activities and classroom posters.

All FREE!

Make it easy to get at these freebies. Like and follow us on Facebook. And when you share...you become eligible for even more free give-a-ways. It's just one of our ways to say thank you! VoWac truly appreciates your support. When you help us gain exposure in schools; public, private and home, you help teachers and children across the country.

Make Phonics & Spelling Hands-On

Doing something different makes a lesson unique & memorable

Practice spelling words that are often confused using magnetic letters, paper or Scrabble® tiles.

Dictate a sentence out loud and have students spell a target word correctly. For example, use the letters 't', 'w', 'o', and 'o'. Dictate sentences using 'to', 'two', or 'too'.

Have students identify a variety of objects around the classroom. Have them create a written list. After each object, have students indicate a part of speech and list the objects' use or purpose (v: push, open adj. color, texture) Alternative: Select a specific letter pattern that must be identified, exp. things with

Choose a certain day of the week where you display a certain pattern, i.e., 'EA'. When children return inside from a recess, instruct them to randomly select a letter from the "letter stash" (a box or bag that you keep letters). They are to place the letter they chose in the initial or final position of your pattern. As they place their letter, they say the new word created. Have them define it or use it in a sentence.

Create a take-home scavenger hunt

Make a list of things (using a certain spelling pattern) that students might see going to and from school. Have them write down where they saw the item they found. Option: Make BINGO sheets listing the items. I.E., 'ai' and 'ay' words - train, "Main" street, wet "paint", Saint Paul's Church, 'hay' stack, 'clay' flower pot, blue'jay', etc.

Write sentences on strips of paper. Cut the words apart and place them in envelopes. Have your students reassemble the sentence. Option: Print words on index cards representing the parts of speech. Have them pick one or two words from each category and make a sentence. Let them use more words or trade words so sentences make more sense.

Create as many words as possible using several of VoWac's 30-sided letter dice or Boggle® dice. Encourage students to create a set number and size of words, i.e., five different four- to five- letter

"I'M GLAD I FOUND VOWAC!"

I discovered VoWac almost ten years ago while attending a conference in Nashville, TN. It was at the end of the show and exhibitors were scrambling to tear down. The VoWac rep stopped and gave me his full attention as if there was all the time in the world.

We talked about what I wanted to see happen within my home-school curriculum and discussed some of the options available for buying and leasing.

I found that VoWac was as easy to use as it was effective. I've seen my children's reading skills improve dramatically and maintain each and every year.

I'm glad I found VoWac. It is a program that fits in nicely with all of my other curriculum. I appreciate the support I receive from VoWac. Anytime I have called with a question or concern, I was provided a solution as well as options - not to mention a ton of additional support that I didn't expect.

Thank you, VoWac!

~ Summer



Virginia homeschool mom extraordinaire, Summer Pate (front center) and her husband, James (rear center) and their busy crew of kids have been in the VoWac circle for almost ten years.

THE SLIDE

Students are falling behind in all grades, but especially in Grades K and 1. Research suggests a 90 percent chance that a student who struggles with reading in Grade 1 will continue to struggle unless we intervene to close this opportunity gap. Additional research indicates that students not at level after third grade will likely continue to lag more and more each year every year after. Establishing essential skill sets in kindergarten through grade two will provide a much better opportunity for children to be successful throughout all of their school years.

DO YOU WANT TO CLOSE THE GAP?

VoWac offers a pilot program that includes FREE skills workbooks. We'll even loan you the teaching materials. Use VoWac for the entire school year. Compare it to any other program. If you're getting better results with something else - you better buy it! Over 95% of the schools participating in our pilot program have adopted in part or whole. Why.....because it works! Contact VoWac for details. Your pilot program is waiting for you!

Doing a few other things besides VoWac...



Mrs. Alicia Hammond's kindergarten class race against the clock to put the alphabet in order without help. She proudly says, "Each week, their time improves!"

DEATH MASKS

Each year, Kyle Erdahl's sixth graders study ancient Egypt. Helping them create their own death masks has been a true delight. We won't deny the fact that is is probably the quietest 30 minutes or so that any of the students has ever been. Mr. Erdahl is on the far right. Jodi Moritz, far left, brings in part of her Egyptian collection of artifacts to share with the class.



John Pfeifer, from VoWac, demonstrates to Mrs. Laura Cassens' class, what it's like to have the Egyptian death mask made. Her students then helped make masks for each other. Mrs. Cassens teaches at the Pembroke Hutterite Colony

