

Helping Your Student

Reading Resources

From now on, we will have a regular feature listing web-based resources to help with instruction in a particular subject. We have chosen to begin with reading, as it is the most important. Students who struggle with reading are handicapped in every other subject, including math. A student's reading ability at the end of grade 1 is a powerful predictor of future academic success, salary, health, even length of life.

FOR PARENTS AND TUTORS

[ABeCeDarian](#)

This is an easy-to-use program for developing phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency and (to a lesser extent) vocabulary and comprehension from levels K-3. The lessons are clearly laid out in an easy-to-follow fashion. The program developer, Dr. Michael Bend, has drawn extensively from the best features of Lindamood-Bell, Phono-Graphix, Direct Instruction and recent research on fluency and accelerated learning to incorporate the critical components in an easy-to-use way. The materials are inexpensive, and the author answers questions and runs a Yahoo group to assist users of the program, whether they are parents, teachers or tutors.

[Funnix](#)

Funnix is a beginning reading program developed from the extremely effective Direct Instruction (DISTAR) reading programs which have been successful with tens of thousands of disadvantaged, learning disabled and special-needs children. DISTAR has also been used to accelerate the progress of young gifted students. Funnix is for parents or tutors and is a CD-based program. The adult controls the mouse, and proceeds to the next part of the lesson only when the student is successful. There is a workbook for Funnix 1 and a storybook for Funnix 2. Funnix 2 takes students to a late second grade reading level. Fluency work and writing skills are incorporated into each lesson. There is a placement test and parent instructions included with the CD, and the authors are responsive to questions through the web-site.

[Headsprout](#)

Headsprout Early Reading is aimed at children aged 4-7, but can also be used with older struggling readers who lack decoding skills. It teaches the essential skills for reading in an engaging way (the music and graphics are outstanding), and both school- and home-users are offered a money-back guarantee (some conditions apply). Children can do the online lessons independently, but need to be monitored by an adult to ensure they are following directions and reading out loud. The stories can be printed out and need to be read with a parent or other adult. The first half of Headsprout is appropriate for 4-5 year old children; the second half takes

readers to a middle second-grade level. There is a great deal of information for parents and teachers on the website, and the research base is extensive. An internet connection is required, as the instruction is individualized to each child and delivered "live." Customer support is outstanding.

[Academic Success For All Learners](#)

Dr. Alan Hofmeister at Utah State University took some of the federally-developed linguistic phonics materials from the 1970's and re-issued them with support materials for parents and teachers. These are very engaging little decodable books with plenty of practice built in as children learn to apply their phonics skills. Included are sound and word review pages and periodic benchmark tests. There are many free resource materials on the website, and Dr. Hofmeister or his staff will answer questions and are very helpful on the telephone. The quality of the books is very high: nicely-printed on sturdy, glare-free heavy paper, designed to withstand repeated use.

[Reading Success](#) *(for reading comprehension -- Grade 3 and up)*

Dr. Bob Dixon, author of several Direct Instruction programs, has turned his talent to producing some materials to teach reading comprehension strategies to middle grade students who have difficulty with summarizing, finding the main idea, inferring, and so forth. The materials have a lot of Canadian content. Direct instruction strategies are used. The teacher/parent needs to explicitly demonstrate the strategy, do it with the student, and then monitor as the student applies it independently. This product is for students who have at least Grade 4 level decoding skills.

[Rewards](#) *(decoding skills for older kids, plus non-fiction reading strategies)*

This is an excellent program for helping middle and secondary students develop their skills in fluent decoding of long words -- circumnavigation, heterogeneity, transcontinental, etc. --which make up such a large part of content-area reading. REWARDS Intermediate teaches the same word decoding strategies, but with vocabulary appropriate for students in grades 4-6. The later lessons in each level concentrate on building rate and fluency. These programs are designed for whole class usage (students can work in pairs on the timed reading segments), but can easily be used by tutors or parents.

[Stairway to Reading](#)

This is the Society's own reading program, for one-on-one use with students who have received some instruction but are struggling with reading. The program's logic is similar to that of Phono-Graphix, and includes a teacher's manual, student reading material, lessons, and supplementary activities. All components can be downloaded from the Internet free of charge.

[Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons](#)

Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons is an earlier adaptation of DISTAR reading for parents, and is very popular in the home-schooling community. On this site Dr. Phyllis Haddox, a co-author, offers other resources and some training materials to help parents using the book, which is aimed at very beginning readers (ages 4-6).

[Teach Your Children To Read Well](#)

Michael Maloney, of the Quinte Learning Centre in Belleville, Ontario, has developed this program (grade 1-8) for home-schoolers. It combines Direct Instruction and Precision Teaching techniques in a user-friendly way. There are many free resources available on the website as well, and the author is responsive to questions via e-mail or the 800 telephone number. A condensed version, Toolbox for Literacy, is aimed at tutors working with older students who need intensive reading assistance and rapid skill development.

SUGGESTED WEB-SITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.dyslexics.org.uk

Much information about effective instruction in reading and writing, maintained by a knowledgeable parent & tutor in the UK

www.fcrr.org (*Florida Center for Reading Research*)

Many interesting presentations on effective teaching (see under presentations by staff), as well as downloadable/printable resources for teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary and more.

<http://readbygrade3.com>

Many reading-related links

<http://ldonline.org/indepth/reading>

Articles in depth and a useful forum on which parents and teachers can post questions and get answers from experts

<http://reading.uoregon.edu>

Excellent site, lots of info, aimed at educators but clearly presented. Focus is on beginning reading skills (K-3)

www.readingrockets.org

Excellent site, general audience, lots for parents and/or teachers

These articles by Dave Ziffer, a Chicago-area parent activist, are very worthwhile:

<http://projectpro.com/ICR/Phonics/Reading.htm>

How phonics helps your child to read

<http://projectpro.com/ICR/Phonics/CriticalThinking.htm>

How phonics teaches critical thinking

<http://projectpro.com/ICR/Research/Phonics/Summary.htm>

Summary of phonics research