The Research Basis for the Hooked on Phonics® Programs

The Hooked on Phonics programs are based upon recent research on how children learn to read. They include techniques and materials to help parents effectively teach children how to read. The Hooked on Phonics **Learn to Read** program takes children through the process of learning the relationship between sounds and letters to reading words, sentences, and stories for meaning. The Hooked on Phonics **Master Reader** program teaches advanced phonics skills and reading fluency.

Research has demonstrated that a strong understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds is fundamental in learning to read. Research has also shown that exposure to reading helps reinforce these fundamental skills. The Hooked on Phonics programs combine practice in decoding or recognizing and pronouncing words with engaging books to allow children to use these skills in reading for fluency and meaning.

Children initially learn strategies to decode individual words and then immediately implement this new knowledge to read stories and books that were specifically designed to include the words and letter-patterns the child has just learned.

The Hooked on Phonics programs incorporate these key elements that are essential to helping children become fluent readers.

Word Recognition and Reading Ability

It is well documented that the ability to recognize words is the critical factor in beginning reading development. Word recognition problems play a major role in dyslexia and reading disabilities.[1]

In the early grades, a child's ability to recognize individual words plays a significant role in determining reading ability.[2] For example, this ability to recognize individual words accounts for 80 percent of a first-grader's reading comprehension.

[1] Bertelson, 1986; Just & Carpenter, 1987; Morrison, 1984, 1987; Morrison & Manis, 1982; Olson, Kliegl, Davidson, & Foltz, 1985; Siegel, 1985; Vellutino, 1979

*The Hooked on Phonics **Learn to Read** program, recognizing that, in order to become successful readers, children must have a strong foundation in word recognition skills, provides the basic steps that lead to fast, automatic word recognition.*

Research has shown that low reading ability at the beginning stages is much more frequently the result of inadequate word-recognition skills than of poor comprehension. Therefore, to ensure success in reading, children need both exposure to and explicit instruction in how to recognize words.[3] Readers cannot rely upon context strategies but must acquire fast, automatic word-recognition strategies to become skilled readers.

Fluent readers are able to recognize words quickly and automatically because of their efficient decoding processes, not by using context to speed word recognition.[4] Research demonstrates that good readers do not skip words or rely on context but read virtually every word and see all of the letters.[5]

Studies have demonstrated that teaching children to guess the meaning of words by context, instead of strengthening their ability to decode and recognize words, decreases the odds that children will learn to read well.[6]

*Hooked on Phonics **Learn to Read** starts by teaching students the alphabetic principle through phonics instruction and avoids reliance on "context clues." Hooked on Phonics **Master Reader** also relies on the alphabetic principle, with a focus on advanced phonics skills.*

The Role of Print Exposure and Fluency in Word Recognition

The more children read, the more opportunities they have to develop fast, automatic word recognition and decoding skills, which are the building blocks for reading for meaning. It is important to remember that many children who seem to have problems with comprehension, are really demonstrating problems with decoding skills and fluency. Because these students have to devote so much attention to slowly and carefully decoding words, they have less attentional processes for interpreting the meaning of a passage.

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[2] Adams, Treiman,& Pressley, 1996; Bertelson, 1986; Chall, 1983b; Curtis, 1980; Ehri, 1992; Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Perfetti, 1985; Richardson, DiBenedetto, & Adler, 1982; Stanovich, 1986, 1992; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; NICHD 2000

[3] See Adams, Treiman,& Pressley,1996; Fielding-Barnsley, 1997; Gough, 1983; Liberman, 1982; Leu, DeGroff, & Simons, 1986; Mitchell, 1982; Perfetti, 1985; Stanovich, 1980, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1992; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; NICHD, 2000

[4] Perfetti, 1985; Share & Stanovich, 1995; Stanovich, 1986, for reviews

[5] For research in eye movements see Balota, Pollatsek & Rayner, 1985; Ehrlich & Rayner, 1981; Hogaboam, 1983; Just & Carpenter, 1980, 1987; Perfetti, 1985; Pollatsek, Rayner, & Balota, 1986

[6] Foorman, B., Francis, D.,Winikates, D., Mehta, P., Schatschneider, C., & Fletcher, J. , in press

Yet for skilled readers, decoding is automatic, enabling them to focus more upon the meaning of the passage. Therefore, to become fluent readers, children must practice reading stories and texts. Developing fluency and rereading becomes especially important after children have learned to decode words.[7]

*Both the Hooked on Phonics **Learn to Read** and Hooked on Phonics **Master Reader** programs include books and stories by award-winning authors and illustrators that are integrated into the program specifically to correspond with the child's decoding ability. Reading, rereading, and reading aloud are encouraged to provide practice toward attaining fluency.*

Research has shown that children vary in the amount of practice they need to decipher a word. Some need to read a word only once to recognize it again with great speed while others may need multiple readings. For example, Assink (1984) found that the average child needed to read a word four to eight times before it was automatized; whereas, other readers often needed as many as 15 to 20 exposures in a relatively short period of time.

This points to the importance of rereading books multiple times to support growth in word recognition. Moreover, it is vitally important for students to read text that is tied to their independent reading level (on which they are 90 to 95 percent accurate), and for that text to provide specific practice in the skills being learned.[8]

*The Hooked on Phonics **Learn to Read** and Hooked on Phonics **Master Reader** programs provide children with the necessary practice through interesting and engaging stories. Because the words in the stories are the same words and letter patterns that are taught in the skills-based lessons, children learn the words and then gain fluency by using them in context.*

*The Hooked on Phonics **Learn to Read** and Hooked on Phonics **Master Reader** programs include illustrations and interesting stories to grab the reader's attention and motivate the child to read the stories over and over again. The program also reminds parents to encourage their children to read and reread the books and stories.*

The Precursors of Word Recognition Skill: Building Awareness of Sound-Symbol Relationships

Studies have demonstrated that the best predictor of early reading ability, even before the child begins to read[9], is his or her understanding of how words are made up of sounds.[10]

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[7] Samuels, Scherner, & Reinking, 1992; Dowhower, 1987
[8] Beck & Juel, 1995
[9] Bradley & Bryant, 1983, 1985; Fox & Routh, 1975; Lundberg, Olofsson, & Wall, 1980; Maclean, Bryant, & Bradley, 1987; Share, et al., 1984

When children are taught these skills of hearing the sounds in words, they demonstrate greater abilities in reading, word recognition, and spelling.[11]

Research findings indicate that it is critical to learn to perceive the sounds within words. The process of learning to read increases beginning reader's sensitivity to words and sounds.[12] Just as a basic understanding of how words relate to sounds is necessary to decode written words, the act of decoding strengthens the ability to perceive sounds in verbal and written language.[13]

For older kids, the sound-symbol relationship can be reinforced by teaching syllable types. Students can learn to divide words into syllables, giving them the ability to read and spell longer, age-appropriate words and to recognize spelling patterns. Giving students the opportunity to divide words into syllables helps them recognize the syllabic units.[14]

*The Hooked on Phonics **Learn to Read** program provides children with multiple ways to learn this critical skill by helping students develop an understanding of phonology through learning to decode words. The Hooked on Phonics **Master Reader** program emphasizes syllable types and dividing words into syllables.*

The Role of Decoding Ability in Word Recognition

Phonological abilities play a key role in the development of decoding ability. In order to automatically recognize the relationship between words and sounds, children must learn the general principles of how the spelling of the word corresponds to its sound and must see enough examples of spelling-to-sound relationships to support fast decoding.

Many children have difficulty determining the relationships between the printed word, its letters, and its sounds.[15] Haskell, Foorman, & Swank (1992) found that students who receive explicit instruction in letter-sound correspondences do better on word recognition tests than students who receive whole-word training or no training. Students benefit from programs that provide specific, systematic instruction in segmenting and blending sounds[16] that can help them decode words. Brown and Felton (1990) found significant

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[10] Bradley & Bryant, 1985; Juel, et al., 1986; Liberman, 1982; Lomax & McGee, 1987; Mann, Tobin, & Wilson, 1987; Share, Jorm, Maclean, & Matthews, 1984; Stanovich, 1988; Stanovich, Cunningham, & Cramer, 1984; Tunmer & Nesdale, 1985; Vellutino & Scanlon, 1987; Wagner & Torgesen, 1987; Williams, 1984; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; NICHD, 2000

[11] Bradley & Bryant, 1985; Cunningham, 1990; Fox & Routh, 1984; Lundberg, 1987; Olofsson & Lundberg, 1985; Torneus, 1984; Treiman & Baron, 1983; Vellutino & Scanlon, 1987

[12] Ehri, 1979, 1985, 1987; Fielding-Barnsley, 1997; Morais, Alegria, & Content, 1987; Perfetti, 1985; Perfetti, et al., 1987; Wagner, Torgesen, & Rashotte, 1994

[13] Perfetti, 1987; Stanovich, 1987, 1988

[14] Moats, 2001

[15] Frith, 1985; Gough & Hillinger, 1980

[16] Foorman, 1997; Vellutino, 1991; Vellutino & Scanlon, 1991; Vellutino, et al., 1996; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; NICHD, 2000

trends supporting the use of structured phonics instruction over literature-based instruction for at-risk first-grade students. This type of instruction is especially important since studies have demonstrated that a child's ability to decode words in first grade predicts 80 to 90 percent of reading comprehension ability in third grade.[17] As a result, many experts view decoding as the major task in learning to read.[18]

*The Hooked on Phonics **Learn to Read** program provides both explicit and systematic instruction in the major sound-symbol correspondences, and extensive practice in these associations at the word, sentence, and text level. The Hooked on Phonics **Master Reader** program adds the additional element of practice at the syllable level. The activities in both programs help children become fluent in segmenting and blending sounds and then automatically recognizing and reading words.*

Phonics and Reading Together

Perhaps most important, research has shown that systematic phonics combined with reading are the most effective tools to developing a good reader. Reading that includes a high percentage of familiar patterns gives the child the opportunity to read for meaning[19].

*Both the Hooked on Phonics **Learn to Read** and Hooked on Phonics **Master Reader** programs include books and stories by award-winning authors and illustrators, woven into the program at the appropriate decoding level of the child to provide opportunities for the child to read for meaning, enjoyment, and fluency.*

Bringing Struggling Readers Up to Speed

Giving older readers the skills they missed in early grades requires specific strategies, including matching the students' level of reading development to strengthen phonological skills, awareness of syllable patterns, and reading fluency in age-appropriate ways. These students need ample opportunities to apply the necessary, cumulative skills in practicing these skills in a systematic, structured way while reading age-appropriate books matched to their ability.[20]

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[17] Juel, 1994

[18] Foorman, Francis, & Shaywitz, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1997; Rieben & Perfetti, 1991; Vellutino & Scanlon, 1991; Vellutino, Scanlon, & Tanzman, 1994; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998

[19] Stahl, Osborn, and Pearson, 1992; Juel and Roper-Schneider, 1985; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; NICHD, 2000

[20] Moats, 2001; Curtis and Longo, 1999; Greene 1996

*The Hooked on Phonics **Master Reader** program was specifically designed to provide the older student cumulative, systematic reinforcement of phonological skills, syllable patterns, and reading fluency with books written to reflect the phonological skills and syllable patterns already learned in the program.*

Summary

This is just a small sample of the growing body of research upon which the *Hooked on Phonics* programs are based. Converging evidence from a multitude of studies supports the approach of the programs in using explicit and systematic phonics instruction coupled with stories and books to enable children to read for meaning. The phonics aspects of the programs give children the tools to learn to read, and the books included in the programs give children the necessary opportunities to practice reading successfully.

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