

Communication Link

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Project Read in the Classroom

I Waynesburg, KY

Lapeer, MI

York, PA

Vineland, NJ

Workshops in
MN

New Materials

Chester, NJ

Web Site: [www.
projectread.com](http://www.projectread.com)

E-mail:
projread@mn.uswest.net

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Project Read

Spring 2000

WAYNESBURG, KY



Teacher Gail Psimer and Waynesburg Elementary third graders scribe during primary Project Read reading block.

“Hooray for Reading!”

Project Read began at Waynesburg Elementary School, Waynesburg, Kentucky in the fall of 1998, on a trial basis, with several children identified as having the most severe reading difficulties being served. A team of administrators, teachers and parents visited sites where Project Read strategies were being used. We had researched reading models and believed Project Read strategies would best meet the student needs as profiled. A trained volunteer worked before school one-on-one with several students and an instructional assistant followed up with additional help in a small group setting during the school day. We were very pleased with student progress and their improved attitudes toward school.

Student Profile

As we analyzed data from multiple sources—KIRIS (Kentucky Instructional Results Information System), CTBS, Brigance, Slosson, anecdotal records, teacher observations, parental input—we noted the following commonalities among students with the most severe difficulties in reading:

- low reading scores
- average or above ability to learn but failure to read
- high rate of referrals for remediation
- students with limited exposure to language-rich experiences

- diverse learning styles, and
- need to be mobile, active, engaged learners

After researching various models, we chose Project Read because we believed the strategies of direct instruction, multisensory approach, a sequential presentation of concept/skills, phonetic approach and intense one-on-one instruction would provide us the framework to meet the needs of our students.

A Balanced Reading Program

Project Read also strongly fit much of the criteria specified in the Program of Studies (Kentucky Department of Education 1998) for a balanced reading program.

- Use variety of genres (e.g. stories, poems, articles).
- To make meaning from reading materials.
- Use auditory and visual strategies to understand words.
- Employ sight word vocabulary.
- Use word identification strategies...phonemic awareness to read.
- Understand that letters make sense.
- Develop awareness of sounds and patterns in language.
- Apply patterns to unknown words in context.
- Use word structure and word meaning cues to make sense of text.

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Kentucky Early Reading Incentive Grant

In the spring of 1999 our school was awarded the Kentucky Early Reading Incentive Grant to support the implementation of Project Read with funding for staff training, teacher and student materials, and parental involvement. In June 1999, K-4 teachers and parents received four days of phonology training from Dr. Mary Lee Enfield and Victoria Greene. After receiving the teaching guides for the Project Read components, the staff received five days of follow-up demonstration teaching by Project Read consultants Cherie Didier and Nancy Raskind in August, October and November 1999.

Implementation Strategies

To support the implementation of Project Read Phonology, we designed a daily 90-minute Project Read reading block. We hired an instructional assistant to coordinate the program and two additional part-time assistants. All primary children were tested using the Brigance and Slosson. Each classroom teacher divided the reading block into three 30-minute sessions with students rotating through each: direct instruction (teacher), oral reading (volunteer) and seat work (instructional assistant). All primary students K-3 receive Project Read Phonology instruction. Additional intense one-on-one instruction is provided for those identified with the most severe reading problems through scheduled sessions with instructional assistants; and they were also referred for the Extended School Services program offered three days per week after school. We supplement the Project Read Phonology sequence of skills with existing reading materials.

Parental Involvement

Parents were involved from the beginning as we researched the best reading model for our students. They were also part of the visitation team and their input was very valuable in establishing the support needed in our school. Several parents attended the initial four day training

Clipping Consonant Sounds with Finger Scissors...

Teacher Melissa Durham and K-1 students during a primary reading block.



session and the follow-up evening work sessions. Some of these parents work as instructional assistants and/or serve as volunteers during the reading block.

In October 1999 we held two evening reading workshops for parents and their children. A team of primary teachers explained our need for a balanced reading program, described the profile of our students with severe reading problems, presented an overview of Project Read, shared samples of Phonology lessons, and shared the vision of our literacy plan for Waynesburg Elementary. The emphasis on reading was highlighted through a school-wide "Hooray for Reading Celebration" held in the evening for all students K-6. We invited students, teachers, administrators and community leaders to be readers and/or storytellers. Most of the presenters selected a topic or favorite book, dressed in costume, and brought props to attract listeners to their sessions. The South Lincoln County Family Resource Center supported this event by supplying free reading material to all families who attended and the P.T.O. provided refreshments.

Further Implementation

- Project Read Reading Comprehension (Story Form) and Linguistics training will be provided for teachers and parents in June 2000. This training will be offered to anyone for a nominal fee.
- Project Read consultants will continue to observe and provide feedback to teachers.
- Training in all components will be provided for new personnel as they are hired.

Data Collection

April Gregory, Project Read coordinator, has collected this data at Waynesburg Elementary School during the 1999-2000 school year. Remember, we have been implementing Project Read for only four months!

- ALL students identified with severe reading problems have improved.
- A 4% decrease in students grades 1-4 scoring below grade level as compared to last year.
- A 15% decrease in below-grade-level reading scores for the 1998-99 third graders.

The new KCCT (Kentucky Core Content Test) will give us additional feedback and will be administered in April 2000. We realize that we have just begun, but we believe that Project Read strategies will impact student reading and help us as a school to break the illiteracy cycle in our community.

Contact:

Mary Jo Gibson, Principal
Waynesburg Elementary School
Tel: 606-379-6413

LAPEER, MI

Lowest Economic School; Highest MEAP Reading Scores Governor Awards Schickler Elementary “Golden Apple”

Development of Project Read began in the 1995-96 school year. Schickler Elementary had a poverty level below the state average.

The teachers at Schickler were very interested in educating students to be polite, cooperative members of society but were not worried about standardized academic test scores. Our students were coming in the door every morning with many problems. Divorce, low income, transient home lives. The general rule of thumb was that the poor kids had such dysfunctional family lives that the school should be a place where the kids could feel comfortable not threatened by academic stress; they had enough stress at home. Standardized tests scores were low but “that was all right, those poor Schickler students have a hard time, just let them be...” was the pervasive attitude of the staff and community.

Then two things happened:

■ First, the Michigan Education Assessment Program, MEAP, was being enforced as a way to compare school districts and increase or withhold funding.

■ Second, Project Read Phonology and Comprehension were introduced at Schickler Elementary.

Staff Development through Modeling

One of the special education teachers had taken a class and began to talk about ‘red words,’ ‘finger spelling,’ and ‘arm tapping.’ She asked if she could try these new techniques in the classrooms. She did. Over time, teachers saw kids learning to read and comprehend. The special education teacher could not spend a lot of time in each classroom. So I, the Title One teacher, took a Phonology class. I modeled in every first-to-third grade classroom.

Sharing ideas and materials was a two way street between the classroom teachers and myself. We were learning and supporting each other. We helped each other by observing and critiquing our successes and failures. The classroom teachers

scrambled to find Project Read classes so that we all could be educated. They incorporated the strategies into their daily teaching, often leaving out parts of the curriculum in favor of the Project Read strategies.

We were very hesitant to teach to the MEAP test. We wanted the strategies that our students learned to be good strategies, ones that were worth learning with or without the fear of a test. We wanted good common sense and sound teaching practices to prevail. That is what happened with Project Read. The only extra strategy that we added was Question Answer Relationship. We did not change any of our text books. We just learned how to use them differently.

Results and Rewards

The first year that our test scores went up, people were shocked. What was happening over there at Schickler? What do they know that we don’t? What we knew was how to use multisensory approaches with direct instruction to teach reading and comprehension strategies sequentially, not hit and miss workbook or teacher editions that chose skills just based on the story.

In the last year, things have moved quite quickly. Schickler’s test scores have gone up again. In fact, Schickler, the lowest economic school in the district, scored higher than any other school. The Project Read Phonology and Comprehension have been adapted as part of the curriculum by the district.

Schickler Elementary qualified for Governor Engler’s “Golden Apple Award” based on 1997-98* and 1998-99* MEAP tests. (See chart below.) The governor has also proposed a \$1000 bonus for teachers and employees at schools which posted the highest scores on MEAP tests or made significant gains on the exams.

Schickler Elementary School in Lapeer, MI
Percent of Students Performing at Satisfactory Level
Michigan Educational Assessment Program Tests (MEAP)

	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98*	98-99*
Reading-Information	44.7	53.4	37.8	46.2	28.3	60.4*	80.5*
Reading-Story Selection	86.8	72.4	77.8	76.9	67.4	70.8*	90.2*

Editor’s Note: In 1999-2000 Schickler Elementary merged with Irwin Elementary, another school in the Lapeer District.

Contact:
Roberta Rickett, Title I
Tel: 810-667-0078

YORK, PA

S.G.I. Program Paired with Project Read Helps Students Achieve High Academic Goals.

York Country Day School is a college preparatory school affiliated with York College. Students range from two-and-one-half years old through twelfth grade.

Investigation—Examining a Need

Using Project Read materials as the main reading curriculum in Small Group Instruction (S.G.I.) at York Country Day School (YCDS) in York, PA was the result of a long process of investigation, which started when YCDS first began to look into establishing its new program for children with different learning needs.

For many years educators at York Country Day School saw that the population of the school reflected the need for a language arts program for bright children whose academic performance was not in keeping with their measured intelligence. The school's philosophy made it incumbent upon the teachers and administrators to attend to this. In the philosophy, it is stated: "... **Although our academic program is challenging and is designed for students who possess high academic goals, we do recognize the uniqueness of each individual child and strive to help each fulfill his or her potential.**" In February of 1998, the wheels were set in motion to create and implement a program called Small Group Instruction (S.G.I.) which would address the reading needs of students with different learning styles.

Small Group Instruction for Half Day

It was decided that S.G.I. would be a half-day program for second and third graders with a special teacher skilled in providing a language arts program that engaged the auditory, visual and kinesthetic senses. While several different programs were studied, it was apparent that the Project Read curriculum lent itself to the specific needs of YCDS most appropriately. It was multisensory, the materials were affordable, and local training was available. Project Read curriculum would also work with a daily schedule in which the children returned to the regular classroom for content area instruction.

Transitioning

Initially, there was concern that the S.G.I. children might have difficulty transitioning between the S.G.I. classroom and the second-grade classroom. But the move between the two rooms was accomplished without difficulty. Peggy Street, the classroom teacher, who instructs in the content areas stated that: "The benefits of Project Read extended into all other subject areas of each child's school day. Reading word problems, listening for directions, writing science observations

and participation in class presentations and discussions are areas in which Project Read students are better equipped to succeed."

Funding

Each child's participation in S.G.I. with Project Read instruction is funded by an individual tuition premium, which is designed to be kept at the cost of, or below the cost of private tutoring for that child.

Teacher Qualification and Training

The qualifications for the S.G.I. instructor are Pennsylvania state certification in elementary education and a reading specialist certification. Training in Project Read curriculum strands was completed off-site through the outreach program of a nearby school for children with special needs.

Satisfaction

Since the inception of the program, feedback from parents, students, administrators and other teachers has been extremely positive. The initial six participants in S.G.I. showed a dramatic increase in standardized achievement test scores over the previous year. However, the most notable result has been their increased enjoyment of reading, and the self esteem that flows as a result of having been successful.

The headmaster of YCDS, Taylor Smith, comments: "In my thirty years in education, I have been involved in many innovations in education. However, I believe nothing has given me more satisfaction than helping to create the S.G.I. program here at Country Day. Nothing has had more direct impact on the learning of a group of our children. To see the dramatic improvements in the reading test scores of our children is satisfying, but it is even more exciting to see the blossoming self confidence of every child involved in the program."

One parent summed up her experiences with Project Read and S.G.I. as follows: "Before Project Read, all I heard from my son were the words 'I can't' and 'I'm stupid.' I don't hear those words at all anymore. In fact, he is very confident when it comes to his reading. He is at grade level, and is reading the same books as the other children in his class. He even asked for books for Christmas. His self esteem has improved dramatically, and he is a normal, happy kid! What more could we ask for?!"



Story Puzzle

Student Comments:

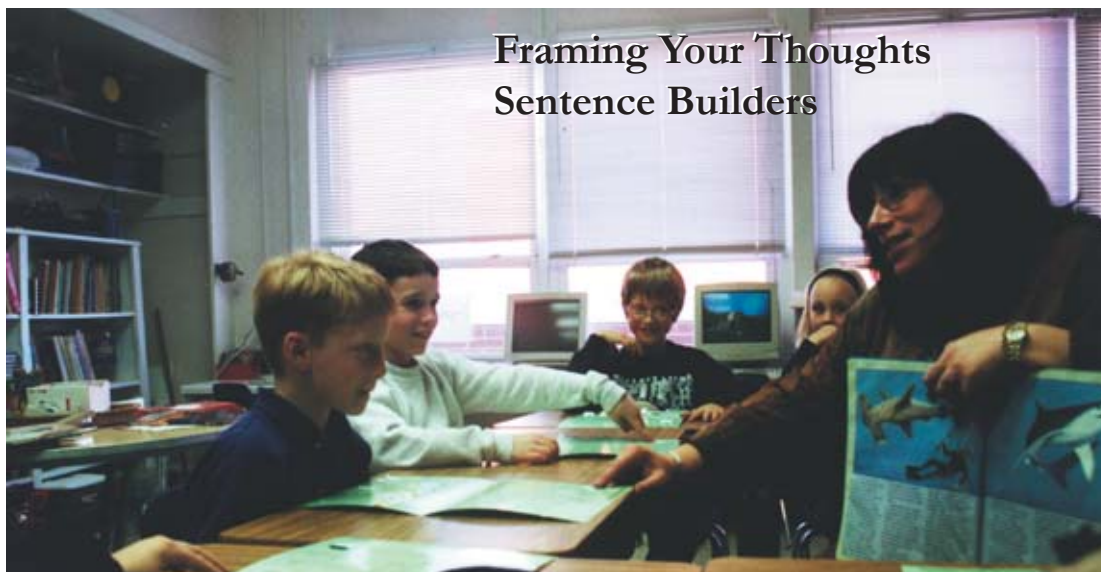
“S.G.I. is the coolest place in the school because you learn how to learn with the other class, but in a different way.” —M.S.

“We read White Fang... We learned to use a puzzle to tell about a story, and we also finger-spell our words. We love the activities in S.G.I.” —B.F.



Sentence Diagramming

“S.G.I. is fun because of the way we learn reading... we do sentence dictation... we do finger-spelling. The other class doesn’t get to do that.” —T.B.



Framing Your Thoughts Sentence Builders

At left, Emily Ritholz in the classroom with her students.

Contact:
Emily Rose Ritholz
S.G.I. Instructor, YCDS
Tel: 717-843-9805

VINELAND, NJ

Project Read Provides a Teacher-Friendly, Research-Based Program That Works For Kids.

“My teachers were looking for additional reading strategies to help their students be successful readers. Through Project Read they are able to meet the needs of their emergent readers. Project Read has been positively received by the students and their success encourages and reaffirms that we are on the right track in meeting their needs.”

—Maria Cortez-Gallagher, Principal at John Winslow Elementary

Project Read initially appealed to me for two reasons: First, I was searching for a teacher-friendly, research-based program.

Second, I was looking for an approach that would go beyond the inductive, visual and auditory approach that was not meeting the needs of the population of the students I was testing. This population was falling further and further behind in reading each year. The methods to which they were being exposed were not meeting their learning style and were failing them.

My principal, Mrs. Maria Cortez-Gallagher, agreed to allow me to pilot Project Read Phonology with one group of classified students at her school, the John Winslow Elementary School in Vineland, New Jersey. As a result of my students' progress, she and three other principals joined to have their first and second grade teachers trained in Project Read.

TEACHER TRAINING

Project Read, Language Circle provides excellent teacher training. The Phonology Strand was presented for three days this past April to thirty regular education and special education teachers in our school district. An enthusiastic, informative, well-trained Project Read instructor taught specific rules and hand gestures. The Phonology Strand was presented as a study of the English language.

Teachers were taught through direct instruction, just as they were in turn going to teach their students. The teachers all took turns “learning by doing,” practicing their clipping, skywriting, and letter formation jingles as part of the VAKT (visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile) techniques.

Teachers agreed that they learned many new things they were never aware of before. Thirty teachers left the three-day workshop armed with confidence, knowledge and four well-written, teacher-friendly manuals consisting of the Phonology Guide and the three-volume set of Lesson Plans to follow and refer to while teaching.



Students trace, feel and say / o / along with Ms. Odd puppet and Ms. Kutner

IMPLEMENTATION

Regular Education and Special Education students in the John Winslow Elementary School receive instruction together in a variety of ways. Here is a sample of teacher implementation:

Susan Kutner/Reading Specialist: I am continuing to instruct my '98-'99 pilot group for forty minutes five days a week. We are in Level 2 and doing very well. I am happy to say my students are no longer “at risk” and all their teachers have seen growth.

My new group consists of classified third and fourth graders, reading significantly below grade level at the primer and 1st grade level. They have not internalized sound symbol association and they are not automatic decoders. These students clearly lack phonemic awareness. They receive small group instruction in Project Read for 40 minutes five days a week.

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S U M M E R 2 0 0 0
LANGUAGE CIRCLE COURSES
MINNEAPOLIS

- Phonology—July 10–13, 2000
(Registration deadline: June 1, 2000)
- Reading Comprehension—July 17–20, 2000
(Registration deadline: June 15, 2000)

\$349 per person for EARLY REGISTRATION (before May 1st).
After May 1st deadline cost will be \$375 per person. All course
materials will be provided and are included in the cost.

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Available May 2000...

A consumable student workbook for each strand:

- Phonology Practice for Application & Transfer Vol. 1 – 3
- Framing Your Thoughts Practice for Application & Transfer
- Linguistics Practice for Application & Transfer
- Report Form Practice for Application & Transfer Vol. 1 – 3

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Mrs. Hendrick's Regular Education first grade class is receiving whole class instruction and then breaks into smaller groups for those students needing more reinforcement.

Mrs. Tamagni utilizes Project Read for her first grade at-risk readers and incorporates the techniques for her entire class. *"Project Read is working well with my first grade remedial and former pre-first students. They seem to enjoy the VAKT strategies. They do not realize they are repeating concepts, because it's a different approach to strengthen the same skills."*

Mrs. Davis finds, *"The Project Read program has given me additional reading strategies. This program enhances the reading capabilities of my first grade students."*

Ms. Brida, second grade teacher, correlated the HBJ scope and sequence and the Project Read Phonology scope and sequence so that all units compliment each other. *"The students are responding to the active and developmental nature of Project Read."*

Mrs. Dyer's second graders are exposed to leveled readers and HBJ, while reinforcing phonics through Project Read's strategies and scope and sequence. *"I like the way I can vary the amount of lesson-drill we do depending on the group's needs in Project Read."*

RESULTS

After pre- and post-testing with the Spache Reading Scales, my Project Read students' '98-'99 reading comprehension and automatic sight vocabulary indicated a range of a minimum of one year of growth and a maximum of two and a half years of growth.

Contact:
Susan N. Kutner
Diagnostic & Remedial Reading Specialist
Vineland, NJ Public Schools

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CHESTER, NJ

Reports Give Us Facts

Using a classroom bulletin board, teacher Barbara McAuliffe and students illustrate Project Read Report Form.



Editor's Note:

We invite you to share your Project Read/ Language Circle experiences with other Communication Link readers. Send us data, student projects, implementation models, funding, and staff development ideas.

Communication Link Editor: Kathleen A. Ogle, Tel. (507) 334-5847

Project Read/Language Circle • 800-450-0343 • fax: 651-406-8788
 e-mail: projread@mn.uswest.net • web site: <http://www.projectread.com>

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Bloomington, MN 55420
 P.O. Box 20631