

## Don't Take Our Word For It

### 2048 Kits

In [Credibility](#), the Introduction to *The Book of IFs*, it is noted that in the 1984-1985 school year the Center began a ten-year study of the effectiveness of its Reading Program.

The long-term goal of the study was to distribute 2,000 kits to classrooms cross the USA and Canada. We knew the kits would be expensive to produce because they would be printed in such small numbers. The \$831.27 price we set for each kit was necessary to cover the kit's costs. For our study to succeed, we would need to find enough teachers who had sufficient faith in the Center, based on the proven effectiveness of our math curriculum, to trust us in reading as well, and be willing to pay the high price we had set for each kit.

We trusted teachers to trust us. However, we did not aim for 2,000 kits worth of trust at the start. We set our short-term goal at 500 kits. We would publish the kits in batches of 500. Each new batch of 500 would be produced only after the previous 500 kits were sold.

The chart below shows the time frame of the 2,000 kit sales. The final total of kits in the study was 2,048, with the additional 48 kits assembled from various print over-runs. The year that only 2 kits were sold was because the next full print run was not yet ready, and we only managed to make 2 kits from previous years print over-runs.

		Students										
Kits		Ten Years										
	Sold	84-85	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90	92-91	91-92	92-93	93-94	
1984-85	280	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	70,000
1985-86	220		5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	49,500
1986-87	293			7,325	7,325	7,325	7,325	7,325	7,325	7,325	7,325	58,600
1987-88	207				5,175	5,175	5,175	5,175	5,175	5,175	5,175	36,225
1988-89	2					50	50	50	50	50	50	300
1989-90	349						8,725	8,725	8,725	8,725	8,725	43,625
1990-91	194							4,850	4,850	4,850	4,850	19,400
1991-92	236								5,900	5,900	5,900	17,700
1992-93	267									6,675	6,675	13,350
2,048												308,700

The chart above provides an estimate of the number of students across the USA and Canada who participated in our study. For estimation purposes we assumed an average of twenty-five students in each class, each year. The estimated number of students participating in our study through the tenth year was over 300,000.

Whether the number 300,000 is a reasonable approximation or not, what is clear now and was clear at the time was that there were thousands of students using the Center's Reading Program during those ten years.

### **The One Suggestion for Improvement**

For all ten years of the study, we asked teachers using the kit to evaluate its effectiveness. We also asked for any suggestions that teachers had for a way or ways to increase the kit's effectiveness. The only suggestion for a way to increase the kit's effectiveness during all that time came from English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. Their suggestion was for the Center to make a Spanish version of the Program that they could use with their ESL students.

I had taken Spanish in high school. Based on that experience, I was of the opinion that it was such a phonetically simple language that there wasn't a need for sound-symbol pictures at the beginning level for children learning Spanish. The several ESL teachers who contacted the Center had a different view. The children in their classrooms were learning either English or Spanish or both. The ones learning Spanish felt left out because the English learners had sound-pictures as their starting point and the Spanish learners did not. The ESL teachers wanted to use the same sound-picture approach for both languages.

The Spanish language uses twenty-three sounds, not forty-four. Twenty-one of the Spanish sounds were sounds already being used in the Reading Program. All we would have to do is add an additional two sounds. The added advantage of creating a Spanish version of the Program was that now both languages could be taught side-by-side to everyone in class, regardless of his or her native language.

In response to the ESL teachers request for a Spanish version of the Reading Program and with the help of several ESL teachers, the Center created a Spanish version of its Reading Program.

### **Every Child Learned - No Child Left Behind**

Every year of the ten-year study, we asked teachers who had received their kits that year to send us written reports of their successes and/or failures with the Program. We said that teachers using the kits could use any method of evaluation they, or their school, or their district, chose to use. In the tenth year, we asked every one of the 2,048 teachers in the study if there was anything they wished to add to any earlier review they had previously submitted to the Center. As was already stated in [Credibility](#), during that entire time frame and continuing to this day, there has never been a report of any child failing to learn to read or to write using the Center's Program, regardless of any child's supposed reading-readiness. EVERY child learned. NO child was ever left behind.

### **100% - Not 99.99%**

Is a learning rate of 100% for the more than 300,000 children in the ten-year study believable? Wouldn't there be at least one or two children who failed to learn to read? If I had said there was a study done that asked the parents of 300,000 healthy infants born over a ten-year period of time to use any measure they wished to assess if any of these 300,000 infants learned to talk. Would you be surprised to hear that, regardless of the assessment used, all the children would have learned to talk?

The Reading Program makes learning to read and to write as easy and as natural for children as it was for them to learn the language(s) they now speak. Just as 100% of healthy children who can hear will learn to speak, 100% (not just 99.99%) of the children using the Reading Program will learn to read and write.

### **Teacher Evaluations**

Over the course of the ten-year study and, as you can see if you read Donna J's emails included in [Credibility](#), every year since that time, we have received so many positive (and no negative) reviews of the Reading Program that we could turn them into their own book. What I would like to do now, though, is give you a representative sample of what teachers using the Reading Program over the years have thought.

#### **Excerpts From the Ten-Year Study**

Name: Kathy Casaday

State: Alabama

Number of years using the program: 2

Grade: K

"..... It meets the need of every child - from the slow learner to the gifted kindergarten child..... One parent summed it up with two words - 'It's magic!'....."

Name: Barbara Hale

State: Georgia

Number of years using the program: 1

Grade: K

"..... I have thrown out all the workbooks and am enjoying helping children get ready to read. This is the first time in 34 years that I can make that claim....."

Name: Sharon Riggs

State: Alabama

Number of years using the program: 2

Grade: 1

"..... In fourteen years of teaching Kindergarten and first grade this is the first program I've seen where all children succeed in reading and at their own rate. The program creates an excitement in learning to read and helps children to develop a love for reading at an early age....."

Name: Linda Sue Brisby  
Number of years using the program: 3

State: California  
Grade: 1

"..... The strength of B-L that continues to amaze me is the success with which the kids handle blending. They can do it before they even know why and they have such confidence....."

Name: Ann Wilder  
Number of years using the program: 1

State: Georgia  
Grade: K

"..... The Baratta-Lorton Reading Program is wonderful. I would not even want to teach Kindergarten without it. Every child in my class is able to experience success. Every child is working on his own level and progressing at his own rate. The children love reading time. Never before have I had a group of students so 'tuned in' to sounds in words! We have only used the program since January, but many of my students are already reading real books!....."

Name: Mary Siewert  
Number of years using the program: 2

State: Utah  
Grade: Pre-1st

"..... The reading program has worked wonders in my pre-1st class. The children are reading regular books and excited about every book they pickup. Each child has met with great success at every level of the program. The different stations provide the students with enough movement and variety that learning is enjoyable and fun. This program provides pre-1st graders with all the things these high energy leveled children need. It's a wonderful program! P.S. After 16 years of teaching - finally a reading program where every child meets with success!!!!....."

Name: Jamie Palmer  
Number of years using the program: 2

State: Tennessee  
Grade: K

"..... I am so pleased with the program. I have seen slow, insecure children develop into outgoing, confident writers as well as readers....."

Name: Karen Fleischer  
Number of years using the program: 3

State: Colorado  
Grade: 3

"..... I feel more excited about the program every year I use it. It's wonderful to see a child, who isn't reading at the beginning of the year, come to me and read a "paragraph" about something he's interested in and wants to share....."

Name: Sandie F. Sing  
Number of years using the program: 4

State: California  
Grade: 1

"..... Baratta-Lorton is the greatest program for students who can't read in the regular basal program. Students who are emotionally distraught, perceptual motor weak, etc. are able to read with this program!....."

Name: Kathleen Simon

State: Wisconsin

Number of years using the program: 1

Grade: K

"..... I am simply amazed at how much fun reading is with Dekodiphukan. The children enjoy their stations and helping each other. What a great example of cooperative learning! Even the very low children are working and trying things they normally would shy away from....."

Name: Victoria Puia

State: Massachusetts

Number of years using the program: 3

Grade: Readiness

"..... The Baratta-Lorton Program enables children to blend sounds faster and better than just with the Lippincott Program. The Program - Baratta-Lorton - accommodates all learners....."

Name: Connie Phelps

State: Michigan

Number of years using the program: 3 months      Grade: 1

".....However, I have used it long enough to know it is the most exciting thing I have ever used. I am now enough of a 'school expert' in the program to have two students that everyone said would never read come to me and at least make a start at reading. The most wonderful part is that the kids love it and will read anything and everything....."

Name: Lois Jackson

State: Michigan

Number of years using the program: 3

Grade: K

".....It's interesting to note that the parents who begin the year as doubters often end the year as the biggest supporters when they see that this 'strange method' works!....."

Name: Pam Greve

State: Michigan

Number of years using the program: 2

Grade: 1

".....The children are eager to read and not intimidated by a 'new' book. I never really believed first graders could write as well as they are. I feel, for the first time, that all of my kids are successful readers....."

Name: Jan Dooling

State: Alabama

Number of years using the program: 2

Grade: K

"..... Some of my children choose to do stamping, picture packets, or tiny

white or blue cards at center time instead of 'playing.' For the first time in my 12 years of teaching my book center is the most popular center in the room. The contagious enthusiasm in my classroom is very evident from the children's interest in the program and the 'products' they produce daily!....."

Name: Debbie Gordie

State: Alabama

Number of years using the program: 3

Grade: K

"..... Your program is with-out-a doubt made for children and allows them to use all their modes of learning....."

Name: Marianne Peters

State: California

Number of years using the program: 3

Grade: K-4

"..... I've used just about every technique or trick in the book to teach reading to the mildly handicapped population. I've never seen such success, such incentive as this program generates! I conference with parents constantly and they are amazed, shocked at the progress their children make under this program..... It's great fun for the children and the true 'letter readers' are now blossoming out like dandelions!....."

Name: Janice Chung

State: California

Number of years using the program: 4

Grade: K

"..... I have 12 Vietnamese speaking children and the program's continual use of pictures is a very big help in the teaching and understanding of English. It is so easy for all children to gain an understanding of phonetic reading, spelling and writing. They understand the concept of what reading is and it makes sense. It is excellent for individualization....."

Name: Sally Terrill

State: Idaho

Number of years using the program: 4

Grade: K

"..... The children are writing reams - and use the program constantly. We stamp out words daily - and spelling lessons occur naturally....."

Name: Rhonda Trihub

State: California

Number of years using the program: 2

Grade: K

"..... The best aspect of this program: The children are independent, cooperative 'learners'....."

Name: Annie Chandler

State: California

Number of years using the program: 3

Grade: K

It is interesting because each year that I've used I have at least one student in my class who comes in reading already. They are still able to really benefit from the program because they also need to learn how to blend sounds into words. I was worried that it may be keeping them back but it is great practice for them....."

Name: Carol O'Connor

State: Florida

Number of years using the program: 1

Grade: K

"..... I am especially pleased over the way every child can hear sounds and blend them into words.....it is so wonderful to have a teaching tool that every child in the room can use to their individual ability. The creative writing efforts of my class are thrilling....."

Name: Tara Bennett

State: Alabama

Number of years using the program: 2

Grade: All

"..... I have had tremendous success on all grade levels and with each type of handicap.....have really been thrilled to see students jump actual grade levels in written language and reading scores on standardized tests. The tests we have to give in Special Ed. are absolute proof that Baratta-Lorton works!....."

Name: Sheila Okin

State: California

Number of years using the program: 1

Grade: K-1

"..... All perceived themselves as 'independent readers'.....One day I overheard my students discussing how every one in our class is a teacher. This is how one student explained it to his classmate...'You are not a teacher who tells people what to do. You are a teacher who helps people to learn.'....."

Name: Cathy Redden

State: Georgia

Number of years using the program: 1

Grade: K

"..... In the past, I have experienced difficulty keeping my children's attention during workbook reading activities. I now am so thrilled at how involved all my students are with reading and writing. They all feel safe in this type of environment because they are successful! I love the cooperative atmosphere. Not only are my students learning to read, but they are developing social skills needed in life....."

Name: Jean Hawkins

State: Massachusetts

Number of years using the program: 3

Grade: 1

"..... I had a Spanish-speaking child.....I was given a Spanish-English

dictionary. I used it 2-3 times.....She is speaking English constantly and is doing well in reading and writing. I have to think that the B.L. sound-picture method has been a big reason for her success!....."

Name: Joani Richardson

State: Utah

Number of years using the program: 5

Grade: 1

"..... Each year it gets better! I have better readers, spellers, writers. I love this time of year because you can see the fruits of your labors - they read anything they want (not just the first grade basal, like the other classes), they can spell and understand why words are spelled in that way, and they can write, and write they do - it's so fun to see them enjoy each others work too. I'm committed there's no other way....."

Name: Barbara Lencke

State: Georgia

Number of years using the program: 2

Grade: K

".....We have no non readers and the excitement in our class over their reading ability is fantastic. Rest time is now reading time as we try to find more time to read due to student interest.....I couldn't be happier and I've been teaching for 23 years....."

### **Three Letters**

#### **First Letter – A Letter of Recommendation**

Dear Ms. F.

I am delighted that you are contemplating the use of the Baratta-Lorton Reading Program at your school. I am always happy to share concerning it's use in my classroom.

Five years ago, I piloted this unique program in our school system. My kindergarten class generated a lot of interest in the community and around the state. Numerous people came, and still come, to see children involved in active learning.

Since every child, regardless of academic background, was successful, our school system added more units. It is now used in all kindergarten classes, many first grade classes, and in special classes. It has even been successful with hearing-impaired children. In my nineteen years of teaching experience, I have never known of any other approach which meets the developmental needs of every child.

The Baratta-Lorton program is unique for several reasons. First, the underlying philosophy assumes that every child can and will learn when

given activities which help the child experience success. Self-confidence is readily evident as children work at their own pace beginning with concrete level activities prior to the introduction to abstract print.

The children are grouped for station activities by compatibility and not by academic ability so that cooperative learning, sharing, and responsibility for others is encouraged. Since all the activities at any one station are similar in format with the level of difficulty being the primary difference, ability grouping is not necessary. Children who need help ask for peer help before asking for teacher help. So, children are able to make individual progress while building a positive rapport with others. In my classroom, discipline problems are rare. Every child is on task.

While working at stations, children are actively working at tasks. Many tasks involve problem-solving. Some picture packets are recycled, for example, at higher difficulty levels and require higher levels of thinking skills. Children become aware of homonyms, synonyms, and experience new vocabulary through the activities.

All children experience success and progress. Even children who are already beginning readers when entering my classroom become better readers as they learn to decode new words. So many of those beginning readers simply have fantastic visual memories but few decoding skills.

In addition, the teacher's role is significantly different. I spend more time facilitating the stations and assessing individual progress. Our environment is pressure-free, yet children make more progress than I've ever experienced. Learning is contagious when reading and writing are purposeful and enjoyable. I feel I am teaching to the needs of children. I am not merely teaching a curriculum and I am not a textbook technician.

The program provides a framework for whole-language activities in my classroom. Once a child is a reader, my role is to provide a variety of reading materials, many opportunities for creative writing which generates more classroom reading materials as work is "published" and, to introduce other reading or writing skills, including punctuation, as they are needed.

Basically, my role is to immerse children into a print-rich environment. Baratta-Lorton activities comprise about one and one-half hours daily. Our day is integrated through themes and includes many expressive activities. Stamping and writing materials are available throughout the day. Of course, our day also includes manipulative number experiences, and some large learning centers. I've found that the stamps provide me with an open-ended communication tool which replaces the need for so many symbol-charts.

I do hope you will observe this program in a classroom. If you do, I'm sure you will be thrilled by the sight of eager, enthusiastic children who are enjoying themselves while learning the power of communication. Thank you for the opportunity to share. I hope I have answered some of your questions. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Martha C.

### **Second Letter – A Kindergarten Child Now in College**

Center,

I am a senior elementary education major at The University of Tennessee at Martin. I can personally testify to the phenomenal success of the Dekodiphukan program. Every kindergarten class at the elementary school I attended used this program, and by Christmas break of each year the kindergarten hallway was covered with creative stories written by the students, and by that same time most of them were reading at least Grade 2 level books.

My middle school and high school brought in students from my elementary school along with students from three other elementary schools that did not use the program. Students from my school – who all learned to read and write with Dekodiphukan – formed a disproportionate number of the spelling bee finalists and of the top 25% of my graduating class. Teachers could tell just by listening to a student read whether she or he learned to read using Dekodiphukan.

Learning to read with Dekodiphukan was so much fun that even now I can remember learning to read! I have never met anyone else who learned to read a different way who remembers the joy of learning to read as I do, but several of my peers who learned to read with me still remember the Dekodiphukan story and the stamps and look back upon it all with a smile.

I am in a kindergarten practicum, and I find myself describing the sounds the letters of the alphabet make with the same images as those on the stamps. (For example: “B” is like a ball bouncing, “K” is like a stick breaking, and “H” is the sound you make when you are out of breath.) I was ecstatic when I found your site! No one outside my old school system seems to have heard of the Dekodiphukan system, and now I know why.

Thank you very much for your program that not only taught me how to read, but also to love reading!

Bevin W.

**Third Letter – Trisha A.'s Letter of Recommendation for Linda B.**

Written as a letter of recommendation for Linda B. who was applying for a teaching position in the Washington D.C. area and who brought with her from her earlier teaching experience a Dekodiphukan kit.

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Tricia A. and I am a Community Based Teacher at XXX Middle School in Ithaca, New York. I teach Special Education to very academically needy students using life skills as their 'canvas' if you will. Many years ago, Linda B. introduced me to the Dekodiphukan reading program. I was quite excited to learn about it because I had been using the Math Their Way Program (by the same authors of this reading program) in the elementary school where I was teaching at the time and had seen great gains in understanding math concepts and their application by my Resource Room students.

I have used the Dekodiphukan program with my non-readers for the past 18 years. My students are a testament to this program as I have NEVER had a child leave my classroom (most are with me for 3 years) unable to read! Since many of my students are Mentally Retarded, that is speaking volumes. I will temper this statement with the fact that not all of these students will spend their lives reading for leisure, but it will help them be better able to navigate their world. Many of them read to get by in the interdependent life they lead day to day. However, for many of these students, parents and teachers alike could not envision that they may actually learn to read in the first place!

When I first started with this program, many of my students had Down's Syndrome and most could not read. They left my class as readers - around a mid-first to second grade level! Today, many of my students (because of the diversity that Cornell University brings to Ithaca) are ESOL/ESL students, students on the autism spectrum and MR. This program is amazing in that it's accessible to all who strive to read English - and for those who are ESL, MR and/or Autistic, it adds bonuses to their learning by using visual cues, articulation of sounds and multiple meanings of the words/language they are reading and learning.

I am excited by the prospect that Linda B. will be continuing the use of this program in the D.C. area. If you would like to speak with me please do not hesitate to contact me. (Contact information removed).

Thank you,

Tricia A.

Master's in Education in Special Ed. and Reading

### **The Linda B. Conversation – And Its Last Paragraph**

Included below are excerpts taken from emails exchanged between Linda B. and me from January 2006 through March 2012

#### **To Bob from Linda B.**

In 1986 I purchased the reading kit to use in my classroom in Yokosuka, Japan. I was teaching with the Department of Defense and was given a pre-first classroom. It was a glorious year! I no longer teach and part of my kit is now in use in a special education classroom. There is nothing like this approach and I am hoping it can be put back into production.

I sent your link to someone who heads a foundation in our town with whom I am acquainted. I do hope it helps. I talked last night with a young special education teacher and she remembered seeing the teacher in the district who uses part of my components in her own classroom. She was so interested in this and she was saddened knowing that the kit wasn't available.

I have always held a special place in my teaching memories for Mary. Math Their Way was wonderful – she was truly a genius in her area. I have in my closet, all the newsletters and the text when it isn't on loan. Was Mary's picture anywhere in the Math Their Way Book? I always wondered what she looked like, wishing I could have met her. She was such a wonderful presence in my classroom.

#### **To Linda B. From Bob**

Because Mary and I both started writing books for teachers when we were relatively young, we deliberately kept our pictures out of our books, or at least never identified ourselves in any photos. We preferred that people who purchased the books without knowing us personally imagine our ages, because the ones who might have dismissed ideas from young teachers would just assume we were older.

Actually, Mary is in some of the pictures in Math Their Way, as am I. In the first edition of Math Their Way, I am the male teacher in every picture containing a male. When the book was modified for adoption by the State of California, we were told to put in a picture of an additional

male, since it was noticed that we had only one. Because the new pictures were added about ten years after the first pictures were taken, we used me again as the new male. So regardless of which edition of the book you have, I am the only male in it.

After Mary died in 1978, I wrote an issue of the Math Their Way Newsletter devoted to her. This tribute is included in the Mathematics Their Way Summary Newsletter that is downloadable from the Center's website. Mary's picture is on the third page of the tribute.

The Reading Program, which Mary and I developed together--merging her primary experience with my experience teaching special education--was our favorite project. Although the Center has not yet been able to find a publisher willing to put out our program, the Center has not given up trying.

My father is 30 years older than I, and he's still living, and his mind still works. I always feel I have this thirty-year sliding window in which to accomplish things, because as long as my father keeps on living, my thirty-year window of opportunity keeps on sliding. So, I have at least thirty more years to work on getting the Reading Program published.

**To Bob from Linda B.**

Thank you for taking the time to reply. I did go to the newsletter and saw Mary's photo. She was really lovely.

Now as for that 30 year window - if you don't eat animal protein you will increase your chances. That is the conclusion of a lifetime of research by a Cornell professor, Colin Campbell, who detailed the results of many studies in "The China Study."

You and Mary were certainly quite young - it is really quite amazing what you did and have accomplished. There is nothing to compare to Math Their Way and the Reading Program. You two just got it right very early on and your consistency runs counter to the rest of the education system. The "system or systems" just seems to keep looking for the latest answer - but you've had it all along.

**To Linda B. From Bob**

When I first started the project of turning Dekodiphukan into a series of apps, I estimated it would take me two years to do it. I believe the iPad was first introduced two years ago this month. So, while the actual app creation only took me a year and a half, it has been two years since I had the idea of doing it.

Mary would have been very pleased with the notion of free apps. When Mary created the first Workjobs II kits to accompany her Workjobs II book, she priced the kits at exactly what the materials in the kits cost the Center. Her pricing included no labor, no shipping box, no postage, and no paying people to pack the materials in the shipping boxes. Obviously, that was not a good long term marketing strategy, so I had to take over setting prices. Had Mary been left in charge of setting prices for anything, we would have been out of business before we got started.

However, since I had already scanned in the artwork for the eventual reading program apps to make program components available for downloading from the Center's website, and since I do not pay myself for working at the Center, and because once an app is written it costs nothing to distribute no matter how many copies of it are made available, making apps free is not the same as selling a Workjobs II kit for less than it cost to make it. The only voice you will hear on any of the apps is my voice because my voice is as free as the apps.

Yes, I sent Tricia an e-mail announcing the existence of the apps. But hearing it again from you will be welcome, I am sure.

**To Bob from Linda B.**

So odd - today I was thinking about this and wondering if I should do an app store search for Dekodiphukan and there is your email!! You had emailed that you were working on this over a year ago and I was hoping you had not forgotten. Free is generous - beyond generous. Perhaps Mary would approve? I would think so. I'll forward your email to a family in Maryland where I used it with their daughter who could not read and in a few months was reading Nancy Drew and Black Beauty. Also, did a copy of the email go to Patricia A.? I'll forward it just in case but probably it did. So many children could benefit if schools were not so sure they have it all figured out.

**To Linda B. From Bob**

I did email Patricia and she said she got it and said thanks. Her success with it is something of a testament as she works with the lowest functioning students at a middle school. She has been using Dekodiphukan since about 1989.

I have found that older children with mild to moderate disabilities learn faster with the program than younger children.

**To Bob from Linda B.**

I agree with your assessment that older children with mild to moderate disabilities learn faster with the program than younger children. One of the problems with school teaching is that we decide the age everyone

should learn to read and then impose that age on everyone regardless of who is really ready and who is not.

I was given a class of children who were deemed not ready for first grade and that was in 1986. That summer I received the Center's letter announcing the kit, so I asked my vice principle if I could use it. She said yes but all purchasing was in, and I would have to buy it myself. I talked it over with my husband who agreed, and I had it ready to go when school started. The children were transitioned by January, each at their own pace in a marvelously cooperative environment and were reading as well as the other first grade classes.

By the time the children who would have been ready to learn if we had only waited reach a point when they are actually ready, school has taught them that they are non-learners. Every lesson they then face using the materials they failed to learn with earlier is, for them, just a reminder of their earlier failures.

What the Reading Program does for these older children who are now actually developmentally capable of learning to read is allow them to approach the learning process in a way that does not remind them of their earlier failures. This fresh start is all they need to learn to read.

**To Linda B. From Bob**

I don't know if I told you this before, because I cannot always remember to whom I have related which of the various stories from my past, but the year I spent turning the program from an idea into a series of specific activities, I had myself appointed as a teacher of a learning disabled (LD) class at Mary's and my school.

I had taught an educationally handicapped class a few years before, but the LD class was different. It was not actually a "class". Rather, my role was to teach six different groups of two or three students for an hour each every school day. These students were learning disabled children from the school who came to me on a pullout basis. They were from grades second through fifth with each group from a single grade level.

In this LD experience I could see quite well the differences in learning capabilities for the various age groups of supposed learning-disabled student. The older the students, the more quickly they learned.

*Note for the message below: In the process of downloading kit components from the Center's website, Linda encountered some difficulties. Robin was the Center person who helped Linda solve the problem she had encountered. The message below is Linda expressing her thanks to Robin*

**To Robin Brown from Linda B.**

Thank you for your help - I did get it figured out. Please let Bob know how much I appreciate the program components being available for downloading. I have been doing an inventory of the components and was able to fill in a few spaces.

I am currently teaching Elena, a nine-year-old girl, to read whose parents are paying \$30,000 a year to have her attend a special school in D.C. that teaches children with learning disabilities through the arts. I completely agree with using the arts but in the case of reading, the artful Dekodiphukan is best. Elena is completely in love with the program and on the days when I am not there, she is practicing. For the first time, this lover of stories is reading and learning without difficulty. I see her once a week to go over the new material and change out the components for her to use. Her parents are thrilled.

I am forwarding a letter from a friend to whom I loaned my kit for many years. Bob should enjoy it and I am sure it is all right to post it as a testimonial. (Note: See Tricia A's Letter) It will be in a separate email. I used the program in a transitional first grade - 20 children deemed not ready for the first grade. They left reading - and no one felt reading was difficult or that they were in any way defective for having trouble learning. I wonder where the other kits are and what the other teachers had to say about it. I consider it one of the most valuable things I own.

As always, when I work with it, I am impressed all over again with the genius behind it. It is a common belief that nothing works with everyone, and a teacher must be willing to try different approaches - so if I tell someone that there is a program that does work for anyone and everyone - well it is like telling women that milk is bad for their bones. Arguing with ignorance is something a long enough life reveals as one of the most difficult tasks there is.

Thanks again and give my best to Bob

**Alabama State Department of Education Newsletter**

On the following two pages is an article that appeared in the December 1986 edition of *Alabama Education*, the Alabama State Department of Education's official newsletter. It was written by Dr. Jack Sassar, Director of Instruction for the Dothan City Schools. Dothan City Schools had piloted the Reading Program in the second year of the Center's ten-year study. For the third year of the study, Dothan placed kits in all 26 kindergarten and first grade classrooms. The article was written by Dr. Sassar halfway through year two.

# Fail-Proof Method Teaches Reading Fast

By Dr. Jack Sasser\*

Children in Dothan City Schools are excited about learning to read, thanks to a unique approach their school system initiated last year.

The reading program, which is based upon the philosophy that "all children can learn to read," was piloted in the Dothan City Schools in 1985-86 and extended to 26 kindergarten and first-grade classrooms in 1986-87. This program was created by Mary and Bob Baratta-Lorton to make the process of learning to read and to write the same kind of activity-centered, child-centered, manipulative-based experience. At the same time, it is a:

- language experience approach;
- phonics approach, consisting of 44 basic sounds;
- non-ability-group approach;
- writing program;
- reading program;
- language arts program; additionally, it
- does not require a workbook;
- does not require duplicator sheets; and
- is unique.

There are no other programs presently available which approach the teaching of reading and writing in the same manner. No child fails to learn to read.

The program is represented by samples of the approach used:

- The more a classroom learning environment encourages students to look for patterns and relationships in the world around them and the better children become at seeing these relationships, the easier meaningful learning becomes for the child. The reading program places an emphasis on searching out patterns as opposed to memorizing rules.

- The program provides freedom for children to learn from one another. None of us is as smart as all of us. If we use each other to help each other, we can make maximum utilization of the knowledge possessed by each child to help another child to learn. *There are no traditional reading groups* and no homogenous ability groups which convince some children they can learn and others that they cannot. A child is where he is, neither behind nor ahead.

- Once a child has learned the procedures for an activity at one level, those same procedures are used at each succeeding level. Children advance through the program with only a minimum of teacher supervision, freeing the teacher to become a diagnostician and helper of children.

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# Every Child Learned To Read—100 Percent

(Continued from Page 1)

- Children learn to read and to write in a secure environment. There is no element of failure associated with the learning involved. First-year efforts resulted in *not a single child failing to learn to read successfully.*

- Children are involved at a very early stage in the process of writing their own thoughts and stories without the need for teacher intervention and *before the child even knows the alphabet.* Children can write what they wish using their own words, *before they can even hold a pencil.*

- The program teaches children to write and read, but most importantly, it teaches them to love reading and writing, so that excitement generated by this early reading experience will translate into a desire to keep on reading and keep on writing, long after the school day or the school year has ended.

None of the program materials is consumable. There are no workbooks, no worksheets. A large number of books to read are needed, because *children read a lot.* In this program, all children can learn to read and write with a level of understanding and enthusiasm that is unmatched, cannot be described and must be seen.

Pilot and first-year efforts in the Dothan City Schools using the reading program have yet to experience failure for any child. The program currently is used in kindergarten, first grade and special education classes. Modification to the basal reading instructional process will occur as children

exit this program as readers. The love for reading must be fostered and nurtured. The children will possess the skill and love for reading and can be kept busy reading, rather than doing worksheets and seatwork.

Although the initial cost of the program—\$827 per classroom—sounds high, bear in mind that this cost covers the entire program and includes *everything* needed to teach children to read. There are no textbooks or workbooks to buy and the materials can be used year after year.

For more information write to Center for Innovation - Reading Program  
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