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**READING
STYLES**

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**OUTRAGEOUS
INSTRUCTION**

Stanley Pogrow

The **Color** of Learning

**EMBRACING
DIVERSITY**

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Match the Style of Instruction to the Style of Reading



Schools that analyze the needs of students and provide instruction that fits the child will reap results with beginning and at-risk readers.

By Marie Carbo

Educators are on the front lines of a battle for our children's futures. Only one-third of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 read at or above the proficient levels, and reading for pleasure is declining every year (Dillon 2005; Bracey 2006). Unfortunately, No Child Left Behind's Reading First program apparently hasn't made a dent in any of these troubling statistics. A new U.S. Department of Education report (Gamse 2008) reveals that after five years and \$6 billion, Reading First has:

- Significantly increased the amount of time teachers spend teaching reading in grades 1, 2, and 3, especially phonemic awareness and phonics in grade 1; and
- Produced no significant gains in grades 1, 2, and 3 in reading comprehension — the goal of all reading instruction.

According to Senator Edward Kennedy, "The Bush administration has put cronyism first and the reading skills of our children last, and this report shows the disturbing consequences" (Dillon 2006).

When more time and money are spent on teaching reading, and yet there is no improvement in reading comprehension, that's a strong indication that ineffective teaching practices are being used. And that, I believe, is at the heart of why Reading First has not helped students enjoy reading and make substantial reading gains.

The "right" reading work for any student should increase reading motivation and achievement, as well as reading for pleasure, in a short time. The work



should be interesting and exciting, thereby tapping into the most powerful kind of memory: emotional memory. Reading instruction should use students' reading style strengths and preferences. In short, learning to read should be easy and fun. When it's difficult and boring, it's invariably the wrong work.

With Reading Styles teaching, even the most at-risk students have made extraordinary gains in reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary in short periods of time at all grade levels. In addition, voluntary reading has increased substantially, and discipline problems and retentions have been reduced. These positive results have been well documented over the past 15 years, including a two-year study published by Phi Delta Kappa that was conducted in six states

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using a multi-site, simultaneous replications design (Barber, Carbo, and Thomasson, 1998).

These improvements have occurred because the reading strategies are built on each student's reading style. The Reading Style program considers how a stu-

dent's ability to learn to read is affected by: 1) the reading environment, and also by the reader's 2) emotional needs, 3) sociological preferences, 4) physical needs, and 5) style of processing information. Not only does every person have a distinctly different reading style, but every reading method, resource, and strategy demands particular reading style strengths of the learner (Carbo 2007).

Here are the reading results from a sample of model Reading Style schools and reading labs:

- O'Connor Elementary School in Victoria, Texas, is a preK-5, Title I school that has 86% Hispanic and African-American students from low socioeconomic families. In 1993, after one year of Reading Styles teaching, O'Connor students rose from 19% to 80% passing their state reading test. By 1997, over 98% of O'Connor's 500-plus students passed math, reading, and writing at all tested grade levels, and the Texas Education Agency rated the school "exemplary." O'Connor has maintained those scores for 10 years.
- Minor Hill School Reading Lab in Minor Hill, Tennessee, is a preK-8 school. In 2007, 22 of their 7th and 8th graders scored below the proficient reading level on a university-created predictive reading test. After six months of attending the Reading Styles Lab in the school, 21 of the 22 students achieved proficient or advanced levels in reading on that same test, including five of the six special education students in the group. Principal Lisa Stogner reported a 100% turnaround in student attitude, from negative to positive, toward reading.
- Marion Elementary School in Marion, Ohio, is a preK-5 school where one-third of the families have no phones, have high unemployment, and 61% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Marion students rose from 42% attaining reading proficiency on the state test in 2002 to 87% in 2005 and 95% in 2006.

Increase Effective Reading Practices

Educators can begin to improve reading instruction by adapting their existing system to students' individual reading styles. The following Reading Styles recommendations have, in a relatively short time, helped thousands of children to become better readers — especially those severely at risk of failure.

- **Accommodate both global and analytic reading styles.** Remember that most young students and at-risk readers tend to be primarily global learners.
- **Use colored overlays to minimize visual problems.** For some youngsters, letters and words reverse, swirl, or slide off the page. Experiment by placing different colored overlays over a page of print. The right color for a youngster can dramatically improve reading by reducing letter movement. (For more information about colored overlays, their effects on visual dyslexia, and how to use them, see www.dyslexiacure.com and www.seeitright.com.)
- **Do not emphasize phonics with strongly global students or those who are not sufficiently auditory.** When students struggle with phonics, consider using different methods, especially those that match the child's style. Fit the method to the child, not the child to the method.
- **Use the Fernald Word-Tracing Method with global/tactile students.** With this technique, a word that a youngster wants to write is written by the teacher in crayon on a large card (preferably in cursive writing). The student traces over and says the word two or three times, then turns the card over and writes the word from the tactile memory of it (Fernald 1943; Carbo 2007, pp. 73-74).
- **Provide sufficient modeling of stories.** Modeling is a strong global strategy for both beginning and at-risk readers who need to see and hear the words in a story being read by a teacher or any good reader. Some effective modeling reading methods are: shared reading (the teacher reads the text of an enlarged book or chart to students while pointing to the words and encouraging students to read along); the Carbo Recording Method® (students listen a few times to stories recorded at a slow pace in small amounts, while following along in the text, and then read the material back to a teacher, volunteer, or peer); echo reading (the teacher reads aloud a small amount of a text while the student follows along and then reads back the same material); choral reading (two or more read a passage in unison); and pair reading (two students take turns reading passages from a story) (Carbo 2007).

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT READING STYLES

To take a virtual tour of Reading Styles schools or to schedule a visit to a model school or model reading lab, see www.nrsi.com/model_schools.php.

A report describing the major studies conducted on Reading Styles, a book detailing research in Reading Styles, and national validations of the Reading Styles program are available at no charge at www.nrsi.com/research.php.

High reading results with reading styles teaching have not been limited to the United States. For 100 days, the Gauerlund School (K-9) in Denmark based instruction on students' talents, learning styles, reading styles, and interests. Gauerlund rose from a rank

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of 1,197 out of 1,600 schools to the top 100 schools in Denmark in reading, math, and science. During that period, reading was taught using the Carbo Reading Styles program (Knoop 2008).

The Pendulum Swing in Reading

Educators have been searching for the best way to teach all children to read for more than a century. No matter which approach to teaching reading enjoys popularity, reading failures persist, disillusionment spreads, and the pendulum swings to a different approach. When a global approach to reading enjoys popularity for a time (whole language or the whole-word reading method, for example), the pendulum swings back to a more analytic approach, such as phonics. The resulting heated debates should come as no surprise. To avoid unproductive debates, it's important to understand both the analytic and the global models of teaching reading.

The Analytic Model. The analytic model of teaching reading moves from the parts to the whole, in the same way that phonics is taught (see Figure 1). Stage 1 requires mastery of isolated letter sounds. In Stage 2, students practice letter sounds by reading words containing the learned sounds. Next, they read connected text, or stories. This approach regards a knowledge of letter sounds as a critical skill for all learners. Youngsters who do well with phonics tend to have strongly auditory and analytic reading styles. Children who are auditory can hear and recall letter sounds. If they are also analytic, the logic of phonics makes sense to them because analytic students proceed naturally from bits of information to the whole. Phonics instruction is usually highly sequential, organized, direct, and predictable — all conditions that appeal to analytics.

But phonics can be confusing and boring to students who are not ana-

lytic, who don't learn easily when information is presented in small portions, step by step. The most serious problems arise for students who are not sufficiently auditory to learn or to blend sounds. If children cannot hear the differences among sounds, they cannot associate those sounds with their corresponding letters. This situation is similar to that of a tone-deaf person who can't repeat a tone. Being sound-deaf can create years of problems even into adulthood — if the individual is continually exposed primarily to phonics instruction (Carbo 1987).

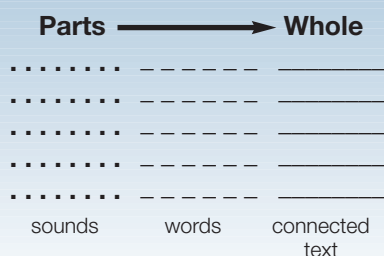
The Global Model. The global model of teaching reading moves from the whole to the parts, in much the same way that whole language is taught (see Figure 2). In Stage 1, large amounts of connected text or stories are read aloud to students repeatedly. After students can read with some independence, students move to Stage 2 and practice words and phrases from the stories in isolation. In Stage 3, some phonics is taught, often by encouraging children to "discover" similarities in words they have encountered in their reading and writing. Youngsters who do well with this model tend to have strong visual and global reading styles. They can recall words they see and hear repeatedly in high-interest stories. If the students are also tactile learners, experiences with story writing help them remember words they have felt as they write them.

But global reading approaches can feel somewhat disorganized and haphazard to analytic learners. If the modeling of stories is too infrequent or if phonics is not sufficiently emphasized, analytic children may not develop the necessary tools for decoding words.

Build on Strengths

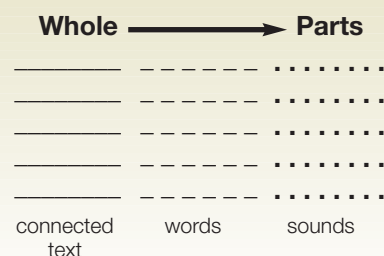
Why do some young people learn to read easily while others in the same reading program struggle? One reason is that our individual reading styles predispose us to learn easily with certain reading methods and materials. Each reading method and set of

FIG. 1
The Analytic Model of Teaching Reading



© National Reading Styles Institute, 1997.

FIG. 2
The Global Model of Teaching Reading



© National Reading Styles Institute, 1997.

reading materials demands different strengths of the learner. If a student has the strengths, a match occurs, and he or she learns to read easily and enjoyably. If, however, there is a mismatch between the student and the approach, the instruction itself will hinder that youngster's ability to learn to read (Carbo 2007).

It's particularly important to understand how to

teach reading to global learners because young children and at-risk readers tend to be strongly global, tactile, and kinesthetic (Dunn et al. 1995; Mohrmann 1990; Oexle and Zenhausern 1983; Thies 1999-2000). To teach global learners well, *meaning* is the key. Global students *need* to be deeply interested in what they're reading. While all students benefit from high-interest reading materials, strongly global students absolutely *require* these kinds of materials to do their best. Based on what we know about global youngsters, their reading programs should focus on high-interest stories (with special recordings, if needed), words learned primarily in context, and reading skills that are drawn from the stories being read, preferably taught in a game format.

Today's reading tests are heavily weighted in favor of an auditory and analytic reading style. Since the goal of all reading instruction is to raise reading comprehension levels and reading enjoyment, a fair evaluation of reading ability should measure reading comprehension using increasingly difficult, high-interest reading material. Other important measures include: the number of books students take out of the library voluntarily; the amount of time children voluntarily discuss, recommend, and exchange books with classmates; and the amount of voluntary reading done by children in their classrooms, the library, at home, and so on. Reading skills can be taught as needed, but the focus should be on reading comprehension and enjoyment (Carbo 2007).

4 Key Reading Strategies

Students have shown the greatest gains in their reading abilities when teachers have used the following four key Reading Styles strategies consistently and intensively:

- Identify students' strengths;
- Match reading methods, materials, and strategies to those strengths;
- Provide sufficient modeling of reading methods and continually stretch students into higher-level reading materials using well-written, high-interest reading materials; and
- Use colored overlays to lessen the effects of visual dyslexia.

Reading Styles teachers also tend to teach reading skills with hands-on games and encourage students to read and learn in comfortable, relaxed environments in a variety of individualized and group settings.

The strategies listed above help make learning to

Ineffective Reading Practices

The following reading practices make learning to read unnecessarily difficult for students and reduce reading for pleasure:

- **Too many worksheets and skill sheets.** Reduce the number of worksheets and skills sheets. There is little to no research to support their use. Some reading programs have a thousand reading worksheets or more just for 1st grade — that's about six worksheets every school day, or more than one or two hours of "seatwork" that needs to be completed and checked. The reading turnoff begins early in the United States.
- **Using reading materials that students aren't interested in reading.** Ample evidence indicates that schools are not providing reading materials that most children want to read, especially in the higher grades. In fact, a recent reading study found that school is the least likely place to find the reading materials that 6th graders say they want to read (Worthy, Moorman, and Turner 1999).
 - Scary books and stories
 - Comics, cartoons, magazines about popular culture
 - Books and magazines about sports, cars, and trucks
 - Series books
 - Funny books
 - Books about animals
- **Exaggerated emphasis on end-of-year reading tests has led to continual, daily testing on minuscule, usually unnecessary reading skills.** This endless testing and test practice, the continual fear of failure, and the resulting high levels of stress, all have a negative effect on learning. While small amounts of stress may motivate some people, brain research tells us that large doses of stress cause fear, decrease motivation, make learning difficult, and, perhaps worst of all, reduce the ability to think and perform at high levels (Caine et al. 2005; Sprenger 1999).
- **Overemphasis on skills teaching.** Few of the hundreds of skills and subskills have been validated as being necessary for children to become good readers. In fact, at-risk readers who have made great leaps in reading ability have spent most of their time reading books and short stories they enjoy with the aid of modeling methods, with small amounts of time spent on a few important reading skills.

read easy and enjoyable. When students enjoy the process of learning to read and associate reading with fun, they're more likely to spend substantial time reading for pleasure. That's extremely important. Apparently, the cognitive abilities required to perform well in reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary are developed and strengthened through large amounts of

pleasure reading (Allington 2001; Anderson 1996), especially when students are in "the flow," when they are deeply engaged in what they are reading (Armstrong 1998; Cziksenti-mihalyi 1991).

It follows that teachers need to identify their students' strengths to be able to capitalize on them. Observation techniques can be used for this purpose, as

Case Study of Melinda

Melinda is a 4th grader struggling to read on a 1st-grade level. She is a poor speller, reverses and omits letters in her writing, and has great difficulty sounding out words. Her RSI profile reveals that she is a child of extremes (Figure 3). Melinda is strongly global, tactile, and kinesthetic. She is minimally analytic, auditory, and visual. There are many good strategies that will help Melinda to read, and the sooner these strategies are implemented the better. Melinda is already years behind in reading.

Melinda's RSI profile recommends the Fernald Word-Tracing Method (she is weak visually and strong tactilely — a good match for Fernald), Carbo recordings, and modeling reading methods (she is strong globally). These reading methods are global approaches, high-interest, provide repetition, and will "stretch" Melinda into increasingly higher-level reading materials.

The list of strategies for Melinda on the RSI include using colored overlays to reduce her visual problems, floor games (she's kinesthetic), hands-on games (she's tactile), cursive writing (can help to reduce reversals), not requiring her to sound out words aloud while reading (Melinda is weak auditorially; when she struggles to sound out words, she is likely to feel stressed and her comprehension suffers — not good results if we want to teach her the way she will learn most easily).



FIG. 3
RSI Individual Profile

Student Name: Melinda W.
Grade: 3rd
Date: 2004-12-13
Teacher's Name: Ms. Tillman

Global/Analytic Tendencies

Very strong global tendencies
Minimal analytic tendencies

Perceptual Strengths

Minimal auditory strengths
Minimal visual strengths
Good tactile strengths
Excellent kinesthetic strengths

Recommended Reading Methods

Fernald Method
Carbo Recorded-Book Method
Modeling Methods

Recommended Reading Materials

Manipulatives w/large-muscle movement, floor games
Index cards, writing notebook, dark crayon, word box
"Hands-On" activities, manipulatives, games

Recommended Teaching Strategies

De-emphasize decoding
Allow student demonstrations, use floor games
Include writing, drawing games
Try colored overlays and large print
Use humor, stories, games

Special Modifications for This Student

For all reading methods, the following modifications are recommended for this student:
Write directions for work, give to student
Use cursive to lessen b and d reversals
Provide repetition of words through many senses
Do not have student sound out words while reading
Limit board copying, give written copy of assignment
Try colored overlay over page

Source: ©National Reading Styles Institute, 2005

well as the Reading Style Inventory,[®] or RSI[®] (Carbo 1992).

Conclusion

Clearly, students can and should make much greater reading progress, regardless of such factors as socioeconomic status and ability to speak English. Reading Styles model schools and reading labs are filled with struggling students, and Reading Styles teaching works with all of them because it places the student at the center of all reading instruction. It capitalizes on each student's natural learning strengths and interests, minimizes weaknesses, and reduces stress. It helps educators reach through to the interests, intelligence, and learning capacity students do have. And, ultimately, it helps us accomplish our two most important goals: to enable our students to read and comprehend at high levels, and to make the process of learning to read so easy and enjoyable that our students read for pleasure voluntarily and become lifelong readers. **K**

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