“The most compelling insight of reading research in the past twenty years—that reading and spelling an alphabetic code require awareness of the speech sounds the code represents—is still lost on balanced literacy. Typical balanced-literacy programs equate phonological instruction with rhyming and alliteration. What science supports is instruction in individual speech sounds—how they are formed in the mouth, how they compare with one another, how they distinguish word meanings, how they are represented in writing, and how they are different from letters. The overt blending of sounds and pronunciation of words, as well as the production of oral language, with feedback from the teacher, is a key element of SBRR (scientifically based reading research) often omitted in balanced literacy.” (Moats, L., 2007, page 20)

“. . . I think that there’s a much greater understanding that really talented teachers are not born, they are made. And we have to be systematic about it and we need to really build off of the talent that we have in our school systems.”


“There are days I come home and throw up my arms and say, “I’m done, I’m not doing it anymore”, but those are in the rarity. There are more days I come home and I say, “I helped this kid learn this today.””

Abby Miller – 1st year teacher, Chicago Public Schools, Participant, New Teacher Center mentoring, (interview PBS NewsHour, PBS.org, July 4, 2013)

Development of Bilingual Phonics Teaching Skills, Language Development Strategies and Teaching Awareness, Part I

A Collaborative Program of
Inglese Dinamico, Partnerships for Learning and Teaching (PLAT)
and
Ca’ Foscari, University of Venice
Abstract:

This course is a pilot program designed specifically upon evidence-based research, often referred to as SBRR or scientifically-based reading research, and is intended to develop a core group of master teachers of English who are currently classroom teachers at the elementary and 1st year middle school levels. It represents a 3-prong process:

1. Skills-based training in understanding phonological processing and the importance of phonemic awareness (sound awareness), phonics (the relationship between sounds of a language and the alphabetic code that represents them), and fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies in the development of literacy. The role of oral language development will be emphasized as a critical foundation that precedes and is expanded through explicit and systematic teaching methodology. Four essential areas of phonological processing of English necessary for literate language development that are inherent in oral language development and expanded by direct teaching;

2. Understanding basic concepts of language development and language disorders that result in slow or atypical literacy development commonly identified as ‘dyslexia.’

3. Professional mentoring to improve teachers’ understanding of how to develop and facilitate positive teaching strategies in challenged and non-challenged learners and best teaching practices to develop positive learning environments in the classroom.

Participants will be initially assessed to assist them in understanding their phonological processing skills and to acquire baseline measurement prior to training. They will be trained intensively in aspects of phonological processing and phonics (Orton-Gillingham approach), they will receive specific strategies and targeted skills for developing and improving students’ oral language and written language production and comprehension, and they will be specifically mentored in these strategies to improve their skills and those of their students. Initial, mid-term and end-term phonological processing screenings of course participants and a final questionnaire eliciting responses to course content and skills application will be utilized to determine the participants’ progress and efficacy of the program effectiveness of the teacher-training course to positively improve their understanding and delivery of skill sets identified through SBRR as essential for adequate literacy acquisition in elementary school-aged children. Initial data collection from this course will be utilized in developing evidence-based, cross-linguistic (bilingual) methodology in Italian and English language instruction.

Key Words: SBRR, Phonological Processing, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Language Development/Disorders, Dyslexia, Best Teaching Practices, Teacher Mentoring, Bilingual Instruction
Target Group:

Elementary school teachers  
Lower middle school teachers of English  
Speech/Language Pathologist (SLPs)  
Student Teachers

Course number of hours: 3 hours per week; 72 hours total

When: October 16th, 2013 – May 14th, 2013  
Wednesday, 4:00-7:00 p.m.

Where: TBA

Cost: 450,00 euros

Maximum enrollees: 30

Screening Materials:

Phonological Awareness Test 2  
Emerson Exam 2005, Candice Bray, Ed.D  
Final Questionnaire

Participant and Course Requirements:

Participants must be classroom teachers of English or student teachers or speech/language pathologists (in practice or graduate students). Screening exams must be scheduled prior to the first class for baseline data purposes. Mid-term and final re-screenings will be scheduled during the first 3-month period of the course. must utilize classroom materials for course purposes only and are required to attend regularly as the skills development is progressive and cumulative. Contact: Nancy Rose Steinbock, Director, Inglese Dinamico for scheduling initial screening – nrsteinbock@hotmail.com or after September 20th, 041.522.6567.

Objectives:

1) To improve English pronunciation skills utilizing multi-sensory teaching strategies to: a) Develop and stabilize the English alphabet letter names; b) Develop and stabilize sound/letter correspondences through specific, structured phonics instruction in the following sequence:
   1a. Short vowel system  
   1b. Consonant families – similarities and contrasts  
   1c. Long-vowel system and introduction of silent – e rule  
   1d. r – controlled vowels  
   1e. Nasal consonants /m/, /n/ and medial and final /ng/  
   1f. Diphthongs and spelling patterns for long and short vowels (e.g. eigh, ough)

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1g. Syllabic segmentation and the system of closed and open-syllables, -le syllables, etc. (Based upon adaptation of Orton-Gillingham (see Gillingham and Stillman, 1956); Steinbock, Nancy Rose, 2009)

1h. Prosody, stress and timing aspects of English that result in alternate vowel pronunciations, e.g., schwa (unstressed vowel), spelling conventions versus syllable pronunciation rules, and how stress/time aspects affect reading fluency, reading comprehension and oral language production.

2) To improve English language skills through specific strategies that focus on meaningful ways to understand grammar and vocabulary points in context, such as the use of – sentence schemas, vocabulary maps, and verb timelines.

3) To understand basic principles of language development/language disorders that result in the diagnosis of ‘dyslexia,’ including infant language development, differences between social and more decontextualized academic school language and the challenges of ‘language of instruction.’

4) To develop a bilingual phonics program that builds on sound and syllable structure with specific enhanced instruction for dyslexic students, particularly in the areas of vowel alternations between Italian and English, placement differences in consonant cognates, e.g., /p-b/, /d-t/ and liquid consonants, particularly /r/ and r-controlled vowels and word morphology.

5) To develop awareness of qualities of good teachers and good teaching through specific self-evaluation of each individual's strengths and weaknesses in the classroom and strategies for improving general classroom instruction and informed accommodation for challenged learners to meet the goals of an individualized education plan.

6) Development of a pilot group of 'special educators' drawn from teacher-education students at Ca' Foscari that can serve as classroom support during their internships and as research assistants in the development of Italian phonics materials and crossover materials between English and Italian. Data collection with regard to these materials will be gathered to determine their effectiveness and the need for modification.

Outcomes:

These outcomes are to be utilized in both classroom and direct (SLP) intervention. “Teacher” refers to the role in both teaching environments, i.e., the classroom and therapy room:

1) Teachers will be able to clearly define the differences between Italian and English phonological systems.

2) Teachers will understand how to produce and to guide students' production of sounds and syllables and the importance of accurate phoneticphonological and prosodic production coding for words and grammar, and for production and comprehension purposes. They will practice and apply multi-sensory principles in their teaching, including visual, auditory and kinesthetic strategies.

3) Teachers will understand how to teach basic morphology, e.g., /s/ as sound that must be deployed for plural, third person and possessive morphological markers, and to strategize grammar and word 'pullouts' rather than conventionally teaching grammar rules and decontextualized vocabulary and how to apply pre-teaching and contextual teaching strategies for skills development.

4) Teachers will understand basic principles of language development and language disorders and the need to approach students with language difficulties with effective strategies that they can activate in the general classroom and how to facilitate learning in challenged and non-challenged learners. They will understand that additional practice and modifying teaching strategies may be necessary. They will understand that professional teacher mentoring can support their methodological needs.

5) Teachers will understand the concepts of qualities of good teachers and how to approach the learning process in general and specifically for effective bilingual language teaching.

6) Teachers will participate in providing feedback for developing effective bilingual phonics teaching materials for challenged and non-challenged learners.
7) Teachers will participate in accountability measures determining materials and methodology success and standards.
8) Professional mentoring will be established as a core element to improve teacher-training and teacher performance in the classroom.

Materials:

Course syllabus/weekly goals and hand-out materials
Explode the Code -- Books 1-4 -- English
Experimental phonics materials -- Italian
Self-evaluation forms
Student progress forms
Video presentations of 'how to teach' the skills

References:


Gillingham, Anna and Bessie Stillman (1956). Remedial training for children with specific disability in reading, spelling, and penmanship. Educators Publishing Service: Cambridge, MA


