

Struggling College Readers: Does a New Approach Work?

Yes - New thinking is transforming struggling adults into excellent readers.

A new view of what is required to produce excellence in reading is quickly and efficiently producing significant gains in reading ability among community college and adult basic education (ABE) students in Spokane, Washington.

At a recent national conference, Spokane ABE educator Lara Shinskie shared many comments and success stories gathered from adult students introduced to Read Right[®] methodology this year. One set of comments Shinskie shared came from a 53-year-old woman who had struggled in school in her girlhood and who had most recently worked for Goodwill Industries. The woman had hoped to return to college to improve her skills and employability, but was deficient in reading. After a few months of Read Right, she observed: "I didn't really read well when I went to school. Now with Read Right I've learned a new way to read and understand what I read. This is the best teaching I've ever gotten out of school. ...This will change my life forever."

"That," Shinskie said, "Is far more powerful than anything I could ever tell you."

Read Right Begins Implementation in Community Colleges

Read Right methodology is grounded in an interactive constructivist view of reading and reading development. Last spring, the Community Colleges of Spokane became the first collaborative community college program in the nation to adopt Read Right small group tutoring to address a variety of reading problems among adult learners. Early results are impressive and consistent with results achieved for the past 15 years at adult workforce literacy programs and for the past decade at elementary, middle, and high schools.

From April 2005 to January 2006, 138 students at Spokane Falls Community College tutored with the methodology gained one grade level of functional reading ability for every 10 hours or less of tutoring. Sixteen percent of the students were English language learners. From September 2005 to February 2006 at the Adult Basic Education center across town, 137 students gained one grade level of functional reading ability for 10 hours or less of tutoring. At the ABE center, 45% of students were English language learners. Functionality was determined by growth in student ability to work with increasingly more complex texts.

Read Right tutoring is used in approximately 250 elementary and secondary schools across the country. Most of the schools using the program are middle and high schools. Because the program is language intensive and uses only authentic works of fiction and non-fiction, it is highly effective with English language learners and English-speaking students deficient in language and life experience. The program also is highly effective with students currently and previously served by special education programs.

Read Right Is Grounded In An Alternative View of Reading

Read Right is significantly different because it operates on an alternative view of what the brain does when it reads and, particularly, what readers do when they produce excellent reading ability. In the new view, excellent readers do not use the alphabet to decode, recode, or otherwise

identify individual words. Rather, excellent readers sample alphabetic information strategically in a complex and instantaneous process of integrating strategic alphabetic information with other forms of knowledge stored in the brain—knowledge of language, the structure of language, subject matter, how the world works, and more. Read Right is designed to compel struggling readers to remodel the neural network that guides the reading process so the focus of reading ceases to be individual word identification and becomes the ongoing accurate construction of meaning.

“The reason so many teens and adults are struggling with reading by the time they hit middle school, high school, and college,” said Dee Tadlock, developer of Read Right methodology, “is that they’ve been taught to focus the reading act on the isolated identification of individual words, rather than efficient use of strategic alphabetic information in the process of constructing meaning. This creates significant problems later on, as reading becomes more complex. Meaning does not reside in individual words.”

Tadlock is a former classroom reading specialist who found in 1978, while pursuing her Ph.D. in education, emphasis in reading, that conventional remedial practices were ineffective at addressing her own young son’s reading problem. She spent the next three years investigating learning theory, reading theory, language acquisition theory, what was known then about neural networks, and more before creating and trying a new approach with her son. The new approach eliminated her son’s reading problem in just three months and she spent the next decade testing the approach with elementary, secondary, and college students in the classroom environment. In the early 1990s she was recruited from her teaching position as a reading specialist with struggling college readers to create an adult workforce literacy model, during which time she named the methodology and formed a private company. She began working with schools again in 1996, when a school superintendent approached her for help with poor state test scores. Today, Read Right Systems, Inc. trains instructors, teachers, and classroom aides all over the country to use the tutoring methodology. Tadlock is former president of the College Reading and Learning Association.

At the IRA Conference in Chicago:

Read Right Developer Dee Tadlock, Ph.D., and Mt. Rainier High School (Seattle area) Literacy Coach Sharon Schmitt will conduct a presentation, “*Changing the Brain: Intervening with an Interactive Constructivist Methodology to Eliminate Reading Problems*” at the upcoming International Reading Conference in Chicago. The session will be Tuesday, May 2 from 2:15-3:15 in Room E351 McCormick Place. Also you are invited to meet and chat with Dr. Tadlock informally at the Read Right Exhibit Booth #1226.

Learn More

Dr. Tadlock’s interactive constructivist view of reading and reading development is explained in detail in the new book written for parents, *Read Right! Coaching Your Child to Excellence in Reading*, published in 2005 by McGraw-Hill and available at www.amazon.com.

An information packet explaining theory, methodology and implementation can be obtained by contacting Kim Kranz at Read Right Systems. Phone: 360-427-9440 or Email: kimk@readright.com.

Articles about Read Right implementations are available at www.readright.com.

Finally, for those that enjoy reading about theory and research, Dr. Tadlock's monograph, *Interactive Constructivism and Reading: The Nature of Neural Networks Challenges the Phonological Processing Hypothesis* may be downloaded from the Read Right web site (www.readright.com) or ordered by phoning the Read Right Office: 360-427-9440.

Please pass this e-mail along to any of your staff seeking information on effective approaches to reading development.

Thank you.