

Talk of the Block

The two main reading programs that we use to tutor with are: Laubach Way to Reading and American Lives. Both programs are distributed by New Readers Press. In the Laubach program (four levels) students learn how to read while in the American Lives series, students use what they have learned to read for meaning. There are other programs at our office that also support the same purposes and can be used as a reading program or supplement. In this article, I will refer to one of those programs, Talk of the Block, which is also distributed by New Readers Press.

“Talk of the Block” was designed for the adult beginning reader (grades 2.0-3.9). It is especially appropriate for students who are learning English as a second language. There are two sets of four books in the program with one group focussing on short vowel sounds while the other concentrates on long vowel sounds. Each book centers on a theme: family, home, shopping, and health. There are four main characters in each book and each story takes place in an urban setting. The books may be used in any order.

How to teach a unit:

Sight words are important for the adult beginning reader. The sight words (seventy-five) that are in “Talk of the Block” are found on page 7 of the Teacher’s Guide. Flash cards should be used to introduce and reinforce sight words at the start of each lesson. They are a good warm up exercise.

One story or one lesson is enough to cover in a weekly session. First introduce the story: tell your student in a sentence or two what the new story is all about. The Teacher’s Guide provides challenge words that can be introduced before reading. For example: in the story “A Problem With Math,” the challenge words are: happy, maybe, problem, school, study, teacher. Ask your student to predict what might happen in the new story then have them read the story aloud as independently as possible. Each story is followed by comprehension questions, vocabulary exercises, as well as grammar exercises. The new story can be read again for homework.

“Talk of the Block” is easy to use, structured, and new readers will enjoy the stories which deal with real life issues. Call me if you would like to preview this program and see if it is right for your student.

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Tutor Trainer