

## The Laubach Way to Reading

Most of us would have learned to read in spite of the reading program that was used for our teaching. Good readers pick up the pieces of language, structure, and phonics in an automatic fashion. Yet there were and are students who fall through the cracks, for whom the chosen programs do not work. Those students usually had difficulty with phonics and as Foorman writes, “lack of phonemic awareness is a major obstacle to learning to read, and they therefore suggest providing disabled readers with highly structured programs which directly teach phonemic awareness.” That is what the “Laubach Way to Reading” program is, a very structured four level approach to reading which has proven itself to be a very successful method of teaching adults how to read and write.

The Laubach system has been used for more than sixty years and it works well with adults with few reading skills as well as for adults who are learning English as their second language. I love it because you can see results instantly. On the first day (Lesson One, Skill Book One), you will start by introducing a chart: students will learn to recognize and say the letters and sounds of: /b/, /c/, /d/, /f/, /g/, /h/. They will read and say the chart words: bird, cup, dish, fish, girl, hand. Then the student will read a simple story using the new chart and story words.

My wife Joan and I introduced the first chart and story to a family from Mexico on a recent Saturday morning. They were so surprised by their success that they couldn't stop reading the first story again and again. The first lesson goes on to show the student how to write each letter that was introduced on the chart and provides extra practice for homework. We also use the “Laubach Way to English” workbooks to provide additional practice in listening to, speaking, reading, and writing patterns of English that are taught in the Skill Books.

In the teacher's manual, the editors write, “The series provides a systematic development of basic reading and writing skills. Each lesson includes vocabulary development, phonic or structural analysis of words, the reading of a short story, comprehension checks, and writing practice. The lessons progress from the sounds and regular spellings of basic consonants to those of the short vowels, the long vowels, and finally to irregular spellings and more difficult reading, writing, and grammar skills.”

By the end of book four, a student will have a large core of words that he or she can read without stopping to decode. The student will be reading groups of words together (fluency) so that their reading sounds like they are talking and not as if they are reading one word at a time. The student will know how to solve a tricky word and at that point we can switch our emphasis to reading for meaning. After book four, we often move our students into the “American Lives” series which was introduced in a previous “Tips for Tutors.” There the student will use all of their reading skills to read about the lives of historical figures.

The “Laubach Way to Reading” with its organized and effective system gives our students a strong foundation. It is easy to teach and the students learn to read. There is nothing more we can ask of this fine program. It works.

Works Cited:

The quotes are taken from the article “New Readers Press” presented by: Title II of the Workforce Investment Act, as well as the “Laubach Way to Reading” Teacher’s Manual I.

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