

**RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR SING, SPELL, READ, AND WRITE
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY STUDY
SING, SPELL, READ, AND WRITE**

By Carol Bond, Ph.D., Steven M. Ross, Ph.D., Lana J. Smith, Ph.D., and Jason Casey, M.S.

- THE SUCCESS OF THE SING SPELL READ AND WRITE PROGRAM AT THE KINDERGARTEN LEVEL SUGGESTS THAT IT MIGHT WELL BE ONE OF THE BEST EXPENDITURES A SCHOOL DISTRICT COULD MAKE FOR THOSE CHILDREN WHO ARE LABELED AS 'AT RISK'. (P. 57)
- SSRW APPEARS TO BE A VALUABLE ALTERNATIVE FOR THOSE CHILDREN WHO MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE HAVE SUCCESS IN LEARNING TO READ DURING THOSE FIRST YEARS OF INSTRUCTION. (P. 58)
- STUDENTS IN THE SSRW PROGRAM SCORED SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER IN WORD ATTACK SKILLS THAN DID STUDENTS IN THE BASAL PROGRAM.
WHILE ONE OF THE MAJOR CONCERNS EXPRESSED ABOUT SSR&W REGARDED THE PERCEIVED LACK OF EMPHASIS TOWARD TEACHING COMPREHENSION, THE MAJORITY OF THE STUDENTS IN SSRW HAD A SLIGHT EDGE OVER THE CONTROL STUDENTS ON THE DURRELL READING TEST. THIS TEST MEASURED THE COMPREHENSION OF THE CHILDREN WHEN THEY WERE ASKED TO READ ORALLY. (COMPREHENSION TEST). (P. 57)
- STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE TEN-ITEM ATTITUDE SURVEY SHOWED SOME SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SSR&W AND CONTROL CLASSES, ALL FAVORING SSR&W. AT THE KINDERGARTEN LEVEL, SSR&W STUDENTS WERE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO (A) LIKE SPELLING BETTER THAN READING 71%, AND 51% RESPECTIVELY; 99% OF SSR&W STUDENTS LIKE SCHOOL, VS 91% CONTROL SAMPLES. (B) 91% OF SSR&W STUDENTS REGARD READING AS THEIR FAVORITE SUBJECT VS 70% CONTROL SAMPLE; AND (C) 97% OF SSR&W STUDENTS THINK THEY'RE GOOD READERS VS 86% CONTROL SAMPLE (P. 50-51)
- KINDERGARTEN LETTER WORD IDENTIFICATION POSTTESTS: SSRW OUTPERFORMED CONTROLLED STUDENTS AT EACH STRATUM ON LETTER WORD IDENTIFICATION. (P. 16)
- KINDERGARTEN WORD ATTACK POSTTEST MEAN SCORES AT EACH STRATUM FAVORED THE SSRW GROUP, ESPECIALLY AT THE LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STRATUM. (P. 17)
- SSRW KINDERGARTENS SCORED HIGHER ON THE DURRELL (READING POSTTEST) AT THE LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STRATUM. (P. 19)
- FIRST GRADE POSTTEST EFFECTS FAVORED SSRW FOR ALL TESTS AT EVERY STRATUM WITH ONE EXCEPTION: THE SPELLING TEST EFFECT SIZE FOR HIGH STRATUM FIRST GRADE STUDENTS. (P. 53)
- FIRST GRADE LETTER WORD IDENTIFICATION POSTTEST: FOLLOW-UP TESTS SHOWED THE SSRW STUDENTS HAD SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER LETTER WORD IDENTIFICATION POSTTEST SCORES THAN CONTROL STUDENTS. (P. 25)
- (FIRST GRADE) WRITING POSTTEST: MEANS SCORES GENERALLY FAVORED SSRW GROUP.(P.25)
- SECOND GRADE DURRELL ORAL READING POSTTEST: 171 SSRW STUDENTS HAD HIGHER MEAN SCORES ON THE DURRELL ORAL READING POSTTEST THAN DID THE 180 CONTROL STUDENTS. (P.37)
- SECOND GRADE WORD ATTACK POSTTESTS: SSRW STUDENTS' SCORES WERE APPROXIMATELY 40% HIGHER THAN CONTROL STUDENTS' SCORES. (P. 36)

- TEACHERS WERE VERY POSITIVE IN REACTING TO THE SSRW PROGRAM OVERALL. 92% RECOMMEND USING IT AT THEIR SCHOOLS; 93% AGREED THAT THEY WOULD RECOMMEND ITS USE SYSTEM WIDE. (P. 41)
- WITHOUT TEACHER ENTHUSIASM THE CHANCES FOR THE PROGRAM TO SUCCEED ARE PROBABLY DISMILL. MOST WOULD AGREE THAT A READING PROGRAM IS ONLY AS GOOD AS THE INSTRUCTION AND THE INSTRUCTOR. TEACHERS NEED TO FEEL CONFIDENT THAT WHAT THEY ARE DOING IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF THE CHILDREN THEY TEACH. IN A FIELD WHERE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO NAME A BEST APPROACH TO TEACHING BECAUSE OF THE DIVERSE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CLASSROOM AND TEACHERS, TEACHER CONFIDENCE IN AND ENTHUSIASM TOWARD SSR&W IS A REAL PLUS AND, AS REPORTED, MOST OF THE COMMENTS FROM SSR&W TEACHERS WERE INDEED POSITIVE. POSSIBLY THIS ENTHUSIASM FOR THE PROGRAM COULD ACCOUNT FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT SCORES OF THE SSR&W CHILDREN. (P. 55)
- IN ADDITION TO TEACHER ENTHUSIASM FOR SSR&W, STUDENTS AND PARENTS LIKE THE PROGRAM.(P. 56)

SEVERAL TEACHERS EMPHASIZED THE TEACHING OF DECODING SKILLS, WHICH ALLOWED THE CHILDREN TO "READ" MORE WORDS. ANOTHER COMMENT, WHICH APPEARED FREQUENTLY, WAS RELATED TO THE PERCEIVED CONFIDENCE THE CHILDREN DEVELOPED ABOUT THEIR READING ABILITIES. TEACHERS ATTRIBUTED THIS CONFIDENCE TO THE EARLY FOUNDATION OF DECODING SKILLS, WITH MANY STATING THAT THE EARLY FOUNDATION HELPED BUILD SELF-ESTEEM. (P. 41)
- THE RESULTS OF THE ATTITUDE SURVEY SEEM TO SUPPORT THE TEACHERS' OBSERVATIONS, THAT THE YOUNGER CHILDREN DO LIKE SSRW." (P.56)
- MORE SSRW STUDENTS (76%) THAN CONTROL STUDENTS (53%) AGREED THAT READING WAS THEIR FAVORITE SUBJECT. (P. 51)
- KINDERGARTEN: THE MOST PRONOUNCED EFFECT SIZE WAS OBSERVED FOR LOW STRATUM CLASSES ON THE WORD ATTACK POSTTEST, WITH SSRW SUBJECTS SCORING AT MORE THAN EIGHT STANDARD DEVIATIONS (8.30) ABOVE THE CONTROL GROUP MEAN. (.25 IS CONSIDERED TO BE EDUCATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT) (P. 51-52)
- (SECOND GRADE) LETTER WORD IDENTIFICATION POSTTEST. THE WOODCOCK LETTER-WORD IDENTIFICATION SUBTEST WAS GIVEN TO 171 SSRW AND 184 CONTROL STUDENTS. MEAN SCORES ON THE TEST FAVORED THE SSRW GROUP. (P. 34)

(NOTE: 10,600 STUDENTS K-1 ARE IN SING. SPELL, READ & WRITE CLASSROOMS IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE BY TEACHER CHOICE, 1994-1995.)

Bond and her colleagues (1995) examined the effect of SSRW on the reading achievement of beginning readers in kindergarten, first, and second grades in Memphis, Tennessee. This study was based on a total of 1,591 students who were participating in either the SSRW program or in the basal reading program; 596 kindergartners, 640 first graders, and 355 second graders. Students in the treatment classes received lessons in SSRW as the main source of reading instruction. Comparison classes received instruction from the district adopted Burdett basal series. Eight SSRW schools were matched with nine comparison schools based on socioeconomic status, race, and standardized achievement scores. These schools were divided into three socioeconomic strata for each grade: high, middle, and low. In second grade, all the children were from middle class families. Results from a stratified random sample of 252 students showed no differences in reading skills between treatment and control groups in the beginning of the study. Posttest results were obtained from a 50% stratified sub-sample "from each class whenever feasible" (p. 124). The effect of SSRW was compared for children in different strata across grades K, 1, and 2 in the following areas: letter name knowledge and word reading skills (Letter-word Identification, Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery, 1984), decoding skills (Word Attack, Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery, 1984), reading comprehension (Durrell & Catterson, 1990), spelling, and writing (samples).

Strengths

Strengths of Sing, Spell, Read, & Write:

- The musical format of instruction is motivating for students learning phonics skills.
- The grade 2 introduction to non-fictional text makes a nice transition in preparing the students for increased expectations for textbook reading in grades 3 and 4.
- At grades K and 1, mastery of skills is tested and documented by the teacher before the student progresses.

School Systems that are long term users of Sing, Spell, Read and Write:

Lamont, CA. Public Schools, Robert Hentges, Supt. (805) 845-1452 (99% Hispanic)

Wise, VA. Public Schools, Wise, VA. Gwenneth Bott (276) 328-8019 (Coal miner area of Virginia - free lunch students)

Bleckley County Public Schools, Cochran, GA. Supt. Dr. Buster Evans (912) 934-9224, "Highest scores in mid-state area."

For More Information:

<http://www.suedickson.com>

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