

# **Multisensory Structured Language Programs: Content & Principles of Instruction**

## **Clinical Studies of Multisensory Structured Language Education for Students with Dyslexia and Related Disorders**

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The **goal** of any multisensory structured language program is to develop a student's independent ability to read, write and understand the language studied.

### **What Is Taught**

**Phonology and Phonological Awareness:** Phonology is the study of sounds and how they work within their environment. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a given language that can be recognized as being distinct from other sounds in the language. Phonological awareness is the understanding of the internal linguistic structure of words. An important aspect of phonological awareness is phonemic awareness or the ability to segment words into their component sounds.

**Sound-Symbol Association:** This is the knowledge of the various sounds in the English language and their correspondence to the letters and combinations of letters which represent those sounds. Sound-symbol association must be taught (and mastered) in two directions: visual to auditory and auditory to visual. Additionally, students must master the blending of sounds and letters into words as well as the segmenting of whole words into the individual sounds.

**Syllable Instruction:** A syllable is a unit of oral or written language with one vowel sound. Instruction must include the teaching of the six basic types of syllables in the English Language: closed, vowel-consonant-e, open, consonant-le, r-controlled, and diphthong. Syllable division rules must be directly taught in relation to the word structure.

**Morphology:** Morphology is the study of how morphemes are combined from words. A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in the language. The curriculum must include the study of base words, roots, and affixes.

**Syntax:** Syntax is the set of principles that dictate the sequence and function of words in a sentence in order to convey meaning. This includes grammar, sentence variation and the mechanics of language.

**Semantics:** Semantics is that aspect of language concerned with meaning. The curriculum (from the beginning) must include instruction in the comprehension of written language.

### How It Is Taught

**Simultaneous, Multisensory (VAKT):** Teaching is done using all learning pathways in the brain (visual/auditory, kinesthetic-tactile) simultaneously in order to enhance memory and learning.

**Systematic and Cumulative:** Multisensory language instruction requires that the organization of material follows the logical order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest and most basic elements and progress methodically to more difficult material. Each step must also be based on those already learned. Concepts taught must be systematically reviewed to strengthen memory.

**Direct Instruction:** The inferential learning of any concept cannot be taken for granted. Multisensory language instruction requires the direct teaching of all concepts with continuous student-teacher interaction.

**Diagnostic Teaching:** The teacher must be adept at prescriptive or individualized teaching. The teaching plan is based on careful and continuous assessment of the individual's needs. The content presented must be mastered to the degree of automaticity.

**Synthetic and Analytic Instruction:** Multisensory, structured language programs include both synthetic and analytic instruction. Synthetic instruction presents the parts of the language and then teaches how the parts work together to form a whole. Analytic instruction presents the whole and teaches how this can be broken down into its component parts.

According to the National Teacher Education Task Force of the International Dyslexia Association, multisensory structured language **programs should include** the following **content** and be taught with the following **principles of instruction**.

	Principles of Instruction				
	Simultaneous Multisensory VAKT	Systematic and Cumulative	Direct Instruction	Diagnostic Teaching To Automaticity	Synthetic/ Analytic Instruction
Content: Structure of the English Language:	X	X	X	X	X

<b>Phonology and Phonological Awareness</b>	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Sound/Symbol Association:</b> visual to auditory, auditory to visual, blending and segmenting	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Syllables:</b> Types and patterns for division	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Morphology:</b> base words, roots, affixes	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Syntax:</b> grammar, sentence variation, mechanics of language	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Semantics:</b> Meaning	X	X	X	X	X

### Descriptions of some MSSSL reading programs

From the original Orton-Gillingham method, many variations have been developed. Some of the modified Orton-Gillingham methods written by Orton students are The Slingerland Method, The Spalding Method, Project Read, Alphabetic Phonics, The Herman Method, and The Wilson Method. Other works included in which the authors of the programs used the tenets of Orton's work, but were not directly trained by Orton-Gillingham personnel are The Alphabetic-Phonetic- Structural -Linguistic approach to Literacy (Shedd), Sequential English Education (Pickering), and Starting Over (Knight). The Association Method (DuBard), and the Lindamood-Bell Method (Lindamood -Bell) have as their basis the research into hearing impaired and the language impaired individuals.

**Alphabetic Phonics** evolved directly from Orton-Gillingham. It combines all three learning modalities (auditory for spelling; visual for reading; kinesthetic for

handwriting). The "Instant Spelling Deck" for daily 3-minute drill focuses on the most probable spelling of each of the forty-four speech sounds. The Initial Reading Deck is a set of 98 cards with 3D pictured key words (chosen by students) to "unlock" each of the 44 speech sounds. Bench Mark Measures geared exactly to the curriculum were added to provide periodic proof of students' progress in reading, spelling, handwriting, and alphabetizing—designed both to guide the teachers' presentation pace and to enhance the student's confidence. For more information contact the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital, 2222 Welborn St., Dallas, TX 75219. Phone 214/559-7425.

**The Association Method** is a multisensory, phonetically based, systematic, incremental instructional program for teaching and/or refining oral and written language. Special features are: multisensory teaching which includes the use of auditory, visual, tactile and motor-kinesthetic cues for learning; use of the Northampton Symbol system for teaching sound/symbol relationships for reading; use of cursive writing for initial instruction—children learn to read manuscript, but write only in cursive; a slower temporal rate of speech is used to provide children more time to process auditorily and more time to observe the speaker's lip movements; precise articulation is required from the beginning; and color differentiation is used as an attention-getter, to differentiate phonemes within words, and to highlight verbs and new concepts in language structures. An individual child's book is made as he/she progresses through the Method. For more information contact The DuBard School for Language Disorders, University of Southern Mississippi, Box 10035, Hattisburg, MS 39406-0035. Phone 601/266-5223

**The Herman Approach.** Renee Herman developed this sequence of instruction and a methodology that started each student at his point of deficit and sequentially taught him mastery of each skill level, expanding those skill levels vertically and horizontally as in an inverted pyramid. Multisensory strategies that link visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile stimuli help dyslexic students compensate for visual and auditory processing problems. Kinesthetic and tactile exercises are carefully sequenced and each activity is repeated until the response is automatic. The Herman Method reading curriculum encompasses: decoding and encoding skills, sight word recognition, structural analysis, use of contextual clues, dictionary access skills, decoding of diacritical symbols, and the complete spectrum of comprehension skills. For more information contact the Herman Method Institute, 4700 Tyrone Ave., Sherman Oaks, CA 91423. Phone 818/788-1360

**Lindamood-Bell.** The Lindamood® Phonemic Sequencing (LiPS) Program (formerly called the ADD Program, Auditory Discrimination in Depth) successfully stimulates phonemic awareness. Individuals become aware of the mouth actions which produce speech sounds. This awareness becomes the means of verifying sounds within words and enables individuals to become self-correcting in reading and spelling, and speech. The Visualizing and Verbalizing for Language

Comprehension and Thinking (V/V) program develops concept imagery through a series of steps beginning with expressive language and extending from a word to imaged paragraphs. For more information contact **Lindamood-Bell Learning Process**, 416 Higuera, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401. Phone 800/233-1819

**Montessori And Sequential English Education Approach.** The Sequential English Education program is a multisensory structured language approach to teaching reading, writing, and spelling to students at risk for or diagnosed as dyslexic or having a related disorder. The program initially emphasizes the mastery of the code of the English language, the alphabetic, and phonetic system. It is one of a few programs age appropriate for 5 and 6 year old children. The instruction is 1:1 or small group (1:7) and intensive. Multisensory techniques are integral. In the SEE program the memory board (textured surface of masonite board) is used for a visual-auditory-tactile and kinesthetic input of new material being learned and any error being corrected. Comprehension proceeds from word meanings to sentence paraphrasing. For more information contact The Sequential English Education Training Program at The June Shelton School and Evaluation Center, 5002 West Lovers Lane, Dallas, TX 75209. Phone 214/352-1772

**Orton-Gillingham** is the structured sequential multisensory teaching of written language based upon the constant use of association of all of the following - how a letter or word looks, how it sounds, and how the speech organs or the hand in writing feels when producing it. Children also learn the common rules of the English language such as the final e rule and when to use -ck and -tch. Older students learn a variety of syllable patterns and common prefixes and suffixes, then Latin and Greek word parts. For more information contact the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators, P.O. Box 234, East Main Street Amenia, NY 12501-0234. Phone 914/373-8919

**Project Read** is an alternative approach to teaching reading and written expression concepts and skills to children/adolescents in mainstream classrooms as well as in special education and Chapter One services. It began as a decoding/encoding program, but it was soon very apparent that the majority of these students had more pervasive language learning problems and so the program curriculum was expanded to include reading comprehension and written expression. thus the name "language Circle," which describes the integration of all the elements of language learning. For more information contact Language Circle Enterprises and Project READ, P.O. Box 20631, Bloomington, MN 55420. Phone 800/450-0343

The **Slingerland Multisensory Approach** is a classroom adaptation of the Orton-Gillingham Approach. Originally created for preventive instruction, it is used today both as a preventive and remedial approach and is practiced in classrooms, in small groups, and in one-to-one settings with students ranging from primary grade children to adults. The Slingerland approach differs from

more traditional approaches in several ways. Simultaneous, multisensory teaching strategies are incorporated into every facet of the lesson. The logic and structure of English are taught using the alphabetic-phonetic principle of beginning with the smallest unit of sight, sound, feel-a letter. All the language arts skills-oral expression, decoding, reading comprehension, spelling handwriting and written expression-are taught with the one integrated direct instruction approach. Students are given guided practice in functional use of these skills with the goals of independent reading and written expression. For more information contact the **Slingerland Institute for Literacy**, One Bellevue Center, 411 108th Ave. NE, Bellevue, WAS 98004. Phone 425/453-1190

**The Spalding Method** is a total language arts approach consisting of integrated, simultaneous, multisensory instruction in listening, speaking, writing, spelling, and reading. These instructional elements (spelling, listening/reading comprehension, and writing) provide the major language arts strands. A fourth philosophical element insures consistency in program implementation. The Spalding principles which guide lesson plans, instruction, and decisions are the following: 1) learning with a child-centered approach, 2) multisensory instruction; 3) encouraging higher-level thinking; 4) achieving quality work; 5) recognizing the value and importance of tasks; and, 6) integrating language arts into all curriculum areas. For more information contact the **Spalding Education Foundation**, 2814 West Bell Road, Suite 1405, Phoenix, Arizona 85023. Phone 602/866-7801

**Starting Over** instruction includes diagnosis and remediation of decoding, spelling, vocabulary, writing, handwriting and comprehension. Its philosophy: 1) Dyslexic children and adults can learn to read, spell, and write if they are diagnosed and taught using a multisensory, structured language approach; 2) teachers can be taught to do both the diagnosis and the remediation; 3) dyslexics can be taught to surmount their primary problem-awareness of differences among sounds; 4) critical thinking can be taught by giving clues and asking question; 5) teachers can be taught not to give answers or model sounds; 6) memorization can be enhanced by daily review of previously introduced material; 7) sequenced steps for decoding and spelling serve to focus attention, activate and slow down the learner, enhance memorization, and foster independence; 8) comprehension can be improved by merely improving decoding; 9: when decoding has been made automatic and fluent, explicit comprehension instruction can make reading a pleasure; and, 10) writing can be mastered when taught alongside decoding and comprehension. For more information contact Starting Over, 317 West 89th Street, New York, NY 10024. Phone 212/769-2760

**The Wilson Reading System** is a 12-Step remedial reading and writing program for individuals with a language-based learning disability. This program is based on Orton-Gillingham philosophy and principles and current phonological coding research. It directly teaches the structure of words in the English language so that students master the coding system for reading and spelling. Unlike other

programs that overwhelm the student with rules, the language system of English is presented in a very systematic and cumulative manner so that it is manageable. The Wilson Reading System specifically teaches strategies for decoding and spelling. However, from the beginning steps of the program, it includes oral expressive language development and comprehension. Visualization techniques are used for comprehension. For more information contact **Wilson Language Training**, 175 West Main Street, Millbury, MA 01527-1441. Phone 800/899-8454