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Homeschooling
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Reading Reviews

**Helping Kids To
Learn Better!**

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READING & PHONICS BLENDING AT THE BEGINNING

Costas Productions

P.O. Box 5391

Timonium, MD 21094

www.blendingatthebeginning.com

Direct Phonics Instruction for Early Readers

Blending at the Beginning is an exciting, innovative direct phonics instruction program for early readers. This approach to phonetic blending for the K-3 learner was developed by an early childhood teacher/reading specialist with a certification in ESOL. It is designed to assist parents in their child's learning and will guide you in providing complete phonics instruction at home.

Blending:

- Teaches vowel sounds
- Teaches sound blending skills
- Builds upon the sounds and reinforces those sounds
- Multi-sensory using rhythm and repetition
- Highly effective as a classroom program
- An excellent "How To" 25 minute, informative educational training

video for parents and teachers

- A parent- friendly learning guide in an easy to follow skills sequence
- Color-coded, laminated alphabet cards including letters and letter groups
- An opportunity to share quality time with your child

We teach the early reader to blend words starting at the beginning of the word : cat. By blending sounds in this manner, the early reader is more easily able to hear the word as it is blended. The rhythm and repetition, method of teaching phonics gives the child a vehicle to successfully complete the blending process.

Blending At the Beginning is designed to promote a positive interaction between

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Language Arts

English From The Roots Up

Help For Reading, Writing, Spelling and
S.A.T. Scores

Available from Literacy Unlimited Publications

P.O. Box 278, Medina, WA. 98039-0278

www.literacyunlimited.com

\$29.95 per volume/\$18.00 flash cards/

Wholesale prices are available

Review by Linda K. Foster

I can't count the number of times in my life that I've said, "it's Greek to me" meaning, of course, that I didn't understand something. After reading English From The Roots Up, developed to provide a foundation for the English language through the study of root words, I realized that not only the things I don't understand, but, also, most of the things I do understand are "Greek to me". "Just as phonics helps children figure out what words are, Latin and Greek help them figure out what words mean." This quote by Joegil K. Lundquist, author of English From The Roots Up provides a simple explanation for learning the Latin and Greek roots for English words. In the introduction, Ms. Lundquist opines, "Without an early working knowledge of these indispensable components of their language, children are handicapped in their ability to use words well."

English From The Roots Up is presented in two volumes, each offering 100 Latin and Greek root words for use with elementary through high school age students. While the teaching materials are written in a manner to be presented in a classroom setting, the system is easily adapted for use in the Homeschool setting. And, probably most importantly, this system is written in such a manner that it is not necessary for the teacher/parent to have a background in Latin and Greek to be successful.

Students use color-coded flash cards to learn the root words, meanings and derivatives of the words. The color-coding allows the student to differentiate between Green and Latin words. A page of each book shows the front and back of each flash card and also includes useful "Teaching Notes" offering information various meanings of

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Language Arts English From The Roots Up

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the words and making suggestions for use in incorporating other aspects of learning (history, music, etc). For example, teaching notes for the word "metron" mentions metric systems and poetic meter as possible areas of discussion.

In addition to "flash card" pages, each volume includes a numerical index of words that coordinates with the flash card numbers, an alphabetical index divided into Greek and Latin sections, a pronunciation guide and a page dedicated to the Greek alphabet.

Throughout both Volumes, teachers/parents are encouraged to use pictures, models, visual media aids, field trips, etc.

to make the concept of the study of words more vivid and memorable. Finally, Ms. Lundquist makes it clear that the order and method of study presented in this system is a fairly time tested system, but should be used as a guide only. Teachers/parents should feel free to adapt the system to the individual student's abilities and interests.

English From The Roots Up is a practical study approach that can bring a quick, solid improvement to the grasp of English. It is a time-tested system that makes what could be a very dull subject, an exciting experience. It is well thought out, well organized and adaptable to any age group. - L.F.

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READING & PHONICS Visual, Concrete Learners and Auditory, Abstract Skills - Bridging that Gap with Itchy's Alphabet!

By Brenda Larson

Learning styles advocates indicate that upwards of 80% of our population are visual learners. It has been my experience that young children, especially, rely heavily on their visual skills for learning. These same young children are also very concrete, hands-on learners.

However, some of the first academic skills children are faced with learning are their letter sounds and formations – skills that are both auditory and abstract. Is it any wonder our visual, concrete learners struggle so much with these essential foundation skills? Current statistics show that over 30% of children at the Kindergarten level will most likely struggle to learn their letter sounds and may, as a result, face challenges with reading throughout their lives. How can we help?

As a Learning Assistance Teacher, the at-risk Kindergarten children were referred to me when they were unsuccessful with the letter sounds program taught in the classroom. I needed to do something different and

prepare those children for Grade 1! Very early in my career, I noticed that if I had a picture cue in the shape of the letter, the children learned and retained the skills; if I didn't have such a picture cue, I had to work harder and they had to work harder for learning to take place. Over the years, I eventually created all 26 picture cues in the shape of the lower case letters and developed the Itchy's Alphabet program.

Research conducted in 1984 by Linnea Ehri, Nancy Deffner, and Lee Wilce confirms the effectiveness of this approach. Their findings state, "The superiority of the integrated-picture group over the disassociated-picture group indicates that only one type of picture works, namely, one that links the shape of the letter to its sound."¹ (p.891) To explain further, instead of having to make sense of a 'b', children use the picture of the 'bat and ball' to bring meaning to that abstract character.

Marilyn Jager Adams perhaps captured this idea the best when stating:

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"Babies, by the way, have to actively and deliberately attend to phonemes. They sit around going bah, bah, bah, bah, bah, right? But after not too much time, they don't need to attend to the phonemes any more. They hear them effortlessly. From that point forward, the normal, natural thing for people to do is to focus their attention on the meaning, not sound. . . and now we're asking them, please, to release their attention from meaning and put it back on the sound of the word. There isn't really a good way to explain that to children. So you have to devise educational activities that will engage them in doing that, and where you can see if that's in fact what they're doing, because until the can do that, the alphabetic game just doesn't make sense because they're trying to pay attention to meaning, and it's not the way this particular game works."² (bold added by author)

Itchy's Alphabet is one of the best educational activities to help children make sense of the 'alphabetic game'. Through literature, song and active, fun-filled learning, children connect each letter to a picture in their mind which identifies both the letter sound and the formation. By practicing both simultaneously,

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learning and retention are enhanced. With our systematic order of presentation based on formations, printing is acquired with ease and letter reversal problems are significantly reduced.

Our Teaching Guide includes specific teaching instructions, phonological awareness activities and art activities for each letter sound. The Game Cards and Interactive Games CD provide the necessary drill and practice to ensure mastery. Reproducible Readers introduce children to basic sight words through patterned sentences. Accuracy and Automaticity Drills develop automatic recognition for sight words and words containing short vowels, long vowels, irregular vowels and r-controlled vowels.

Itchy and his Hands-On-Vowels friends make learning the vowel sounds easy and fun. Children see themselves learning as they collect Itchy Stickers and put them on their chart. They love to sing along with the Itchy's Alphabet Songs. For children who struggle with letter reversals, the b – d – p Reversal Package and g – p – q Reversal Package correct these confusions. Reproducible Blackline Masters teach proper letter formations and identification of initial sounds

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READING & PHONICS BLENDING AT THE BEGINNING

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parent and child. As every moment with your child is precious, so should be their learning time. It is our hope that through our innovative method of teaching phonics your child will reap the benefits when a bond is formed between parent and child as quality time is shared together and as learning is taking place.

Included in our Blending At the Beginning

program is our exclusive 30-page Learning Guide, an exceptional step-by-step teaching guide and an excellent resource as well. Also included in our Steps To Teaching Phonics are phonetic blending activities in a sequential format

Please visit our website: www.blendingatthebeginning.com, and see our special offer – a Free gift with every order!

READING & PHONICS Visual, Concrete Learners and Auditory, Abstract Skills - Bridging that Gap with Itchy's Alphabet!

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and initial blends. Itchy's Alphabet Book has a clear plastic overlay of the letter to emphasize the connection between the picture cue and the letter.

Letter sounds and formations are the essential foundation skills for successful reading and writing. Itchy's Alphabet provides children with the visual/concrete – auditory/abstract connection to en-

sure successful learning and a positive start on their road to reading.

1Ehri, L.C., N. Deffner and L. Wilce. Pictorial Mnemonics for Phonics. As printed in Journal of Educational Psychology, 1984, Vol. 76, No. 5, P. 880 – 893

2Adams, M.J. Thinking About Beginning to Read. An interview on Children of the Code

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