

**DR. CUPP READERS™**  
**AND**  
**TEN MINUTE PHONICS™**

**A SUMMARY OF DOCUMENTED RESULTS  
AND RESEARCH CONNECTIONS  
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### ABSTRACT

During the past three years, educators across Georgia have used *Dr. Cupp Readers*<sup>TM</sup> and *Ten Minute Phonics*<sup>TM</sup> as a core reading program. Whether working with beginning readers in the general K-1 classroom or using the materials to address the special needs of EIP, ESL and special education children, positive comments such as this one are common:

My students excelled because the program provided the explicit instruction and repetition that they needed. They were very motivated to read. I have taught for thirteen years and this is the best reading program I have encountered so far. I get results.

Researchers Paula and Keith Stanovich in their publication for The National Institute for Literacy, Research and Reason in Education (May, 2003), encourage educators and school administrators to use three criteria to identify whether a curriculum is research-based. These criteria include:

- Demonstrated student achievement in formal testing situations implemented by the teacher, school district or state
- Published findings of research-based evidence that the instructional methods being used by teachers leads to student achievement, and
- Proof of reason-based practice that converges with a research-based consensus in the scientific research.

These criteria are regularly applied to the *Dr. Cupp Readers*<sup>TM</sup> and *Ten Minute Phonics*<sup>TM</sup> as measurements of the effectiveness of this K-1 beginning reading program. **The *Dr. Cupp Readers*<sup>TM</sup> and *Ten Minute Phonics*<sup>TM</sup> have demonstrated consistent student improvement as measured by formal and informal testing instruments and assessment tools. Since January of 2002, the effectiveness of these products has been verified by ample, objective evidence in all three areas with the addition of more formalized review and proof in practice.** Research continues to accumulate as surveys are conducted and scores from standardized tests and assessment tools commonly used by Georgia educators are evaluated. Classroom observations, in-depth educator interviews and multi-year assessments triangulate with other methods of data collection to provide a complete picture. Both seasoned and new users alike have contributed to this body of research.

**Both the *Dr. Cupp Readers*<sup>TM</sup> and *Ten Minute Phonics*<sup>TM</sup> are grounded in scientifically based research** identified by such sources as the National Reading Panel's Teaching Children to Read, The Handbook of Reading Research (Kamil, et al), Preventing Early Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow, et al), Put Reading First (U.S. Department of Education), What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction (Samuels and Farstrup) and the *Reading Research Quarterly*. It also includes elements verified by cognitive and behavioral psychologists and educators.

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**Concepts integrated into *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* and *Ten Minute Phonics<sup>TM</sup>* are also endorsed by such literacy advocates** as the International Reading Association, the National Center for Family Literacy, the National Council of English Teachers, and the National Institute of Literacy. The *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* and *Ten Minute Phonics<sup>TM</sup>* represent proven methods for moving students toward mastery of the basic literacy elements needed to competently comprehend text.

**In 2002, *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* and *Ten Minute Phonics<sup>TM</sup>* were officially adopted by the state of Georgia as a curriculum for beginning (K-1) language arts and EIP classrooms beyond that level.** The adoption process is quite extensive, conducted by a panel of distinguished teachers and educational experts, and underscores the validity of the *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* and *Ten Minute Phonics<sup>TM</sup>* as research-based and effective educational tools.

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout this document, references to *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™* appear together. Although a few classroom teachers use only one of these products, the majority incorporates both for a balanced approach to literacy instruction. For simplicity's sake, the name "*Dr. Cupp Readers™*" is referenced most often. Occasionally, the title "Jack and Jilly" or "Jack and Jilly Readers" is used when quoting teachers who still use the original titles for this curriculum. In addition, whenever an educator or administrator is quoted in this material, their quote will be verbatim, from either their written comment on a survey form or as stated in a telephone or face-to-face interview

The basic premise that all children can be readers is the foundation of *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™*. These materials are based on the idea that children become successful readers when they have explicit, systematic instruction, paced to encourage mastery of every step. In study after study, the same themes and elements are proven to be successful, positive approaches to literacy development among beginning and struggling readers. Those elements are perhaps best summarized in the National Reading Panel's list of comprehensive reading program components. Below is a list of "learning to read" essentials from the National Reading Panel compared to elements of *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™*:

<b>U.S. Dept of Education Key Reform Areas for Classroom</b>	<b>Dr. Cupp Readers™/ Ten Minute Phonics™ Basis</b>
<b>Phonemic awareness</b> →	<b>Phonemic awareness</b>
<b>Phonics</b> →	<b>Phonics</b>
<b>Fluency</b> →	<b>Oral fluency</b>
<b>Vocabulary</b> →	<b>Spelling &amp; vocabulary</b>
<b>Comprehension</b> →	<b>Comprehension</b>
<b>Motivation</b> →	<b>Writing &amp; communication</b>
	<b>Homework &amp; parent interaction</b>
	<b>Assessment &amp; study skills</b>

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Another example of how closely *Dr. Cupp Readers*<sup>TM</sup> and *Ten Minute Phonics*<sup>TM</sup> reflect mainstream research is evaluation of a study conducted in 1996 by reading researchers Pressley, Rankin and Yokoi. In this study, they identify key elements for reading success. After studying outstanding literacy programs, the researchers concluded that the most effective programs include:

- creating literate classroom practices,
- modeling and teaching both lower-order (e.g., decoding) and higher-order (e.g., comprehension) processes,
- using extensive and diverse types of reading (e.g. guided reading, shared reading, independent reading), and
- teaching students the writing process (i.e., to plan, draft, and revise as they compose), and extensive monitoring of student progress

The *Dr. Cupp Readers*<sup>TM</sup> and *Ten Minute Phonics*<sup>TM</sup> offer teachers an outline for effective instruction and classroom practices. In their extensive teacher's manuals, lesson plan formats, scripting for educators and an overall clear plan of action are profiled. From the first booklet or card deck, *Dr. Cupp Readers*<sup>TM</sup> and *Ten Minute Phonics*<sup>TM</sup> incorporate a logical introduction to phonics and comprehension plus discussion about text. With the built-in components of "Beat the Tiger," "Dr. Detective" and the core stories, *Dr. Cupp Readers*<sup>TM</sup> allow opportunities for students to participate in active, varied reading experiences. When a child understands the short "a" sound and knows a few frequent consonants, they can begin to read with the first story. The addition of a read-aloud booklist gives educators a chance to scaffold students' listening and vocabulary skills by providing exposure to materials more complex than they experience in the controlled introductions of the *Dr. Cupp Readers*<sup>TM</sup> stories. Also, from the very first booklet, children begin composing their own stories and learning the elements of sequence, plot and imagination.

In this same research, Pressley, et al, describe the best classrooms as positive places, fostering student reading and writing in various ways and conveying the message "you can be a reader." A kindergarten teacher from metro-Atlanta, GA, offers a view of how these elements in Dr. Cupp's materials helped students at her school:

Stepping into a "Jack and Jilly" classroom you immediately see children excited about reading and having fun learning. Even teachers with little experience find Dr. Cupp's methods easy to implement and make their own. It has everything you need to assess students' skills, create a plan of action and teach children to read.

## **AN EVIDENCE-BASED ASSESSMENT: PRACTICAL APPROACHES THAT WORK IN THE CLASSROOM**

### **A Few Comments on Methodology**

In the spring of 2003, an independent literacy consultant conducted a written survey of over 100 users of the *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™*. The consultant also interviewed a randomly selected group of those completing the survey to clarify their comments and observations. To confirm the comments shared in the survey and interviews, test score results of students using *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™* were also examined.

New users of the products represent forty-eight percent (48%) of the total surveyed and those using the products for more than one school year represent fifty-two percent (52%). Six percent (6%) report using either *Dr. Cupp Readers™* (formerly Jack and Jilly Readers) or *Ten Minute Phonics™* (formerly the Phonics Toolbox) for three years consistently. This study is designed to identify not only the types of classroom settings in which Dr. Cupp's materials are successful but to gauge ease of use and areas of student achievement. The study also categorizes teachers' evaluations of the effectiveness of components of *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™*. These curricula include all six of the U.S. Department of Education's key areas of reform as identified by the National Reading Panel's landmark report Teaching Children to Read (see page 4 for a direct comparison of these elements directly compared to Dr. Cupp's curriculum).

In addition, Dr. Cupp includes components of spelling, assessment and study skills, writing and communication, homework and parent interaction to create what some teachers refer to as **“a truly balanced and effective approach to literacy instruction”**. The majority of teachers surveyed indicate they found these additional elements helpful in reinforcing the research-based fundamentals of teaching children to read.

The survey requested that each teacher or administrator respond to eleven questions, some with subcategories, to provide a picture of how the products (*Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™*) were used in their classroom. It also solicited demographic information such as the size of school, type of classroom (EIP/Special Ed or Regular), grade level, etc.

One hundred four classroom teachers were actively involved in this research during the 2002-2003 school year. Seventy-four percent (74%) of those used the *Ten Minute Phonics™* curriculum and ninety-six percent (96%) used *Dr. Cupp Readers™*. Forty-eight percent (48%) used these materials as the primary core curriculum and fifty-two (52%) as a supplemental tool to augment and reinforce basals or other curriculum.

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The following is a summary of the parameters among the surveyed users:

Parameter	Data
Size of Schools by Percentages	9% 100-400    17% over 750    74% 401-750
Length of Time Used	Average: 13.8 months (nearly one school year, 5 months) Range: 2 months to 36 months
Type of Classroom*	Regular K-1 (64%) EIP (44%) Special Ed (7%)
Size of Classroom	Smallest: (7 students-EIP); largest (27)
Breakdown by Grade Level*	Kindergarten: 45% First Grade: 52% Second Grade: 11% Third Grade: 6% Fourth Grade: 4% Fifth Grade: 5%

\*Adds up to more than 100% as some categories overlap (i.e. in the case of type of classroom, regular K-1 with EIP imbedded or multi-year EIP); the majority of users use both programs

## RESULTS

The **versatility** of the *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* and *Ten Minutes Phonics<sup>TM</sup>* provides teachers with tools they say are critical to every child becoming a reader.

**On average, since 2000,  
86% of users gave it a high overall rating  
53% rated it the highest possible,  
33% ranking it at the second highest level**

Results from the most recent survey (for the 2002-2003 school year) continued this trend: the majority of teachers (85%) who use Dr. Cupp's materials give them a high overall rating (54% rated it the highest possible, with another 31% rating it at the second highest).

**Sight words, oral fluency and phonics remain the strongest components according to survey participants.** During the survey and individual interviews conducted as an extension, teachers repeatedly confirm the positive impact of *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* and *Ten Minute Phonics<sup>TM</sup>*. They share statements such as this one from a regular **first grade teacher from suburban Atlanta**:

I love the Jack and Jilly program for my first grade classroom. I am a gifted-endorsed teacher but have a variety of student readers in my room. I have used this program to boost their fluency and expressing ("reading like an adult") for my higher readers. It is a superb way to teach sight words and I love the integration of character education.

**A special education teacher** who has used the *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* for approximately seventeen (17) months **points to success where failure has more often been the norm:**

The “Dr. Cupp Readers” have been the best thing to happen to my kids in the area of reading. I cannot say enough about the progress they have made. It is perfect for students with mild and moderate disabilities.

**Eighty-four percent (84%) specifically identify an improvement in students’ attitudes toward reading as a by-product of these instruction tools. Thirty-two (32%) point to the *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* and *Ten Minute Phonics<sup>TM</sup>* as a primary reason for a reduction in numbers of students not meeting state and national standards.** In addition, thirteen percent (13%) identify these products as key factors in improving student behavior because of the emphasis on character education and the strong motivational element incorporated into the *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>*.

Based on the user surveys and test score results, **there seems to be no discernable distinction between the effectiveness of the program in the regular K-1 classroom and its use in situations requiring specific remedial instruction (i.e., early intervention classrooms.)** Although students’ rates of improvement differ according to their abilities and potential, few students (only 7 out of every 100) fail to progress in reading skills while exposed to these products. Educators from a variety of circumstances corroborate this in comments shared during interviews and via students’ test scores.

**A kindergarten teacher with a regular classroom in rural Georgia says:**

In my twelve years of teaching, I have never seen such positive results as I have with this program. *Everyone* is reading at some level and feels that they can read. I have a great time teaching it and the children love learning. It really works!

**A kindergarten teacher with EIP students in a suburban school comments:**

I love this program. It seems to be the “missing piece” we have needed for a long time. My students and parents are so excited about the program and seeing students’ progress.

The first school outside of the state to use the *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* and *Ten Minute Phonics<sup>TM</sup>* (**an Alabama regular kindergarten classroom with EIP students**) shows that improvement with this program is not unique to Georgia. By the end of the 2002-2003 school year, according to DIBELS assessments (reference page 12 for an explanation), seventy-three percent (73%) of her class scored as low risk in letter naming and the average of 57 was 17 points higher than the test benchmark. Ninety-three (93%) scored as emerging in phoneme segmentation and sixty percent (60%) as low risk on nonsense word evaluation. The teacher comments:

I have never seen such a reading/phonics program for meeting the needs of every child and allowing them to feel successful.

**A first grade regular classroom teacher reports:**

I have used Dr. Cupp's materials for three years and the results are astronomical. It is the best thing I've seen in thirteen years to teach a child to read. I looped with my students this year from kindergarten to first grade. My top kindergarten group completed the entire curriculum for their grade level and, during the first six weeks of first grade, they were already reading on a second grade level.

**A kindergarten and first grade ESL teacher points out:**

My students, grades 1-5, are from Mexico and needed to learn English. The "Jack and Jilly" program [the *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>*] has been wonderful, especially the sight words and phonics components.

**An instructor from special education second, third and fourth grade classes states:**

The basal readers we were using weren't working and getting my special education students to read is a major challenge. They love Jack and Jilly and beg me everyday to do Hop'n Pop [a sight word practice game].

**FORMAL ASSESSMENTS MIRROR STUDENT IMPROVEMENT**

Rural and suburban schools, large and small, report positive test score results overall with *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and the *Ten Minute Phonics™* program. A variety of vehicles such as Lexia, the Basic Literacy Test (BLT), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program (GKAP) and STAR Reading (Renaissance Learning) tests are routinely used to track student progress in Georgia. Although researchers and educators alike continue to struggle with inconsistencies and changes in use of various testing methods within schools and in comparisons between schools from year to year, enough consistency in improvement appears to make review of such vehicles useful.

**The overall picture shows good and, in some cases, marked improvement.** The following is a summary of results from over 45 classrooms and over 1,000 students. Note that these include the average improvement for entire classrooms with the top-end achievement considerably higher.

FIGURE 1: Regular or Inclusive Regular/EIP Kindergarten Classrooms

Grade Level	Test	Average Beginning Test Score	Average Ending Test Score	Average Improvement	Comments
K	BLT	12.7	27.9	15.2 points	Only 1% reporting less than double-digit improvement
K	Lexia	13.4	35.1	21.7 points	
K	STAR		2		NOTE: Only 3 K classrooms used STAR-all readers ended year with above GE scores
K	GKAP	154.5/200	196/200	41.5 points	
K	DIBELS	*	*	*	Multi-level scores available; see page 12 for details

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**FIGURE 2: Regular or Inclusive Regular/EIP First Grade Classrooms**

Grade Level	Test	Average Beginning Test Score	Average Ending Test Score	Average Improvement	Comments
1 <sup>st</sup>	STAR GE	.9	1.8	One year	33% finished year <u>above</u> grade level
1 <sup>st</sup>	AR Book Level	1.4	2.2	Nearly 1 year	
1 <sup>st</sup>	BLT	23.1	47.9	24.8 points	Doubled – only 1 student showed less than double-digit improvement a child later targeted for special education. The greatest improvement was 51 points
1 <sup>st</sup>	DIBELS (WUF)	24	48.1	24.1 points	

**FIGURE 3: Exclusive EIP Classrooms\***

Grade Level	Test	Average Beginning Test Score	Average Ending Test Score	Average Improvement	Comments
2 <sup>nd</sup>	BLT	18.9	56.6	37.7 points	Only 4% improved less than 10 points
2 <sup>nd</sup>	STAR	1.7	2.8	1 year	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Lexia	49.1	57.2	8 points	30% improved in double digits
3 <sup>rd</sup>	STAR	2.6	3.0	3 months GE	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	BLT	22.5	44	21.5 points	

\*These represent classrooms exclusively identified as EIP (most common in upper level elementary school grades). The remainder of EIP student scores appears in Figures 1 and 2.

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The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test referred to earlier is a relatively new assessment giving specific insight into student performance in phonemic awareness and alphabets. Since some of the reviewers of this document may be unfamiliar with DIBELS, a brief explanation of its components and benchmarks is provided. DIBELS was developed at the University of Oregon during the 1990's to provide a prevention-oriented assessment and intervention decision-making system. It judges several components at the kindergarten level, transitioning into first grade. Benchmark ranges for DIBELS scores are as follows:

Onset Recognition Fluency (Initial Sounds) student should be able to perform 25-35 correct responses per minute by winter of Kindergarten
Letter Names: student should be recognizing 40 or more upper and lower case letters by the end of Kindergarten
Phonemic Segmentation Fluency student should be able to perform 35-45 correct responses per minute by the end of Kindergarten
Nonsense Word Recognition and Pronunciation: student should be able to perform 50 correct responses by the winter of first grade

In reviewing the DIBELS test results of approximately 310 students from 21 kindergarten classrooms using the *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* and *Ten Minute Phonics<sup>TM</sup>*, the following specifics are noted. **Eighty-one percent (81%) of students were on target for the phonemic segmentation fluency with fifty-two percent (52%) at or above the benchmark (see above).** In nonsense word recognition (competency not expected until winter of first grade), **fifty-six percent (56%) of the students tested were already within 10 points of that goal or above in the spring of their kindergarten year.** In identifying letter names, **students were able to identify on average 54 upper and lower case letters (in other words, they had completed every letter of the alphabet, upper and lower case, and were beginning a new sequence) within one minute.** While only twenty-four percent (24%) of students tested on target for identifying initial sounds/onset recognition fluency in the winter of 2002, an additional thirteen percent (13%) were within one or two points of this benchmark. By spring that number had risen to forty-four percent (44%). In this skill, more students fell into the “Emerging” status.

Only one first grade class reported DIBELS scores but those showed clear progress: **In each category** (Letter Name Fluency, Phonemic Segmentation Fluency, Nonsense Word Fluency, Oral Reading Fluency, and Word Use Fluency), **the mean score for students tested was at or above the goal.** In the case of Oral Reading Fluency, the mean was 20 points above the benchmark goal and no more than 7% of students were shown to be at risk in any one of these categories.

Highlighting **adaptability** of this program to many student levels, **an advanced kindergarten class reported a 23.9-point increase in BLT scores (17.1 to 41) in the 2002-2003 school year.** Whether Dr. Cupp's programs are used with regular, advanced or at-risk readers (such as in Early Intervention Programs), results are consistent.

Although the majority of schools participating in this year's research used the *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* and *Ten Minute Phonics<sup>TM</sup>* for two years or less, **it is worth noting that, among those schools using her materials longer, assessment shows continued student achievement.** Since test vehicles used in individual schools have changed so frequently over the past few years in Georgia, it is impossible to compare statistical results from year to year in a volume sufficient to verify results. However, evaluation of these on an annual basis, along with those using similar assessment tools, continues to show proportional improvement.

## CONSISTENT RESEARCH FOUNDATION

### A Comprehensive View

This year (2003) a group of researchers, including Gregory Camilli from the National Institute for Early Education Research and Rutgers University, re-examined findings of the National Reading Panel in 2000. In addition to echoing the National Reading Panel's case for systematic phonics instruction, this study emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive reading program that also includes elements of phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. This broad pattern of components repeatedly appears in mainstream research and confirms the approach of the *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* and *Ten Minute Phonics<sup>TM</sup>*

The foundation of most recent research begins over two decades ago, when specialists in reading research began to seriously investigate and identify major areas of instruction critical to students' success in reading, writing, listening and communicating. In the mid-1990's, a collaboration between the International Reading Association's Alan Farstrup and University of Minnesota professor S. Jay Samuels, resulted in the significant publication, What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction. Within the last six months, a third (and updated) edition of this summary was published. In 1998, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, a book edited for the National Research Council's Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children by such researchers as Catherine Snow and Peg Griffin followed. The next year (1999), the same editors worked together to produce a follow up to Preventing Reading Difficulties . . . entitled Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success. From this edition come these remarks:

All children simply do not learn everything at the same pace. [At the same time,] most teachers are given a "scope and sequence" of curriculum skills that they should teach week by week -- determined either by their districts or in published reading programs. One major benefit of these materials is that they provide a yearlong plan for instruction -- an essential element for effective teaching. However, even the most well equipped children may not move with equal ease through any preset sequence of lessons. Teachers must adapt and augment their lessons to meet the unique needs of each . . . individual in their classrooms. Most children need a motivating introduction and a lot of repetition and practice in order for their emerging skills to become automatic.

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Designed by an experienced classroom teacher, the *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™* provide both flexibility and adaptability for educators. A review of teachers' manuals and discussions with various educators using the program confirm that each child can move forward in the *Dr. Cupp Readers* booklets and in the phonics component at their own pace (remedial, average or advanced) and the teacher can immediately individualize or differentiate instruction. Teachers confirm that, almost without exception, even the lowest-performing groups of readers make cumulative progress.

The groundbreaking report by the National Reading Panel (2000), Teaching Children to Read, reviewed more than 100,000 studies to sharpen the focus on scientific research in the area of literacy instruction. The *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™* bring together proven, simple methods, that translate these key areas of reform into classroom practice. Dr. Bonnie Ambruster of The National Institute for Literacy, in September 2001, summarized the importance of this approach as a tool in evaluating effectiveness:

The National Reading Panel brought balance to a field in which decisions have often been made based more on ideology than evidence. These criteria offer administrators, teachers, and parents a standard for evaluating critical decisions about how children will be taught to read. In addition to identifying effective practices, the work of the National Reading Panel challenges educators to consider the evidence of effectiveness whenever they make decisions about the content and structure of reading instruction programs. By operating on a "what works" basis, scientific evidence can help build a foundation for instructional practice.

Dr. Donald Langenberg, Chancellor of the University of Maryland and Chairman of the National Reading Panel, concurred during his expert testimony before the U.S. Congress in 2000:

Literacy instruction can and should be provided to all children beginning in kindergarten. To become good readers, children must develop phonemic awareness, phonics skills, the ability to read words in text in an accurate and fluent manner, and the ability to apply comprehension strategies consciously and deliberately as they read.

All of these elements are available to kindergarten students whose teachers use *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™*. Teachers interviewed as part of the survey indicate that, after a short time with the "pre-Dr. Cupp Readers Word House concepts" [teaching letter recognition and alphabetic/phonemic awareness], many children can begin to read immediately with Dr. Cupp's first story (only containing four distinct words). One educator noted:

Because the phonics component begins at the same time as the first story, children develop the capacity to read right away. They begin to read words in real stories and are rewarded when they practice fluency. The first lesson also starts them off answering questions about the stories, to get them thinking about what they read and comprehending from the start.

The American Federation of Teachers has added its voice to the consistent message of what is needed to teach children to read:

Well-designed, controlled comparisons of instructional approaches have consistently supported the following components of effective reading instruction:

- Direct teaching of decoding, comprehension, and literature appreciation
- Phonemic awareness instruction
- Systematic and explicit instruction in the code patterns of written English
- Daily exposure to a variety of texts as well as incentives for children to read independently and with others
- Vocabulary instruction
- Comprehension strategies
- Frequent writing of prose to enable deeper understanding of what is read.

All of these components appear in *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™*. By combining the controlled, sequential introduction to phonics skills and sight words, with exposure to real literature via the Recommended Read Aloud Booklist (*Hop N Pop's Favorite Read Alouds* and *Miss O's Favorite Read Alouds*), a comprehensive, daily introduction and reinforcement occurs. Daily practice in key areas allows student exposure to group and individual practice, both in reading and in writing. Especially in the second series of books (31-60), teachers scaffold students into more complex vocabulary as they discuss the more challenging concepts of the *Dr. Cupp Readers™* stories

## CLOSING

According to creator Dr. Cindy Cupp, the *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™* began in Georgia as an effort to equip teachers with a controlled systematic introduction to proven elements in reading instruction. She believes all children can learn to read and her programs expand from that philosophy. Her materials are built upon a foundation of classroom experience and research, proven in hundreds of classrooms over the past three years. This versatile curriculum offers a comprehensive and easy-to-use program with the ability to be easily adapted to a wide range of students.

## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH SPECIFICS

### Motivation

Reading researchers have identified motivation as a key component in the successful teaching of reading. Oldfather and Dahl (1994) and Turner (1995) portray students' enjoyment of reading for its own sake as essential to engaged reading. Guthrie (2000) most recently confirmed: "Motivational processes are the foundation for coordinating cognitive goals and strategies in reading."

A vast majority (84%) of teachers using the *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™* report a change in children's attitudes about reading. Dr. Cupp purposefully designed her program to provide multiple components teachers can use to engage students in text and allow them to have fun while they learn (i.e., Hop'n Pop, the Race Car Game, Beat the Tiger, booklet stories, etc.)

In 2003, leading researchers in Canada (comprising the Early Reading Expert Panel commissioned by the Ministry of Education) have joined the U.S. National Reading Panel in confirming the importance of motivation in early reading success. In part, their findings report:

**The motivation to read** is *the* essential element for actively engaging children in the reading process. It is the fuel that lights the fire and keeps it burning. Children need to be immersed in a literacy-rich environment, filled with books, poems, pictures, charts, and other resources that capture their interest and make them want to read for information and pleasure.

**In this critical area of motivation, a teacher of at-risk first graders shares her experiences:**

My students come to me because they are unable to be successful in the "regular" classroom. As students begin with me, their perceived self-efficacy is low. Each of my current learners has displayed the majority, if not all of Bandura's 7 effects of low-efficacy (Gredler, 2001). The reading program that I use, Dr. Cindy Cupp's *Jack and Jilly Readers*, is a highly motivating reading program. Dr. Cupp has designed a program that allows all learners to experience success. I believe that is why Dr. Cupp's program is so effective with at-risk learners. The learners feel successful, perceived self-efficacy increases from a very low level; the learners are encouraged and attempt other objectives, and the effects snowball. It's an amazing transformation to witness, and I am honored to be associated with a program as powerful and as motivating as *Jack and Jilly*.

### **The Importance of Phonemic Awareness and Phonics as Components of a Balanced Approach to Literacy**

Share, Jorm, Maclean, et al. in a *Journal of Educational Psychology* article report that “teaching children to manipulate phonemes in words was highly effective.” They also state “these measures best predict how well students will be reading at the end of kindergarten and first grade.” *Dr. Cupp Readers™* gives many opportunities for building that expertise.

From the first introduction of the *Dr. Cupp Readers™*, several notable elements of effective reading instruction are evident. If a teacher begins with pre-readers or students who still need instruction on the individual sounds used in spoken words, the teachers’ guide provides a preliminary introduction especially for those needs. The teachers’ guide gives techniques for teaching how written language is made up of sounds, letters, words and sentences. It also teaches manipulation of phonemes to enforce familiarity with those sounds and letters. Among the researchers who support this approach are Adams, Foorman, Lundberg and Beeler, authors of Phonemic Awareness in Young Children: A Classroom Curriculum.

The *Dr. Cupp Readers™* introduce the concepts of sound blending and phonemic awareness using onset and rime with common three-letter words. It teaches most frequently used consonants in addition to the short and long vowel sounds. The *Dr. Cupp Readers™* and *Ten Minute Phonics™* enhance phonemic awareness by explicitly and systematically teaching children to manipulate phonemes, focusing on a few types at a time. Miss Sound O’s page (which appears in each book) gives students direct exercises to practice phonemes, onset and rime and simple “sound-it-out” words. According to the 2000 National Reading Panel’s study, this is the most effective way to build that critical group of skills. The National Reading Panel also found systematic phonics and phonemic instruction produces significant benefits for children K-6 and for children having difficulty learning to read. The *Dr. Cupp Readers™* allow students to practice onset and rime, blend letter sounds to create words, and self-correct using a few basic rules for short and long vowels, r-controlled words and those with two or more syllables. The teachers’ guide provides a scope and sequence chart with easy-to-follow outlines.

Phonemic awareness also develops through introduction of the “Word House”, a tool for reinforcing the basic short and long vowel sounds and common phonics rules. Stories are used as quick visual and mental triggers to remind students of a given letter’s sound or the rule that helps the child “say it right.” The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement, in Put Reading First, states that before children learn to read print, they need to become aware of how the sounds in words work. The “Word House” provides the vehicle for this and visual clues to help remember rules.

Rather than using a simple rote exercise, *Dr. Cupp Readers™* turns the practice of sight words and phonics into games. The program engages students in fun, pleasant activities while providing them with the practice time they need. As they work in the small group setting, they also receive reinforcement by hearing other children practice aloud. The consistent appearance of memorable characters such as Jack and Jilly, Miss

Sound-O, Hop'n Pop, The Tiger and Dr. Detective within a regular structure enhances the learning experience.

Each "Reader" introduces spelling words that reinforce the specifics of frequent, regular spelling-sound relationships. This is another requirement of effective reading instruction according to Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children. The authors state, "the goals of phonics instruction are to provide children with key knowledge and skills and to ensure they know how to apply that knowledge in their reading and writing." *Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* quickly moves students from identifying words in isolation to recognizing and using them in text. It gives them such opportunities through:

- an introduction of new words,
- a story with words already introduced and mastered in previous units (and repetition of those from week to week),
- a review and practice of sight words in various order,
- a comprehension segment,
- a writing segment and/or a practice/homework segment.

Each book works as a unit, reinforcing the concepts that came before and uniformly introducing new ones. As children practice sounding out various letters in words, concepts such as blending and use of onset and rime are incorporated. More complex words and syllables are introduced. Spelling and vocabulary elements continue to appear in each story to reinforce development of those skills.

*Dr. Cupp Readers<sup>TM</sup>* begins a track for reading instruction at a simple level. When children have mastered only four sight words, they can read the first story. Initial sight words are no more than five letters long. Children begin to read successfully right away. At least eighty-five to ninety-five percent (85-95%) of the text contains words already introduced in previous lessons. This not only allows the stories to become more and more complex in terms of vocabulary, comprehension and interest, but also greatly increases the chances the child will succeed. The remaining five to fifteen percent (5-10%) of the text are newly introduced "sound-it-out" words that children see when they begin the unit. Clear labels identify "tricky words" that do not follow any rules and these words are introduced and explicitly reviewed.

### **Allowing for Individualized and Small Group Instruction**

Unlike many comprehensive beginning-reading curricula, *Dr. Cupp Readers*<sup>TM</sup> allows flexibility and simplicity in individualizing instructions. Built into each booklet is convenient space for notations and individual test results. The program is created to allow for individualized instruction within smaller groups, ensuring that the average student can read at a 2.1 level by the end of the first grade. Exceptional students who progress more quickly have extensions such as the “After Dr. Cupp Readers” reading list to move them into real literature.

Within these smaller groups, individual participation and small group activities create chances for the more intensive teaching suggested in Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children. This is especially important for struggling, “at-risk,” readers who might move at a slower pace and be “left behind” with more conventional curriculum. Specialized reading groups can continue to work on the controlled vocabulary and skills particular to a story until they master it, whether that takes two days, one week or three weeks. Teachers have ample opportunity to tailor instruction as they assess students’ individual needs within those groups.

Research highlighted in the report of the National Reading Panel emphasizes that teachers should be able not only to assess the needs of the individual students but also adjust instruction to meet specific needs. They reference a study by Miller and Ellsworth (1985) detailed in the *Elementary School Journal*. This study found that training in areas such as assessment of reading levels and skills as well as differentiation in instruction causes significant differences in student performance.

*Dr. Cupp Readers*<sup>TM</sup> incorporates this component so children receive corrective instruction and additional support until they learn a particular word or skill. Teachers comment that they “suddenly were able to recognize the individual problems their children had and the solutions are right there in *Dr. Cupp Readers*<sup>TM</sup> for each of them.” One teacher comments: “I wish I had this program when I first began teaching – I can now see where the problems lie and how to fix them.”

### **Comprehension**

When addressing comprehension, *Dr. Cupp Readers™* introduces a focus on building that skill from the start. The Dr. Detective questions require a student not only to sound out words but also to understand what he/she has read in order to answer questions. With the unit segmented into short, usable pieces, there is much room for discussion of the text. This supports a greater grasp of the stories, how they relate to background knowledge and personal experiences of the students. Specific open-ended questions are also provided for parents to use in the homework component so they can reinforce this skill too. Effective comprehension instruction strategies such as those suggested by P. David Pearson, Laura Roehler, the National Council of Teachers of English and Michael Pressley support this approach:

- Strategies are taught over time and with plenty of practice. Reading develops as a process of emerging expertise (one Dr. Detective segment appears in each *Dr. Cupp Readers™* booklet),
- Strategies are used repeatedly with opportunities for students to activate background knowledge and transfer the strategy (in every lesson through various stories and exercises including writing activities). The teacher's guide also suggests additional questions for discussion to encourage supported, structured practice.
- Strategies are taught explicitly in the context of reading, (through the “Beat the Tiger” and Dr. Detective segments from the beginning, and later in the Writing segments), and
- Strategies are modeled from the very beginning by the teacher (design of initial comprehension questions makes the correct answer obvious to encourage early success). Scaffolding also occurs as characters appear in the later stories. Chapters lead from booklet to booklet as knowledge builds via the “Oral Language Lessons” suggested in the teacher’s manual.

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