

Become a Reader Through Singing

A first-grade study showed significant improvement in reading scores over traditional phonics instruction when using songs.

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Matthew Glavach, Ph.D.

Donny and Marie Osmond

A first-grade study showed significant improvement in reading scores over traditional phonics instruction when using songs. The author describes how using songs for teaching phonics and reading benefits children, especially children with reading difficulty.

The author's program PHONICS SONGS plus for grades one and two is based on original instructional song lyrics written by the author with the music and songs by Donny and Marie Osmond. PHONICS SONGS plus has important phonics skills embedded in each song and hundreds of high frequency reading words (sight words) appropriate for grades one and two.

The difficulty with using songs for teaching reading is that children often memorize the songs, and the words are in sequential memory. The author uses a finger-point reading activity with each song that has students identify words quickly putting the words into long-term memory and available for reading. A difficulty with songs on a computer screen is that many children cannot follow the bouncing ball. Children need to point to each word.

According to reading researcher and author Matthew Glavach Ph.D., one reason why reading scores are so low is that we are missing a fundamental step in the teaching of reading, and it is not phonics. The science of reading is pointing in the direction phonics, and it works well for many, but not all. Phonics relies mainly on one learning style, one that many children may not be ready for or respond to. Children, especially children from challenged or disadvantaged environments, have been found to have underdeveloped or delayed language development and poor auditory discrimination for sounds. Distinguishing sounds is fundamental to learning to read.

Music with lyrics helps develop phonics and reading skills. The rhythm in songs is slower than speech and there is more separation of sounds. This helps children develop the sounds for letters and improves auditory discrimination for sounds. The melody of songs can help with developing fluent reading skills. And the words in songs help in the development of language.

Listening to, playing, reading, and creating music, involves almost every part of the brain. If one pathway is weak, music can help open others. With practice, songs build stronger connections between the right and left sides of the brain and can bring many to reading. Learning to read requires attention, engagement, and repetition, all a part of singing.

PHONICS SONGS plus is for all students, including students with reading difficulty and English as a Second Language. The program is easy to use by parents and teachers and for those of us who go back a few years, Donny and Marie bring fond memories. The program, a CD and Reading Activity Book, is available at the author's website: StrugglingReaders.com. and Amazon.

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