The Overlapping Strategy Word List Assessments

On the following pages, you will find several words lists. They are designed to give you a tool for evaluating the phonics and reading skills of your students who are following Stevenson's Overlapping Strategy. The Overlapping Strategy is a way of covering key information from the first level of the Stevenson Program and teaching it concurrently with the second level. This approach involves covering the full 21 lessons of the *Overlapping Strategy Teacher's Manual*, followed by Lessons 15-52 of the *Basic Blue Level Core Manual*.

To get the most information from these assessments, you should administer each brief test at least twice: once before you begin the Overlapping Strategy books, or shortly thereafter; and once after they have completed, or almost completed, the Basic Blue Level. One purpose of these assessments is to demonstrate student progress. However, perhaps more importantly, you can also use some of the information revealed by the tests' initial results to help you focus your efforts and manage your pacing. In addition to the "before" and "after" results, you might also wish to give the assessments roughly half way through the strategy, which would be at some point during Lessons 29-31 of the *Basic Blue Level Core Manual.*

Please note, however, that these lists are **NOT** designed as a placement test. If a student is going to use Stevenson's Overlapping Strategy, he or she needs to start at Lesson One of the Overlapping Strategy Teacher's Manual no matter what the results of the pre-test. Starting from Lesson One is essential. Certain special mnemonic clues and unusual word-attack techniques covered in the earliest lessons of the Overlapping Strategy are applied throughout the 59 lessons spanning the *Overlapping Strategy Teacher's Manual* and *Basic Blue Core Manual*. If you start part way through the strategy, and then use the program in pieces, you cannot expect the special instructional techniques to work.

Also note that these tests are **NOT** meant to be definitive as an inventory of the student's overall phonics skills. Different syllable types can present different challenges. A student can struggle with some vowel digraphs and not others, or some r-controlled patterns and not others. Also, different phonics programs group their linguistic elements slightly differently. A thorough inventory of a student's phonics skills would require quite a few long lists of words, not to mention the use of full text.

These assessments are not intended to serve all your needs for evaluating students. In education today, students are assessed frequently with many different instruments. These word lists are just one small tool. At the same time, however, if you administer the tests given here, the results can give you some useful information that may help guide your instruction in the Stevenson Program.

Administering the Tests

There are only two pages for these assessments: one for the instructor to use and one for the students to read from. The teacher gives the student's page to the student and points to each word in the list as the student reads the word. Behind a small screen, or otherwise out of sight of the student, the teacher records the student's responses, **including** whatever mistakes the student makes, on the teacher's page. The teacher should tell the student to think before answering. The instructor should not impose a time limit. At the same time, however, it can be useful to note how much time it takes for each student to complete each word list. The teacher

should record the student's first response in the blank space provided, but if the student quickly corrects himself or herself, the teacher should also note the correction by putting a small check mark beside the initial incorrect response.

List 1 should be given at one session and both list 2A and 2B should be given at another session on another day. The student's score is simply the percentage of words read correctly on the first response, BUT the initial score is not as important as what the results show the teacher about the student's strengths and weaknesses. (Remember this is NOT a placement test.) The results of the pre-test can, however, give the teacher some insight about how fast the student might proceed and which areas might require greater or lesser emphasis.

Applying the Results

List 1 - This list includes the most common short vowel patterns (e.g., <u>fog</u>, <u>cub</u>, <u>bond</u>, <u>plant</u>, etc.) and the most common long vowel patterns (e.g., <u>soak</u>, <u>lime</u>, <u>brain</u>, <u>robe</u>, etc.). These vowel patterns are found both without consonant blends (e.g., <u>fin</u> and <u>file</u>) and with blends (e.g., <u>glad</u> and <u>stray</u>). None of the words are particularly rare. They would be easy to understand for most native English speakers of elementary school age. On the other hand, very common reading vocabulary words like <u>cat</u>, <u>dog</u>, <u>make</u>, <u>day</u> or <u>week</u> have not been included. Many of the words in the list are easy to confuse with other words that are spelled in a very similar, but slightly different, way. For example, it would not be surprising for a struggling reader to read <u>fin</u> as <u>fine</u>, or <u>file</u> as <u>fill</u>, or <u>lift</u> as <u>life</u> , or <u>soak</u> as <u>sock</u>, or <u>spice</u> as <u>spike</u>. Many of the words, as simple as they are, still require significant decoding skill. Words like <u>dense</u>, <u>grease</u> and <u>boast</u> require students to handle silent letters in various forms or consonant blends in different positions.

To make use of the results you observe, simply **look for similarities in the words students miss.** If you see certain patterns to the mistakes a student makes you can prepare to make a few small adjustments to the pacing and emphasis of your instruction within the program. Here are some common examples:

  • If a student's mistakes seem mainly to involve confusing long and short vowel sounds, you can assume that s/he needs the Stevenson mnemonics to help anchor those vowel patterns in memory. Vowel patterns in the English language are extremely inconsistent, and using the wrong vowel sound is one of the most common mistakes you will see among struggling readers. In addition to the Stevenson Program's use of memory-aiding clues to learn vowel patterns, Stevenson's Seven Special Reading Steps for single syllable words helps students focus their attention on producing the correct vowel sounds. If missing vowel patterns is the most frequent mistake you observe, you will need to proceed carefully. You must be sure students achieve a high degree of accuracy with one vowel pattern before you move on to the next. You can expect many students who are just starting Stevenson to guess frequently and impulsively. They will need to develop the habit of using the Stevenson Special Reading Steps, and it may take more time and effort for them to stop guessing than for them to get used to the Stevenson steps. For this purpose, the Group Game (described in appendices of both manuals) can be very important. If you are working one-on-one and do not have a group, call us at 800-343-1211, and we will help you adjust the game for individual use.

  • If students frequently misread the words with consonant blends (e.g., <u>bl</u>, <u>cr</u>, <u>dr</u>, <u>gl</u>, etc.), you can assume that Lessons 17 through 20 of the *Overlapping Strategy Teacher's Manual* will be particularly important and you will probably move more slowly at that point than during

the lessons that preceded them. You will probably need to use all of the practice reading material that is mentioned in these lessons and include all of the referenced practice material from the *Basic Blue Reading Book 1* and *Basic Blue Workbook A.* It is possible to reinforce these lessons further with material form the Beginning Green Level, but you should only do so if problems persist. (Call us at 800-343-1211 if that occurs, and we will advise you.) Also, look for the following results regarding consonant blends:

- Student misreads consonant blends consistently, but produces correct vowel sound consistently. This is a little unusual, but it means you will probably be able to move through the first 16 lessons at a relatively fast pace. You can probably omit some of the practice reading material that is available in each of those lessons. Reading activities will proceed rather quickly, but spelling activities may not. When you reach Lesson 17 the pace will slow down.

- Student produces correct vowel sound consistently except when consonant blends are present and then misreads both vowel pattern and consonant blend. This situation tends to indicate several things: that the student is not very familiar with consonant blends, that the student is confused by words that are longer than four letters, and that the student's overall word attack skills are very weak. The Stevenson mnemonic clues and the Seven Special Reading Steps will take care of the problem, but don't let the ease with which student handles the oral reading material in the early lessons of the Overlapping Strategy lull you into thinking that the student does not need to follow the Stevenson word attack process. As words become longer and more complicated after Lesson 17, a solid foundation established before that point will be essential.

• If a student's mistakes on Word List 1 are frequent but do not show any pattern, simply be prepared to use all the practice material that is available in every lesson. How fast or slow you move is not nearly as important as whether or not the student has truly demonstrated competency with one lesson before moving to the next. Focus on accuracy, not speed. You can only develop fluency once a high degree of accuracy (ninety percent or more) is established.

• If a student does very well with Word List 1, then wait for the results of Word Lists 2A and 2B. If the student does well on all three word lists, you may question whether the Stevenson Overlapping Strategy is really the right program for that student.

Lists 2A and 2B - We recommend administering these assessments on the same day, but we have divided them into separate groups for two reasons: some learning disabled students might benefit from taking a brief break between the lists; and the results of the test will give you different kinds of information. Again, you should **look for similarities in the words students miss.** The mistakes will tell how you might adjust the pacing and emphasis of your instruction within the program. Here are some common examples:

• As with Word List 1, in word List 2A notice to see if the student is mistaking vowel sounds or consonant blends or both. It is rare that a student at this stage would miss many single consonant sounds unless they are part of a blend or buried in a multisyllable word. Also notice to see if the student is guessing often.

- If the student is mistaking many of the vowel patterns in List 2A, that problem will be solved by the Stevenson mnemonic clues in Lessons 20-52 of the *Basic Blue Core Manual.* Most pupils who mistook the vowel sounds in List 1 will struggle even harder with List

2A. Sometimes, but not frequently, students will miss only a few of the vowel patterns in List 1, but still struggle badly with List 2A. You can expect such students to move through the *Overlapping Strategy Manual* rather easily and you can omit some of the practice material referenced in that book. However, these students will slow down quickly when you switch to he *Basic Blue Core Manual* Lesson 14, and you will probably need to use more or all of the practice material as you move through the *Blue Core Manual.*

 - If the student is guessing frequently, again the Group Game in the appendices will help a great deal. If you are working one-on-one, call us at 800-343-1211, and we can help you adjust the game for individuals.

• In Word List 2B students not only encounter multiple vowel patterns with and without consonant blends, they also must decode suffixes (i.e., frostings) and discern changes in the root structure that occasionally occur. If students struggled with previous lists, they will certainly struggle with List 2B. In fact, if the results in List 1 and 2A were very bad, you could omit List 2A to spare the student frustration. In that situation, you would only use List 2B to have a point of comparison for the later re-administration of the assessments. If you do administer List 2B, note which suffixes are causing the most trouble. Here are some thoughts on what you might observe:

 - Of all the suffixes the <u>ing</u> is the most likely to be decoded correctly.   Some students will decode the <u>ing</u> suffix itself correctly and consistently, but they will be confused by how the suffix affects the vowel pattern. This indicates that Lessons 15 through 19 of the *Basic Blue Core Manual* will be very important. During this phase of the program watch carefully to see how the pupil's decoding progresses. If mastery comes very slowly, you may want to review these lessons while you are moving forward. For example, You could cover Lesson 15 and 16, then review 15 before moving to 17. You could then review 16 before moving to 18. After Lesson 20, before on to Part Two of the manual, you could review Lesson 15, 16 and 18 again. These are foundation lessons for all the suffix work that is woven into the remainder of the Stevenson Program.

 - If students decode the words <u>waited</u> and <u>slanted</u> correctly but stumble over <u>frowned</u>, it is possible that they recognize the <u>ed</u> suffix (frosting) but cannot handle the word when the /ed/ is not fully sounded out. Lesson 16 of the *Basic Blue Core Manual* covers this issue, and that lesson may need to be reviewed more often than the others.

 - In general, Lesson 16 and Part One of Lesson 19 of the *Basic Blue Core Manual* are the ones likely to require the most review.

 - Of course, if students stumbled over most of the vowel sounds in the words in List 2A, they will probably have even more difficulty with 2B. The purpose of 2B is to see if the presence of the suffixes makes the situation worse, and, if so, which suffixes are most problematic.

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Students cover a great deal of phonics during the 59 lessons of the Overlapping Strategy materials, and they learn many other skills besides phonics. These assessments are just a simple way to help you understand your students' decoding weaknesses. We have offered a few suggestions on making some appropriate adjustments. However, the challenges faced by struggling readers cannot be fully captured by a few simple test results, so we encourage you to call us at 800-343-1211 if you have questions or need assistance.

Overlapping Pre- and Post-Tests
Student's Page
Two Separate Sessions both Pre and Post

1.

soak	shed	raid
fog	cub	wax
glad	smear	cramp
grease	boast	cute
bond	robe	plant
tame	breeze	chair
ramp	scream	grave
frost	spice	snore
float	lime	strap
drive	lift	brain
fin	dense	trunk
file	stray	cloth

2A.

wrote	wasp
spark	brook
mound	crawl
quick	haunt
growl	flew
scoop	nurse
skirt	glow
worth	phone
spread	break

2B.

barking	greasy
hoping	frying
camping	frowned
waited	hopping
grinning	dried
slanted	purely
meaner	darker
scaring	baker
smoothly	riding

Overlapping Pre- and Post-Tests
Teacher's Page
Two Separate Sessions both Pre and Post

1.

soak	_____	shed	_____	raid	_____
fog	_____	cub	_____	wax	_____
glad	_____	smear	_____	cramp	_____
grease	_____	boast	_____	cute	_____
bond	_____	robe	_____	plant	_____
tame	_____	breeze	_____	chair	_____
ramp	_____	scream	_____	grave	_____
frost	_____	spice	_____	snore	_____
float	_____	lime	_____	strap	_____
drive	_____	lift	_____	brain	_____
fin	_____	dense	_____	trunk	_____
file	_____	stray	_____	cloth	_____

2A.

wrote	_____	wasp	_____
spark	_____	brook	_____
mound	_____	crawl	_____
quick	_____	haunt	_____
growl	_____	flew	_____
scoop	_____	nurse	_____
skirt	_____	glow	_____
worth	_____	phone	_____
spread	_____	break	_____

2B.

barking	_____	greasy	_____
hoping	_____	frying	_____
camping	_____	frowned	_____
waited	_____	hopping	_____
grinning	_____	dried	_____
slanted	_____	purely	_____
meaner	_____	darker	_____
scaring	_____	baker	_____
smoothly	_____	riding	_____