

Introduction

The Overlapping Strategy is one of several ways of initiating the Stevenson Language Skills Program. It is intended for specific kinds of students and requires certain materials. This *Overlapping Strategy Teacher's Manual* **replaces** the first fifteen lessons of the *Basic Blue Core Manual* and is used **in conjunction** with the *Overlapping Strategy Student Book* **and** *Basic Blue Reading Book One* **and** *Basic Blue Workbook A*. Implementing the strategy is simply a matter of following the directions in this book, but the first few lessons will probably be easier if you read *Part One - A User's Guide* below. If you would like to understand more about the theory behind the Stevenson methodology, you may also want to read *Part Two - The Concept of the Program*.

Part One - A User's Guide

The Overlapping Strategy - The Overlapping Strategy combines the first two levels of the Stevenson Program. The program is a structured phonics approach with some unusual qualities, such as imaginative clues for letter patterns and a unique sequence of language units. Because the sequence is important, all students have to start at the beginning one way or another. The Beginning Green Level clues and word attack procedures form building blocks for the effective reading of complex words. Some students need to complete all the Beginning Green Level materials in a careful step-by-step manner in order to overcome their learning problems and build a strong foundation. However, many other students only need certain key elements of the Beginning Green Level, and these students can move at a faster pace. The Overlapping Strategy was designed for these latter students. Essential elements of the Beginning Green Level are introduced in the *Overlapping Strategy Teacher's Manual* and then “overlapped” with the second level of the program, the Basic Blue Level. In this way, students cover a wider range of phonics skills sooner than they would if they used the Beginning Green books before the Basic Blue books.

The Students - The program is most often used in small groups, but it can easily be used in larger classes or in one-to-one settings as well. The Overlapping Strategy is intended for two kinds of students:

- 1. Struggling readers above the primary grades who need an intervention for reading, spelling, vocabulary, and basic language skills.** These are students who are not responding to their current curriculum and need methods specifically designed to overcome reading and spelling problems. It is quite possible that these pupils have been identified as being dyslexic or as having specific learning disabilities. Under the RTI model, these students may or may not be identified as requiring special education, but they are probably in Tier Three. However, at a minimum these students **should have** certain skills before using the Overlapping Strategy: they should be able to recognize and sound out consonant letters; they should be able to discriminate consonant sounds; and they should be able to blend a consonant sound to a vowel sound without significant difficulty. Also, these students **should not have** any of the following problems: serious cognitive deficits (i.e., developmental delays, mental handicaps, etc.); serious oral language deficits; or severe, persistent problems blending two or three letter sounds.

(Difficulty blending multiple syllables is acceptable). If students have these significant learning difficulties, the Overlapping Strategy is likely to move too quickly for them, and they should use the full Beginning Green Level before starting the Basic Blue material.

2. Problem-free first or second grade students who need a foundation in basic phonics. These students should have already mastered letters (or at least the consonants) and be able to read at least a few dozen “sight” words consistently. They should not be learning English for the first time.

Please note that most students in the first category above will benefit from some preparation before you actually start teaching the phonics skills in this book. These students are usually frustrated with reading and writing. The Stevenson Program can make a large, positive difference, but not instantly. Part 1 of Lesson One and Appendix A provide information you can share to help prepare your pupils. It can be helpful to remind them that many enjoyable skills require practicing simple, less enjoyable tasks before one can succeed. For example, people do not simply sit down at the piano and start playing great songs. They have to learn and practice scales and small passages first. Athletes cannot simply play the game and be excellent. They have to exercise and do practice drills before they can play and have fun. Much of the Stevenson Program will be fun, and it may not be long before students feel the benefit they receive from the unusual Stevenson techniques. However, they will have to start with some very simple activities and build up their skills gradually.

The Teachers - Most people using the Stevenson Program will be professional teachers in public schools, but the program can be (and is) used effectively by private school teachers, tutors, home educators and teaching assistants. Training is not required to use the program, although training is available, and many people using the program have received it. If you have not received training, you should be prepared to read the manuals carefully and follow the directions closely. Anyone using the program can use our toll-free number for free phone consultation - 800-343-1211. If you have questions about a particular strategy or a particular students’ response, please call during business hours, Monday through Friday, 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Eastern Time. We may have to set up a phone appointment, but we will be glad to help. (If significant regular consultation becomes necessary, some charges may be involved.)

The Books - Since the Overlapping Strategy combines both the first and second level of the Stevenson Program, you need to use the *Overlapping Strategy Teacher’s Manual* and the *Overlapping Strategy Student Book* in conjunction with the Basic Blue Level materials. This *Overlapping Strategy Teacher’s Manual* replaces the first fifteen lessons of the *Basic Blue Core Manual* and it will refer to practice and reinforcement activities in the *Overlapping Strategy Student Book*, *Basic Blue Reading Book One* and *Basic Blue Workbook A*. When you complete this *Overlapping Manual*, you will move on to Lesson 15 of the *Basic Blue Core Manual*. The *Basic Blue Core Manual* contains 52 Lessons divided into three parts: Lessons 1-20 are correlated to *Basic Blue Reading Book One* and *Basic Blue Workbook A*, Lessons 21-36 are correlated to *Basic Blue Reading Book Two* and *Basic Blue Workbook B*, and Lessons 37-52 are correlated to *Basic Blue Reading Book Three* and *Basic Blue Workbook C*. You will require all of these books to finish the second level of the Stevenson Program. We also highly recommend you acquire the *Basic Blue Spelling Manual*. Other supplementary materials are also available for the Basic Blue Level, and some of these can be very helpful for particular needs. (Call if you want advice about selecting additional items.)

The Standard Materials - All instruction in this manual requires a few standard items. You will need a whiteboard, blackboard, flip chart or other surface on which to demonstrate key points, and something with which to write and erase. Your students will need paper, pencils and erasers every session.

The Lesson Format - Lessons provide explicit teaching instructions divided into several sections. At the front of every lesson you will see a box with three Sections:

- **Summary** - A brief description of the contents of the lesson.
- **Materials** - A list of materials needed in the lesson. Sometimes these include items for demonstration purposes. Often they will include photocopies of appendices. In every lesson you will find references to the specific pages students will use in the *Overlapping Strategy Student Book*, *Basic Blue Reading Book One* and *Basic Blue Workbook A*.
- **Integrals** - The term “Integrals” refers to the language units taught in the Stevenson Program. You will find a list of the integrals in Appendix O. This list basically captures the sequence of phonics instruction in the Stevenson Program. Sometimes the integrals are individual letters, sometimes vowel patterns, sometimes consonant blends, sometimes whole words. While the Beginning Green materials cover all of the Integrals from 1 to 102, this *Overlapping Manual* only covers certain integrals that are required to proceed to the Basic Blue Level.

The main body of each lesson is comprised of teaching activities and direct instruction. This material is divided into several parts, most commonly three. Each part usually requires one teaching session, but sometimes you will be able to cover two parts in a single session. (Much will depend on the particular students you have.) Every part of a lesson requires students to complete at least some oral reading and some writing activity. In the margins of the lessons, you will find illustrations and comments to clarify what you are to teach.

After the directives in each lesson are several sections which are entirely optional, but helpful to most teachers. They include Hints on Pacing, Additional Reinforcement, Commentary, and Modifications. The titles of the sections basically explain their purpose. Hints on Pacing will be found in every lesson. The other sections will be found in some lessons but not all. The importance of these sections to you as a teacher will depend greatly on the kinds of students you have.

At the very end of the lesson you will find facsimiles of the pages from the *Overlapping Strategy Student Book* and *Basic Blue Reading Book One* that are correlated to that lesson. These facsimiles are reduced from the size of the actual books, but are large enough to be legible to the teachers. In the margins next to these pages are various comments intended to help you guide your students with their oral reading. You will also find a list of Feed Words (see below) for every page in the reading book.

At the end of the entire 21 lessons, you will find Appendices A through O. Some of these appendices are items that you photocopy, use and reuse during teaching. Some appendices are simply detailed explanations of strategies in the manual, which you can use as you choose.

The Feed Words - Feed Words are words that allow us to create sentences, even though the students may not have yet learned the phonics required to sound out the word. Teachers should “feed” these words to students any time they struggle with one. In the *Overlapping Strategy*, most

students will easily read most Feed Words most of the time, because most of the words are small and common. Occasionally, longer unfamiliar words will be included. In any case, please do not make students figure out Feed Words, even simple ones. These words will eventually be taught using mnemonics and phonics.

The symbols and conventions - Please note the following conventions we use regularly in this book:

- t or m or d - Refers to the visual symbols “t”, “m” or “d”.
- /t/ or /m/ or /d/ - Refers to the sounds made by the letters t, m or d.
- a, e, i, o and u - Refers to the long sound of the vowels (e.g., /a/ as in pay, /e/ as in need, etc.), although other conventions may sometimes be used, such as “/ee/” for /e/.
- a, e, i, o and u - Refers to the short sound of the vowels (e.g., a as in pat, e as in net, etc.)
- coat - When the word is typed the regular way, it has the regular meaning, in this case a piece of clothing you wear to keep warm.
- coat - When the word is underlined it refers to the word itself. For example, you may see a teaching directive such as, “Print coat on the board”
- What is the first . . . - Shaded material can be read out loud to your students. You usually have the choice of reading these passages word-for-word for direct instruction, or putting them into your own words by paraphrasing. The shaded areas are usually dialogues.
- (Peanut butter . . .) - In the lesson dialogues, students’ answers are in parentheses. Although these answers are hypothetical, they are usually very close to what you actually hear.
- [Print soap on . . .] - In the lesson dialogues, directives telling the teacher to do something are in brackets.

Part Two - The Concept of the Program

The basic concept of The Stevenson Language Skills Program is simple and plain enough: do whatever it takes to help the student learn to read and write the English Language with understanding. That said, it is clear that some ways of teaching are more effective than others, particularly with certain types of students. This section is intended to offer a relatively brief discussion of the instructional strategies and techniques which we feel most contribute to the program’s effectiveness.

The Stevenson Language Skills Program arose initially from teaching experience, not from educational theory. Nevertheless, many important educational concepts are reflected in its teaching strategies, and considerable research was instrumental in its development. The Stevenson Program resembles other curricula in several ways. You will see, for example, that Stevenson uses a framework of structured phonics. The program also employs both direct instruction and multi-sensory instruction, as do other programs. In more important ways, however, the program is unique. Instead of traditional phonics rules, you will find carefully chosen memory aids, also called mnemonics. You will also find an unusual sequence of language units and an unusually thorough integration of different language skills.

Phonics and Phonemic Awareness

At the time this *Overlapping Strategy Teacher’s Manual* is being prepared (2007), almost all reading

teachers are familiar with the importance of phonics instruction and the development of phonemic awareness. The value of phonics has long been known and supported by research, but it was also questioned and debated. Only in the 1990's did a new round of research lead to a general acceptance of the need for systematic phonics instruction. At the same time, a great deal of scientifically thorough research identified phonemic awareness as playing a major role in reading problems. This research clearly indicated that students who have a poor grasp of the sounds that comprise words (phonemes) are more likely to have difficulty learning to read. Similarly, improving the phonemic awareness of students who are weak in this area generally improves their reading skills.

It is obvious in the early lessons in this manual that the Stevenson Program places a great deal of importance on developing phonemic awareness; and the program has some slightly unusual ways of doing this (see Appendix A). It is also obvious in the teaching directives that this program places a great deal of importance on phonics instruction. Early in the development of her method, author Nancy Stevenson included multi-sensory instruction with her phonics strategies. She was familiar with the work of Anna Gillingham, Bessie Stillman and Dr. Samuel Orton. Beginning with the instruction of the letter o (the first letter in the Stevenson sequence), it is easy to see how Nancy incorporates the tactile/kinesthetic process. However, the multi-sensory aspect of the Stevenson Program is different from (and more flexible than) the classic Orton/Gillingham method. Although Nancy Stevenson made a distinct commitment to phonics, she explored many different ways of teaching it (and all the other basic language skills students need). Her exploration led her to add another dimension to her phonics instruction.

The Use of Mnemonics

Over the years the vast majority of reading programs - and there have been many - have not provided students with sustained, explicit assistance with one of the most fundamental areas of learning: memory. Scores of reading curricula reflecting dozens of different approaches and philosophies have gone in and out of vogue. In the 1960's and 1970's, several publishers produced basal reading systems emphasizing phonics and linguistics. These systems were reputed to give students solid word attack skills, but students and teachers alike rebelled against the boring drills in these programs, and the rote repetition they used simply did not work with many people. The Language Experience approach and the Whole Language philosophy were reputed to excite students by emphasizing the dimensions of meaning, but these methods seem to have left behind large numbers of students who were confused by the incredibly inconsistent code structure of the English Language. The Stevenson Program gives students tools to crack the code, but just as importantly, it also gives students an alternative to boring, ineffective drill or the memorization of clumsy, abstract rules. This alternative includes mnemonics, or memory aids.

Although the term mnemonic is unusual, the use of mnemonics is very common. Many of us associate the shape of Italy with a boot. This clue helps us remember what Italy looks like and makes it easier to find the country on the map. In contrast, few of us have a clear picture of the shape of Romania or Bulgaria, even though we see these countries on the same map of Europe as Italy. The association of Italy with a boot is one kind of mnemonic, a visual one. Many people also use rhymes as mnemonics to remember the number of days in a month, or the order of the letters i and e when spelling certain words. There are still other kinds of mnemonics.

The use of mnemonics in education is long-standing, dating at least to ancient Greece. In recent

years there has been considerable research into the educational use of mnemonics. The results are clear and positive. Mnemonics help all types of students, from the general population to various kinds of special education students. Mnemonics have been shown to help students learn different subject matter, and several different kinds of mnemonics have been shown to be effective (although some kinds appear to work better than others).

Many reading programs will use mnemonics in small, fragmented ways. For example, you will see the letter a embedded in an apple, so that students will connect the symbol with the first sound in the word apple. Or, occasionally, you will see a manual suggest that the word look can be taught by placing a dot in each o to make the o's look like eyes. The idea is to connect the appearance of the word with the meaning of the word. Almost never does a program move beyond using a single memory clue to teach a single letter, or less frequently, a single word. In contrast, the Stevenson program uses memory aiding clues thoroughly and systematically for all aspects of reading.

The first level of the Stevenson Program begins by using mnemonics to teach not only the sounds of letters but also their shape and directionality. This *Overlapping Strategy Teacher's Manual* is designed for students who have already mastered individual letters, so the work here focuses on words, sentences and paragraphs. The program progresses to using mnemonics to show students how letters interact to change each other's sounds. The structure of language is illuminated using familiar images. For example, a crunchy peanut butter and jelly sandwich is used to teach certain kinds of words where the vowels are sandwiched between consonants. Some letters can be heard, like the crunchy peanut butter when you chew it. Other letters are quiet, like the jelly. Students move on to learn about layer cake words where vowels and consonants are layered. As students move from the Overlapping Strategy to the Basic Blue books, the cake mnemonic is then used to help students understand and remember the dynamics of adding suffixes (known as frostings in The Stevenson Program).

We cannot recount all of the Stevenson Program's mnemonics in this space. You will have to use the program to see how the full range of memory-aiding clues builds a wide repertoire of word attack skills. Certain characteristics, however, make these clues especially effective. First, most of the Stevenson clues are visual images (or a combination of images) that are familiar to students. These images draw on the student's own personal experience. They are already stored in the pupil's long-term memory. The clues associate new information being introduced through short-term memory with familiar information already stored in long-term memory. Hence the term, learning by association. Stevenson uses learning by association, as opposed to rote repetition, to anchor information in memory.

Second, most of the mnemonics used in this manual are what Dr. Kenneth Higbee, in Your Memory: How It Works and How to Improve It (Prentice-Hall), calls process mnemonics, as opposed to fact mnemonics. The association of the boot with the shape of Italy or the addition of the eyes to the word look are fact mnemonics. Each helps you remember a single item. The peanut butter and jelly sandwich is a process mnemonic because it opens up the process of decoding over a hundred words that fit that structure. If you relied solely on fact mnemonics to teach reading, students could become as overwhelmed by mnemonics as they are by rules or by drill. In the Stevenson program, a few dozen key mnemonic images, carefully interrelated, unlock thousands of words.

Third, we believe our mnemonic images tap learning areas in the brain that conventional approaches

do not. A considerable amount has been written about “right brain” and “left brain” learning. Certain mental functions seem to be processed more by the right hemisphere of the brain, and others by the left hemisphere. In point of fact, our scientific understanding of this phenomenon is very incomplete. It seems, however, that emphasizing mental imagery involves certain areas of the brain that teaching strictly written words or letters does not. A dyslexic student, for example, who may have great difficulty remembering the sounds or sequences of letters, may easily recall a familiar image like a sandwich or cake. We believe that it is possible that the Stevenson memory clues engage learning pathways previously untapped by other reading programs.

A valuable by-product of the frequent use of mnemonic images is the effect this strategy has on students comprehension skills. Students with poor comprehension frequently fail to make pictures in their minds of what they are reading. That is why the first of the Stevenson Vocabulary Steps is mental image-making. Since our approach to teaching the structure of language continually requires students to make mental images, it seems to strengthen a skill that comprehension also requires.

The Special Sequence of the Program

The mnemonic clues in the program would not be nearly as effective if they were not strategically structured. Printed English is one of the most confusing and inconsistent of all the alphabet-based languages. The letter c can be either hard (as in cake) or soft (as in face) or part of an entirely different sound in ch (as in chain). Consonants, however, are consistent when compared to vowel combinations. Consider for a moment the different sounds of ou in count, couple, court, could, cough and cougar. Also, consider that the sound of ou in count is also made by ow in brown, and that ow in turn can be pronounced differently, as in snow. Students who do not naturally have good memories for words simply need to have English sorted out for them.

Most whole-word oriented methods like Language Experience and Whole Language do not attempt to sort out the different linguistic structures of English. Most phonics-based reading programs do. Stevenson does so with an unusual sequence. The program is divided into different language units called Integrals. The program uses its own term for these units because, while many of them are similar to conventional phonetic elements, quite a few are not. You will find these units listed in Appendix O of this manual. Different integrals are taught in different ways. Sometimes multi-sensory techniques are strongly employed. In most cases, visual mnemonics are key. With all integrals, some kind of mnemonic is applied.

The Stevenson Program, unlike most similar programs, uses primarily long vowel sounds in the early stages. It is easier to discriminate between long vowel sounds. This is particularly helpful for students with poor phonemic awareness. Students come to school having used long vowel sounds in isolation (e.g., I, Oh, you), so they can more easily apply them to decoding and encoding strategies. It is also easier for pupils to resolve blending difficulties using long vowel sounds. The program uses only two constructions of long vowel words at first: the peanut butter and jelly words (CVVC) and the layer cake words (CVCV). The mnemonics allow students to figure out these linguistic structures, and once pupils have resolved their decoding, encoding and blending problems, they can use these structures as building blocks.

The sequence allows students to build upon previous skills continually. As students transition from the Overlapping Strategy into the full Basic Blue level, they move from the sandwich and cake

words to more long vowel patterns (like igh and ild). Then they proceed to other vowel digraphs (like ou and oi) and then through all the short vowel structures. When they finish the Basic Blue material, they know dozens of structures (and variations), and they can read almost two thousand words. At the end of the third level (the Intermediate), they can read thousands more.

The Analysis and Variation Of Tasks

For decades educators have been taught to analyze the tasks they expect from their students and break those tasks down into steps the students can master. When working with students who have difficulty learning to read and write, such careful task analysis is crucial. Throughout this manual, you will see references to the Seven Special Reading Steps, the Seven Special Spelling Steps and the Special Vocabulary Steps. These strategies reflect a thorough analysis of the tasks involved in decoding, encoding and comprehending, and they are essential to the effectiveness of the program. The reading and spelling steps allow students to figure out words without having to remember more than two units of information at once. You will find the steps discussed in the appendices, but the best way to understand the task analysis behind the steps is to use them.

In this manual you will also find that students move very frequently from one task to another; from reading off the board, to a writing task, from writing to reading from a book, from reading to vocabulary chanting, from chanting to spelling, back to reading, etc. This frequent varying of tasks has two important benefits. First, it helps students who have attentional problems (e.g., ADD or ADHD). In our program, such students can spend an hour working on a new linguistic structure, but never have to attend to any one task for more than three to five minutes. Second, the different tasks engage multiple learning pathways. Students who do not learn as effectively by one modality will have many opportunities to master the skill using several modalities.

Multiplicity of Skills

Printed language is a multidimensional phenomenon. Many programs emphasize phonics to the exclusion of meaning, or meaning to the exclusion of phonics. Both of these types of programs tend to ignore the importance of syntax, usage and grammar. The Stevenson Program weaves multiple language skills together and uses one skill to reinforce another. At times in this manual, decoding and encoding take precedence, while at other times language development becomes more important, but the program as a whole does not isolate a single language skill. We feel this multi-dimensionality is another key reason why the program succeeds with such a wide variety of students.

