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Here is a sobering fact: despite the efforts of teachers for the last 25 years, a third of the fourth-graders of our country can not read. This was revealed in 2000 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (also known as the country map report), which also found that a full 68% of children fall below what is considered a minimum level of reading proficiency. Many experts believe that these low scores are partly the result of a long-standing debate about how best to teach the basics of reading. For years, some teachers have preferred acoustics that emphasizes the decoding and sound of words, while others have touted the whole language approach, which emphasizes the study of words in terms of view and context. Result: confusion for both teachers and parents. However, the recent report could put an end to the debate once and for all. A large study commissioned by the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in Bethesda, Maryland, and conducted by the National Reading Group, concluded that the combination of the two methods is ideal for successful reading education and - perhaps more importantly - that children who are taught acoustics first make significant advances in reading and spelling. These findings confirm what appears to be an acoustic renaissance already underway in the United States. In communities such as Hanover, NH; Fairfax, Virginia; and Princeton, N.J., charter schools with acoustics-oriented reading curriculum were on the rise. And when President Bush announced his reading of the First Initiative, he hinted broadly at his support for acoustics-based reading instructions and reading the group's report. The acoustics of the rules of American reading instructions until the 1920s, when some teachers began to develop alternatives to the acoustics of mechanical drills, which they said led to boring, word-by-word reading, which taught children how to sound words but made them read less freely and, some claimed, less fun. Over the next 50 years, educators flip-flopped between advocating acoustics and advocating for various other approaches that emphasized reading for meaning. Since the 1940s, for example, one of the most popular methods of reading instructions has been the look-talking approach, in which children are taught to memorize words in sight using repetition-based materials such as flash cards and Dick and Jane-style primers. After Rudolph Flash described the dip of the look to say in his 1955 book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*, the acoustics staged a comeback. But in the early 70's there was a new theory: a whole language in which the enjoyment of literature is the main goal. The method, which encourages students to take meaning out of context and illustrations and skip unfamiliar words, has become so popular that In 1987, the state of California rewrote its language arts curriculum to mandate instruction in all languages. Over the past 15 years, teachers have generally tended to learning phonetic elements only when they arrive in the text. But proponents of the entire language ran into problems when research showed that California's reading score fell with this approach. In 1996, the pendulum swung again, and California revised its curriculum, this time with explicit acoustic requirements. States such as North Carolina and Ohio, which also adopted programs in all languages, followed suit, and now, with a study by the National Reading Group, schools across the country are ready to move on to the first acoustics training. Although many consider acoustics old-fashioned, today's instruction is not like the instruction of our parents' generation. We're not talking about having kids hunched over work books, says Louise Moates, Ph.D., a reading expert who helped California rework its curriculum. The shift occurs both in the way we teach acoustics - more actively using games and songs - and when. While she and other experts stress that there is no one size fits all method, they recommend teachers give children a large dose of acoustics ahead. This becomes an anchor for a balanced reading program. Contrary to the claims of proponents of the whole language, acoustics do not prevent the fluency of reading or reduce a child's love of books, says Dr. Moats. In fact, we find the opposite, that a qualified reader is more able to enjoy reading. Acoustics today are much more informed than the acoustics of yesterday, agrees Lucy Calkins, Ph.D., director of the Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University Teaching College. We no longer teach letters and sounds in isolation. The new approaches show children how to recognize the mixtures, patterns and families of words and teach them to be active, resourceful word solutions, says Dr. Calkins. In kindergarten, children learn the letters of the alphabet as well as lessons aimed at raising awareness of the sounds in words: rhymes, slapping out syllables in a word, saying it out loud, and breaking words from each other to pieces of sound, and then putting them back together (*/tr/*th/train). For first-graders and second-graders, acoustics now include more than just left-to-right deciphering, says Dr. Calkins. We want children to come to a new word from all sides, so we help them learn to recognize basic words, sound patterns, and prefixes. The lesson on the sound of *op*, for example, begins with introducing children to simple words like *hops* and *pop*, and then moves on to gradually harder words such as the operator and the opposition. Teachers then include sound in classroom reading and writing exercises, spelling lists, and rhyme games. Children in early classes also need a lot of writing opportunities, since writing is one of the strictest forms of putting acoustics into practice. Good acoustic homework asks students to write out words in their spelling lists, use them in the sentence and then list other words they know with the same sound. After decades of discussing the pros and cons of all language and acoustics, we now know that children need to balance both to learn to read. They should make audio correspondence to decode the structure of words and should have access to relevant levels of books of all genres. And there's another thing that matters in the success of reading children: time spent with reading - or with - an adult that can give them feedback. Acoustics is an important step towards literacy, but parents can still pave the way early on, exposing children to wonderful stories and conversations and providing a rich and stimulating language environment. The © 2002. Reprinted with permission for the February 2002 issue of *Children* magazine. Are you looking for ideas for teaching acoustics to your elementary school students? The analytical method is a simple approach that has been around for almost a century. Here's a quick resource for you to learn about the method and how to teach it. The analytical acoustics method teaches children the phonic relationship between words. Children are taught to analyze letter-sound relationships and look to decipher words based on spelling and letter patterns and their sounds. For example, if a child knows a *baht*, a *cat* and a *hat*, then the word *mate* will be easy to read. This method is suitable for first-graders and struggling readers. First, students should know all the letters of the alphabet and their sounds. The child should be able to identify the sounds at the beginning, middle and end of the word. Once the students are able to do this, the teacher then selects a text that has many letter sounds. Next, the teacher presents the words to the students (usually the words of the site are chosen first). For example, the teacher puts these words on the board: *light*, *bright*, *night* or *green*, *grass*, *grow*. The teacher then asks the students how these words are similar to each other. The student replied: They all have a *ight* at the end of the word. or they all have *gr* at the beginning of the word. The teacher then focuses on the sound of words that say, *How does ight sound in these words? or How does gr sound in those words?* the teacher selects a text for students to read that has a sound they are focused on. For example, select a text that has the word family, *ight* (*light*, *maybe fight*, *right*) or choose a text that has the word family, *gr* (*green*, *grass*, *grow*, *gray*, *big*, *grapes*). Finally, the teacher stresses to students that they simply used a decoding strategy to help them read and understand words based on the relationship of letters with each other. Use books that have predictable, repetitive sentences. Encourage children to use clues for any unknown words. Teach students about the families of words. (Now like a *cow*) (*down*, *frown*, *brown*) Encourage look for consonant clusters at the beginning and ends of words. (*bl*,*fr*,*st*, *nd*) When learning analytical acoustics, make sure to emphasize the importance of each sound. Choosing the acoustics of the program can be overwhelming. There are many acoustic programs available and most are a significant investment. Here's a review of the best acoustic programs available for your homeschool students. Simon Schuster, Inc. Is one of my favorites. Teach your child to read in 100 Simple Lessons a very relaxed, no-frills method to teach your child to read. You just climb up in a light chair together for about 15 minutes a day and they read at second grade level when you're done. Image courtesy of Christianbook.com Saxon acoustics is a multi-sensory, consistent acoustics program that is flexible, easy to use, and highly efficient. Kits include a student work book in two parts, a reader, a teacher's guide, tutorials, (home study videos, and a pronunciation guide to cassette). This program is divided into 140 lessons or 35 weeks. Sing, spell, read and write is an incentive-based program that uses songs, a collection of readers' stories, games and prizes to teach reading. Students' progress is tracked by a magnetic racing car at the 36-step racetrack. Create cursory, independent readers with this unique 36-step program built on carefully sequenced, systematic and explicit acoustic instruction. Favorite among homeschoolers. ClickN' READ Phonics is a complete online acoustics program for children as young as 4 years old. There are 100 sequenced lessons taught by ClickN' KID, the goofy and attractive dog of the future. Each lesson consists of four attractive learning environments that gradually teach alphabetical understanding, phonemic awareness, deciphering and word recognition. Bob Jones University Press BJU K5 Start Home School Kit uses the traditional method to teach reading. This is a solid program that has been adapted to use homeschool. The kit includes: Phonics Practice Books Reading Books Reading Books

Teacher Edition Acoustics and Review Card Start Worktext Start Teachers Edition A and B Beginning Visual Home Flip Chart Start Phonics Chart Home School Package Phonics Songs CD Happy Phonics. Diana Hopkins, Love to Learn Happy Acoustics was designed by Diana Hopkins to teach her own bright, wiggly and energetic 5-year-old son. Happy Phonics covers from cutting-edge acoustics through the acoustics of the game. Watch the video on your website to get a complete picture of the curriculum. Image courtesy Pricegrabber.com Hooked on Phonics uses a step-by-step approach. Children first learn about letters and sounds, how to bring them together to form words, and then read history and books. Because children learn differently, the program includes a variety of multi-sensory tools that appeal to visual, auditory, and experience-based students. Phonics Ways. Images of Christianbook.com This program is popular with families at home. He teaches students acoustics and spelling an effective, practical and reliable method. Phonics Pathways is organized by sounds and spelling templates and is presented in a simple-use format. Soft cover, 267 pages. Egg Reading is an online program for children between the ages of 3 and 13. Reading Eggs uses interactive animations, games, songs and lots of rewards to help kids learn to read. The Veritas Press Phonics Acoustics Museum is located around a boy and his family on a scavenger hunt through the museum. Students went on an adventure, using real books with historical and biblical content. Using a museum model with paper dolls, flash cards of fine art, puzzles, games, songs and daily sheets, students will not only learn to read, they will learn to love reading. The Veritas Press Acoustics Museum program is a solid phonetic program that uses historical and biblical material to teach reading. The program is set out very well, with the guidance of a teacher who walk the instructor through the program painlessly. Veritas Press has done an excellent job of creating this thorough acoustic program. Program.

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