

# No Child Left Behind

By Chia-Yi Lee, Yumin Elementary School

In order to enhance the professional and international perspectives of English teachers in Taipei County, the Taipei County Government provided funds each year for English teachers to participate in international short-term education training in the states of the U.S.A., such as California and Iowa. Besides, teachers attending the program also get opportunity to visit real teaching scenes in local primary schools. By observing, teachers can understand the English education policies and learn the new teaching strategies used in the United States. Furthermore, teachers in Taipei County can expand multi-cultural concepts, improve English teaching professions, reflect on teaching philosophy and methods, and then search for more sophisticated teaching strategies.

We arrived at Los Angeles after a fourteen-hour flight. We started the one-week training program under the leadership of Principal Hu. In the first two days, we visited urban and pre-school education centers. The education and training center which located in Hacienda Heights School District is small, beautiful and well-gearred. We benefited greatly after observing the unique teaching skills of the instructors, such as Barbara, Christina and others. During the training session, we also spent time touring City Hall and City Council and paid a visit to legislative meetings and other activities to realize the style of democracy and freedom. After the five-day training courses, we visited several elementary schools for the second week.

Under the enthusiastic arrangements of several elementary school principals, we began another fantastic and beneficial trip to observe the public elementary schools in the United States. The school I visited is Los Molinos Elementary School which is a primary school with about three hundred students. It's small but perfectly formed under the leadership of the excellent principal, Dr. Lin.

The teachers possess professional teaching skills and are well-trained. We enjoyed the time spent there during our visit.





Visiting is a hard but rewarding process. During this process, I found that comparing with teachers in Taiwan, teachers in the United States focus more on building students' ability of reading fluency. Reading fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. When students can do fluent silent reading, they recognize words automatically. They group words quickly to help them gain meaning from what they have read. The ability of reading fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Without reading fluency, comprehension will be a struggle. In other words, fluent readers recognize words and comprehend at the same time. While visiting the elementary schools in the United States, I learned some great teaching strategies from the demonstrations of the teachers. A large-scale study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found that 44% of a representative sample of the American fourth graders was low in reading fluency. The study also suggested that reading fluency is a neglected reading skill in many American classrooms, affecting many students' reading comprehension.

Researchers have suggested two major instructional approaches related to reading fluency (Bonnie B. Armbruster., & Jean Osborn, M. Ed., 2003). The first approach is repeated and monitored oral reading (commonly called "repeated reading"). Students read passages aloud several times and receive guidance and feedback from the teacher. The second approach is independent silent reading. Students are encouraged to read extensively on their own.

There are some strategies to help students become more fluent readers (Bonnie B. Armbruster., & Jean Osborn, M. Ed., 2003).

First, teachers need to read aloud daily to students. By doing so, students can learn how a fluent reader sounds LIKE during reading. Second, let students re-read the story. Students are engaging in repeated reading by doing this. Usually, it is sufficient to have students read a text four times. Students always need enough time to practice by their own. Third, teachers can encourage parents or other family members to read aloud to their children at home. Thus students can increase their knowledge of the world, gain vocabulary, and cultivate interest in reading.

Last but not least, providing students with opportunities to read the same passage orally several times is the best way to develop reading fluency. Teachers should know what they want their students to read and how to have students read aloud repeatedly.



There are some ways to have students read aloud repeatedly (Bonnie B. Armbruster., & Jean Osborn, M. Ed., 2003). The first way is students-adult reading. Students read one-on-one with an adult. In this period, adults read the passage to children in a proper way, then encourage and assist the students while they re-read the text.

The second way is choral reading. Students read along as a group with the fluent adult reader. Teachers choose a book that is not too long and that is at the independent reading level of most students.

The third way is tape-assisted reading. Students read along from their books as they hear a fluent reader read the book on an audiotape. For tape-assisted reading, you need a book at a student's independent reading level and a tape recording of the book read by a fluent reader at about 80-100 words per minute.

The fourth way is partner reading. Here, paired students take turns reading aloud fluently in a manner that sounds like natural speech. Instead of reading aloud, I found that "reading to ears" is a good way to help students be familiar with the plots in class. Students can read much quietly and they do have fun by doing so. Then the teacher will test students' reading fluency one by one, to see how many correct words they could read aloud in one minute (see the attached file).



The procedures for calculating words correctly pronounced per minute are as follow:

First, select two or three brief passages from a grade-level basal text or other grade-level materials.

Second, have individual students read each passage aloud for exactly one minute.

Third, count the total number of words the students read for each passage. Compute the average number of words read per minute.

Fourth, count the number of errors the students made on each passage. Compute the average number of errors per minute.



Fourth, count the number of errors the students made on each passage. Compute the average number of errors per minute.

Fifth, subtract the average number of errors read per minute from the average total number of words read per minute. The result is the average number of words correct per minute (WCPM).

Sixth, repeat the procedure several times during the year. Graphing students' WCPM throughout the year help capture the student's reading growth.

Seventh, compare the results with published norms or standards to determine whether students are making suitable progresses in their fluency (Bonnie B. Armbruster., & Jean Osborn, M. Ed., 2003). After practicing the strategies, students start to work in group.

At last, students can practice the readers' theatre (RT) script. In the readers' theatre, students rehearse and perform a play with peers or others. This semester, I teach students how to perform RT in class.

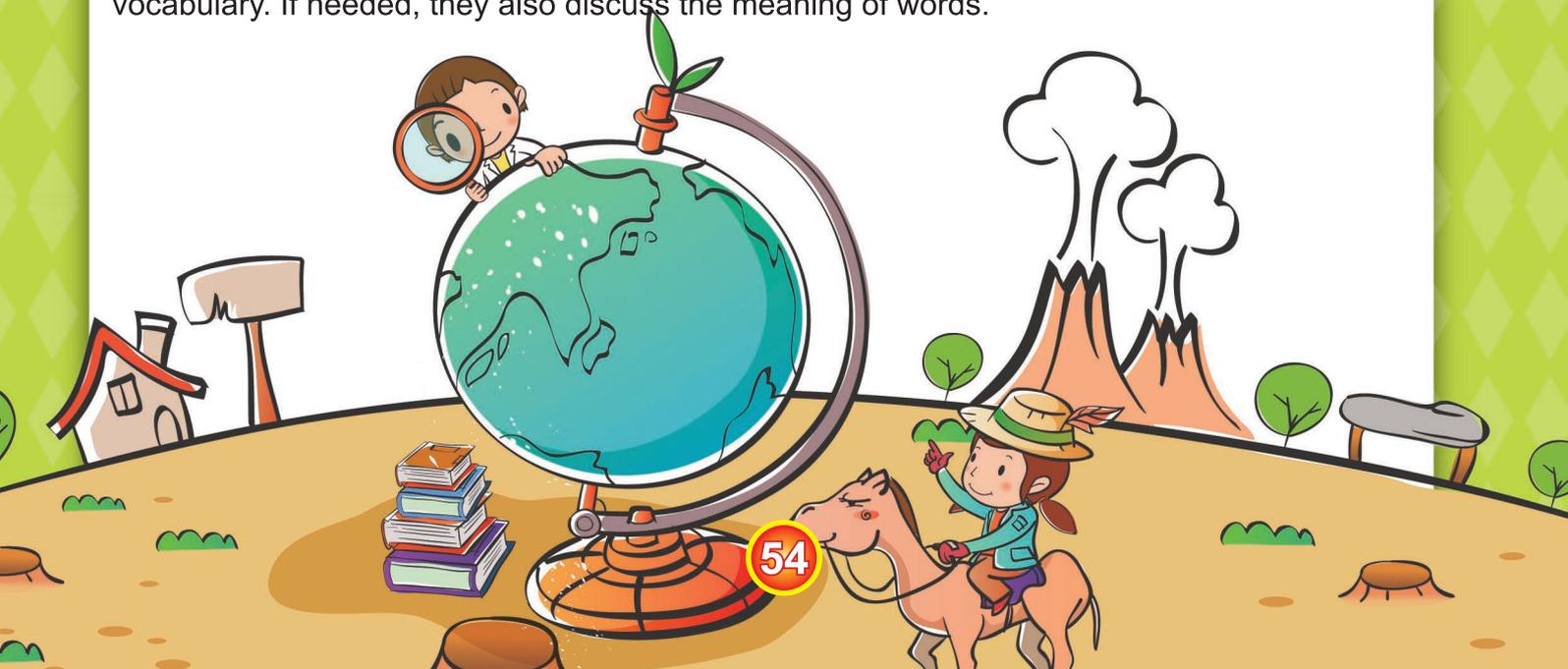


The steps of teaching RT are as follows (Evan-Moor Educational Publishers, 2008):

First, teachers need to build background by asking students to tell what the story was like when they had the similar situation.

Second, teachers need to assign parts and pick up the suitable reading parts in the play to students reading level.

Third, teachers have students point to each key word and repeat it to introduce vocabulary. If needed, they also discuss the meaning of words.



Fourth, guide students to preview the script. Have students look at the illustrations and make predictions about what will happen in the play. Then go through the script again, page by page, and have students highlight their reading parts.

Fifth, practice the script and share the play. Have students read the script aloud several times as a group. Learn how to use intonation and expression to reflect emotion. After students are able to read the script fluently, they can start to read the play for the audience.

Sixth, conduct follow-up activities. Teacher models the chants for students and teach the rhythm and rhyme of the chants. Have students echo the teacher as the teacher sings the chant again. Then have students sing the chant as a group.

There are some more steps I use in class to teach students vocabulary:

First, students need to pick up common, irregular sight words in the story (e.g., the, have, said, were, be, saw, was, by, very, down, but, could, knew, came, onto, ever, after, come, little, of, with, let, and).

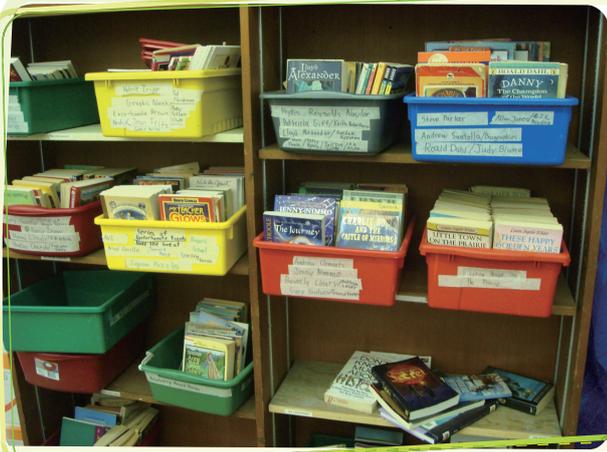
Second, students need to use knowledge of vowel digraphs and r-controlled letter-sound associations to read words.

Third, students need to read compound words and contractions (e.g., I'll, it's, and I'm). Fourth, make students read inflectional forms (e.g., -s, -ed, -ing) and root words (e.g., go, going).

Fifth, let students read common words families (e.g., -ite, -ate). The example is *The Three Little Pigs* as the attached file.

From this visit, I learned that there are complete and consistent practices in Hacienda La Puente Unified School District education training system. That is, teachers implement what they learned in the training programs. The teaching guides are well-organized, accompanied with AR tests. In class, teachers also provide different levels of story books. Students need to complete their must-read books according to their own learning progress, and they can self-test themselves online anytime.





Teachers implement corner teaching in class, and list must-do and may-do things for students every day in order to achieve self-learning. Must-do things are what students must complete every day, whereas may-do things may be done according to the individual's level. Students can learn autonomously with the above strategies.

Teachers implement corner teaching in class, and list must-do and may-do things for students every day in order to achieve self-learning. Must-do things are what students must complete every day, whereas may-do things may be done according to the individual's level. Students can learn autonomously with the above strategies.

### References

- Bonnie B. Armbruster., & Jean Osborn, M. Ed. (2003). Put Reading First-The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, (2<sup>nd</sup>), 22-31  
Evan-Moor Educational Publishers (2008). Leveled Readers' Theater, grade 1.

### The Attached File

*The Three Little Pigs*-Retold by Archie

Characters:

Narrator

- R1: Mother Pig
- R2: First Little Pig
- R3: Second Little Pig
- R4: Third Little Pig
- R5: Big Bad Wolf



N: Once upon a time, there were three little pigs who lived with their mother. One day, their mother said,  
 R1: It's time for you to live alone. Look out for Big Bad Wolf!

R2, 3, 4: Mom, don't worry. We'll be fine.

N: The three little pigs went out into the wide, wide world!

R2, 3, 4: We'll build our own houses.

R2: I'm going to build a house of straw.  
 R3: I'm going to build a house of sticks.  
 R4: I'm going to build a house of bricks.

N: The First Little Pig found some straw and built a house of straw.  
 R2: He saw the straw house.  
 R4: He was hungry.

R1-R4: Very very hungry.  
 R5: Little pig, little pig. Let me in!  
 R2: Not by the hair of my chinny-chin chin!  
 R5: I'll huff and puff and blow your house down! Huff! Huff! Huff! Puff! Puff! Puff!

N: Wolf blew the house down. The little pig ran and ran. He ran to his brother's stick house.  
 R1: Along came the big bad wolf.  
 R2: He saw the stick house.  
 R3: He smelled two little pigs.  
 R4: He was hungry.

R1-R4: Very very hungry.  
 R5: Little pigs, let me in! Little pigs.  
 R2, 3: Not by the hair of our chinny-chin chin!  
 R5: I'll huff and puff and blow your house in! Huff! Huff! Huff! Puff! Puff! Puff!

N: Wolf blew the house down. The two little pigs ran and ran. They ran to his brother's brick house.  
 R1: Along came the big bad wolf.  
 R2: He did not smell any pigs at the brick house.  
 R3: But he knew they were there.  
 R4: And he was hungry.

R1-R4: Very very hungry.  
 R5: Little pigs, let me in! Little pigs.

R2, 3, 4: Not by the hair of our chinny-chin chin!  
 R5: I'll huff and puff and blow your house in! Huff! Huff! Huff! Puff! Puff! Puff!

N: But he couldn't blow the house down. The big bad wolf climbed up onto the roof.  
 R2, 3, 4: The Big Bad Wolf was on the roof. We can put a big pot of boiling water on the fire.  
 N: The Big Bad Wolf came down the chimney, and fell into the boiling water.  
 R1-R4: Splash!

N: The hot wet wolf ran away, and never came back again.  
 R1-R4: Hurray!

N: The three little pigs lived happily ever after in their house of bricks.

