

## Book Reviews Évaluation des ouvrages écrits



### Language Strategies for Little Ones

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#### Publisher

Thinking Publications

#### Cost

\$ 62.00

#### Reviewers

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The authors of *Language Strategies for Little Ones* developed this program "to provide a simplified version of *Language Strategies for Children* that would be appropriate for a primary age population." The lessons are purported to integrate whole language philosophy, classroom curriculum concepts, literature-based intervention techniques, and strategies for self-prompting.

The communication goals for *Language Strategies for Little Ones* focus on three primary areas:

1. language comprehension
2. oral expression
3. story grammar knowledge

The program goals are as follows:

1) "To provide students with multi-sensory strategies that: promote self-learning and self-prompting, decrease the need for direct assis-

tance from an adult, help them experience success in the least restrictive classroom environment possible,"

2. "To teach in a way that integrates curriculum concepts..."

3. "To introduce an awareness of student responsibility for learning..."

4. "To develop a system that encourages parent participation..."

*Language Strategies for Little Ones* was developed for use with children with learning disabilities and/or language disorders. This program was intended for use with children in Kindergarten and Grade One, or children who are at that level developmentally. *Language Strategies for Little Ones* can be adapted for use on a one-to-one basis, but it is designed to be implemented in a small or large group, or in the classroom. The authors have included multi-sensory teaching techniques to address the needs of the students in an inclusive-model classroom.

*Language Strategies for Little Ones* includes lessons, homework activities, skills checklists, parent newsletters, and a summer calendar, all contained within a spiral-bound book. The black and white line drawings are reproducible to allow for easy carryover. The manual includes descriptions of how to implement the program, as well as a chart that cross references goals and objectives with the lessons.

*Language Strategies for Little Ones* provides goals, background information, objectives and materials needed

with each individual lesson. There are a total of 35 lessons categorized into three units. Within these lessons, the authors integrate listening, speaking, reading, writing, role-playing and art activities.

The authors of *Language Strategies for Little Ones* have based their program on research and literature relating to learning theories. They have integrated this knowledge and presented it in a practical format that is easy to follow. It would be beneficial for the user to be acquainted with background learning theories (e.g. "Principles of Cooperative Learning"). In addition, the authors have implemented the program in the K-2 classrooms prior to publication, and have the experience of a previously published program.

The lesson plans are well developed and allow for flexibility to account for the level and learning style of the students, as well as the teaching style of the presenter. Additional planning and preparation time (e.g. to collect materials) is necessary. The lessons themselves are designed to take approximately 30 minutes.

The illustrations are child-friendly, and centre on two main characters: "Einstein" and "Professor Green," who are utilized throughout the whole program to enhance familiarity. The authors also suggest the use of "props" such as puppets to introduce novelty and to keep the students' interest. Younger children can speak to the puppets, encouraging practice and carryover. This program

encourages the student to interact with peers and the presenter, thus ensuring that the child is integrating the principles presented. The key strategies (e.g., CAREful listening) are revisited through the program.

The home program activities correspond well with the lessons, and are designed to be easy to implement. Students also complete Skill Checklists throughout the program to reinforce self-monitoring. The Speech-language pathologists who assisted us in reviewing the program were enthusiastic about the summer vacation calendars. The Parent Newsletters are a great idea, and are easily reproducible for home use. However, we question the reading level of these letters.

There is a great deal of information to be covered in each 30-minute lesson, and the topics tend to "move quickly" (e.g., one lesson addresses sequencing and the next lesson moves on to story-building). The overall goals of many of the lessons are to increase receptive and expressive language. However, it would appear that the lessons assume that the student already understands the vocabulary, but needs practice in its use.

We feel that some vocabulary, directions, questions, and concepts are too complex for the target population, for example: "What helped you concentrate despite all the distractions?"; 'Polite Clarifications' (e.g. "Excuse me, but did you mean...?"); Comparison of the brain (for listening) and the ears (for hearing) with minimal explanation for teaching these concepts.

Some of the vocabulary and themes are American-based (e.g., the Pilgrims, American flag, and Independence Day). These lessons could be adapted for the Canadian population, though added preparation time would be required.

The authors state that this program can be implemented with children who are nonreaders, however,

students who are already literate would benefit more from the information presented to them.

### Recommendations

- Include the option of elaborating on activities that parents can do on the vacation calendars, rather than to ask specific questions each day (e.g., "group vegetables and fruit together before putting the groceries away" vs. "apples go with fruit, as carrots go with \_\_\_\_.")
- Provide more preamble information (e.g., How to introduce the concept of listening with the brain and hearing with your ears).
- Provide more lessons on one topic (e.g., sequencing and story-building)
- Provide more opportunities for repetition of vocabulary, to build receptive language skills.
- Reduce some of the complexity of vocabulary, directions, questions, and concepts.

### **Silly Songs for Phonology and Sound Awareness** *Beverly Banker*

#### Illustrator

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#### Publisher

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**Silly Songs** is a resource for master Sing phonology and the sound/symbol relationship in children with spe-

cial needs. One of the author's goals is to provide "a resource that is interactive, fun and time-efficient". It can be used by the teacher to develop early literacy skills, sound awareness, and sound symbol relationships. *Silly Songs* can also be used by the speech language pathologist to develop phonological awareness and to remediate phonological skills.

*Silly Songs* is designed for children from Preschool to Grade Two with the intent to enhance phonological awareness and literacy skills. A particular target group is children who need special attention to develop these skills and who may be demonstrating a phonological delay or disorder.

*Silly Songs* provides auditory bombardment of selected phonemes to develop phonological awareness and production of targeted phonemes. It was also developed to enhance literacy skills through association of sounds/words to letters. Two CDs are provided including 13 familiar childhood melodies. The songs are sung by a female (Judy Fjell) using a slow tempo. Each melody targets a specific initial phoneme and contains 10 verses, such as "Do you see a pig with a paddle?" (sung to the tune "Do you know the Muffin Man?"). There are two repetitions of each song, the second repetition omits key words and phrases for the child to fill in. Repetition is a key component of the lyrics and allows the child to predict what will occur next.

The manual provides prototypes of letters, which may be given to parents and teachers. The accompanying manual provides a songbook for each phoneme; it includes reproducible black and white pictures representing each verse, as well as extension games and activities. The reproducible pictures are simple black and white line drawings that depict each verse of the song. These pictures can be colored and personalized by the child. The author encourages the child to draw his or her own pictures to represent

the verses and target words. Each picture includes the written verse with the target words bolded so each child can follow along as the songs are sung. Picture cards representing individual words from each verse are also provided. The child can play games to encourage development of vocabulary as well as production of the target words. The child also hears the target word within phrases and sentences and is encouraged to repeat these longer utterances. *Silly Songs* is designed to build on the child's imagination and sense of humor.

The author provides a rationale for this program by citing research in the areas of music, phonology, and literacy. A strong argument linking literacy skills with phonological awareness and sound production is provided. The program capitalizes on the child's love of music to facilitate learning and memory. The familiar nature of the music also provides ease of carryover into many environments (e.g. home, school, listening centres, the car...). The program is well organized and easy to use as it takes little training or preparation to implement. *Silly Songs* is versatile and can be used with an individual child, a phonology group or within a classroom by teachers and speech language pathologists. However, as one goal of *Silly Songs* is to remediate phonological disorders, a speech language pathologist should initially assess the children in order to provide appropriate goals. Caregivers are strongly encouraged to prac-

tice with the child; the materials, including the songs may be reproduced to facilitate carryover at home. The strong emphasis on listening skills as well as the provision of the written word would enhance a literacy program for any child.

Though *Silly Songs* has a component or expressive phonology, its main strength is in the development of phonological awareness at the receptive level. This program would be a good adjunct to a phonology program though we do not feel it could stand alone in the remediation of a phonological disorder. As the author states, this program only targets phonemes in the initial position and not all phonemes are represented in this program - only targets /p, b, t, d, s, ch, f, sp, sh, g, k, r, l/ are included. There is no guidance as to when to move onto another phoneme or what phoneme sequence should be used. Therefore, when treating children who exhibit phonological delays or disorders, *Silly Songs* should be used under the supervision of a speech language pathologist.

Extension activities are provided for each phoneme, though there are only approximately 13 developed activities per unit. Although, it is stated that this program can be used with children in Preschool to Grade Two, it would be helpful to have a developmental age attached to the target group of children as an understanding of nonsense and pictorial representation and a good basic receptive

vocabulary are necessary to fully appreciate this program. However, the auditory component of this program may be used with younger children or with those who have developmental delays or disorders. The author states that this program has been field tested by her colleagues, however there is no information in the manual about the results of the review. In addition, pretest and posttest information would assist in supporting the premise that *Silly Songs* is an effective program for the development and remediation of phonological skills.

### Recommendations

- Use as an adjunct program for phonology.
- Define the preschool population target group, e.g. Can the program be successfully implemented with a two-year old preschooler with special needs?
  - Include more specific guidelines on how to present phonemes, e.g. How long do you stay with one phoneme before moving on to the next?
  - Expand the "Extension Activities" to include some general carryover activities, and more activities specific to each phoneme, e.g. a reading list of children's books.
  - Include the results of the field-testing that has already occurred.
  - Develop a second resource, that would include more initial phonemes and phonemes in final word position.