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This article is by the editor Thomas W. Bicknell. It is from Volume 1. No. 6, March 1878. pages 135-136.

SUGGESTIONS.

3. How to Teach the Sounds.

The following is from a letter written Dec. 4, 1871, to a teacher in Missouri who was required by her superintendent to teach by sound with the Pronouncing Print and was quite anxious lest she should fail of success.

The chief tiling required, and the only thing absolutely necessary, is to **spell by sound while looking at the signs** : to point to and look at **m ou se** and give the successive sounds **m ou s**, and then the whole word *mouse*. This is simple enough but it is the whole of it, and if you persevere and carry the class through the primer, first sounding every word with the class (in concert) two or three times, you will see the good results. Of course they can not *appear* till after the children have become acquainted with the sounds of the letters and have *used* them.

SOUNDING the word is the main thing.

PRACTICE, drill, is important.

CONCERT practice is important.

Practice in sounding the word (by the class)

AFTER YOU, at first,—imitation—is important.

Practice in sounding the word WITH YOU, as soon as they begin to know the letters and their sounds, is important.

After taking the class over the lesson, as above, by *sound*, I would *always* (in the Primer) dictate it to them, a few words at a time in the natural way of talking and reading it, with proper expression, so that they may "talk it off," and thus acquire ease and naturalness.

To Teach the Sounds of the Letters. You can proceed just as you would to teach the *names*. If they look at these letters **m ou se**, they can say and learn the sound **m**. as well as the name *em*; the sound **ou** as well as the names *oh you*; the

sound **s** as well as the name *ess*; and that *e* has *no* sound, as well as to call it *ee*. So you *can* teach the sounds by *any way* you would use to teach the names; but—

To Teach with Facility and Efficiency.

1. Use the *Blackboard Exercises* given, or indicated, on pp. 3 and 4 of my Mc Guffey's Primer, or Primary Reader, or Hillard's Second Reader, Watson's National Primer, Sander's Union Primer, or Union Reader No. 1., or of Edwards and Webb's Analytical First Reader. (*See my Comments at the end of this article for a link to a copy of those exercises*)

2. Use at another hour of the same day, such of my *charts* as teach some of the same sounds; the first time going over them, *teaching* only the four *large* letters on each chart, making any use of the rest of the chart, for dictation and concert practice, that you please,

3. Use some common easy *words* containing the sounds that you wish to teach, printing them letter after letter on the blackboard talking, explaining, interesting the children giving the sounds, making them sound with you, as you print each letter on the board.

Suppose the following is the blackboard and these are the words—

mouse	eiw	cess	mn	css
eyes		ou ow	e a ou o o	
the-nose		I i y a	tlfth	
tail		I see a-mouse.		
feet		I see two eyes.		
two mice		I see two mice.		

1. As fast as you print the signs on the board, make the sounds and let the children join afterwards in concert with you (*two* times or not more than three), thus; you sound **m**, then all the children together sound **m m**.

2. Then spell it — the word *mouse* — by sound, **pointing always at the signs**, always letting the class imitate you, and join with you in concert *two* times.

3. Then print each sign by itself at the corner of the board, always sounding each as you print it, and then having the class follow twice in concert with you.

4. So go on with each of the eight words in succession.

5. Call attention to the forms of the letters as you make them, point out their differences and the way you print them, the three **l**s in **lll**, the two **l**s in **n**, the two parts of **at**, **lc**, the round dots of **s** and the *square* ticks of **S**. Let them observe and make distinctly the difference between the hissing **s** and the buzzing **S**, but look out, *at the very first*, that they make the sound **s** *very* short and quick, and in exact concert.

6. You can just as well—yes *better*—bring in now some of the *duplicate* letters as **cs** and show them how they are alike, calling attention to the dot • in **c** and **s**.

So **I i y** all have **l**, (the hair line **J** in **y** represents no sound). So **ou** and **ow** have **ou**.

7. Speak a few times of the hair line letters (as *e i w*) as having *no* sound, and made *light* because they have no sound, and you will quickly fix *that* fact.

8. Every now and then point to all the **lls** on the board, sounding **ll** every time; then to all the **ns**, **es**, **ls**, etc.

9. Let the children see you, hear you, join with you, imitate you, and thus learn, and practice eye, voice, and ear. But *do not question* them, or make them *tell you*, till you are pretty sure they have learned and know. Don't *teach* (such things as these letters and sounds) by *asking*, and *testing* their knowledge before they have it; it puzzles, perplexes, confuses, discourages, mixes up and destroys the associations, spoils their memory, makes them acquire the bad habit of mere guessing.

10. After you have *given* them the sound and they have practiced it with you a few times, try the *class together first*; wait for several days or more, before you try them individually.

11. When you *first* try or ask the class, do it *after* they have seen the letter and sounded it—*very soon after*—when it is fresh in the memory, and you are sure they will make no mistake. Then try afterwards with a little longer interval of time, and perhaps two or three intervening letters, and so on. You will notice that if some of the class are wrong at the first sounding, (when they sound a letter twice), they will all come right at the *second*; if not, call for it again, and even tell them and join with them till they are all

right.

12. As soon as you are satisfied they know, and will not mistake, call on some pupils to *point out* some of the letters or signs, and give the sounds, and then let all join sounding in concert. Make any use you like of the *letter-cards*, hold them up to be recognized, make words with them, let some of the children pick them out. I have distributed a few to the youngest, and then called for a letter, asking that the one having it will show it and sound it. But don't waste time with these things. Practice them in concert, keep them wide awake, fly from sound to sound, from word to word. Let it be good fun for them. Go over and *practice* a great many letters a great many times, and they will soon have them all and have them right.

13. Other sets of words may be these—

do boy you five shoe
 kit four paws rat
 fox jump moath catch
 bear arms fast foot
 wheel ring leg ye we he
 pleas ure

These words contain all the rest of the sounds. You can make six or twelve lessons of them, more or less. Go over them again, use others, or select from the book.

I commonly teach a class the dozen sounds or signs in the first eight words, the first forenoon, review and practice them in the afternoon, and the class will usually sound them promptly at sight the next morning.

14. Use all these three (and other) methods every day, going back and forth from syllabic blackboard exercise **me ma ma mo mo** to chart, and then to the "mouse-word," and so, round and across, keeping the children alive, attentive, interested, practicing, learning.

This is one of my ways ;—try it.

15. Spare your own voice; don't strain it: keep calm; only sound half as loud and half as quick as you *can*, unless there is special need or occasion; as soon as the *class*, or rather the best pupils, know and can, let *them* give the sounds for the rest to follow, adding *your* voice only when it is needed.

You can then *hear*, notice, and correct the errors of the poorer ones.

Notice the third paragraph on page 5. of McGuffey's Primer, (or the others above quoted), "Do not * * * improved."

Do not practice sound lessons too long at a time, or in too loud a voice. Make them brief and frequent. With moderately loud tones, but a quick, lively, distinct utterance, the exact sounds will be better distinguished and acquired, and the vocal organs of both the teacher and pupil will be, not strained, but strengthened and improved.

Be brief and frequent and secure life and attention by varied, quickly alternating ways.

Subdued tones may be just as quick, lively distinct, well heard, as louder ones—more so—and they will arrest attention, secure intelligent apprehension, and help to control as well as teach. There is a power in subdued tones. in reserved force, in self collection and self control, like the power of silence.

I *once* advised to postpone *spelling* by the *names* of the letters, till after finishing the Primer. But now I know there is no need of it. The children may begin the very first day and learn to *spell m o u s e* mouse and to sound **m ou s** without the least confusion and with very little pains on your part.

You need not take any pains to *teach* the names of the letters; just *use* them and practice spelling as well as sounding in concert and you will soon find they know them.

Their parents will be better satisfied if they begin to *spell* also. By spelling as well as sounding, their *attention* will be continually called to the *silent* as well as the sounded letters, and much good done in several directions.

For the information of teachers who feel any apprehensions as to their success in teaching with this print, the following extract from Miss. C's letter of March 10, 1872, is here given. It ought to be as assuring to the teacher as it was cheering to me.

I have been rejoicing in the new way for some time. Our Superintendent secured the charts after it was fairly introduced. He likes it, and I like it; the children love it, learn it rapidly, and it is rest and entertainment for both teacher and pupil. My steps were a little faltering at first, but I am safe now.

That which a primary teacher, in the trying every day life of her school-room, can recommend, is certainly worthy of praise, and so long as I teach such a room, I expect to use this system. The hesitation I felt before I wrote to you is all gone. I wish you all possible success, and if you have any other "newfangled" way (as people call it) to introduce, please give me the benefit. I will take the risk.

OUR NOTE-BOOK. [page 141]

Our readers will be glad to know some thing about the "Pronouncing Orthography,"* now used in Boston, New York, St. Louis, Washington, and other cities, and the method of phonetic teaching with its aid. Some illustrations of it, and suggestions as to its use, are given in this number of the Teacher, and Dr. Leigh has promised us two or three brief articles on this subject.

A teacher of Marquette, Mich., asks for a good method to teach the sounds of the letters to small children, and we can not answer better than by referring her to Dr. Leigh's article and methods, or to the new chart system of Prof. Monroe, referred to in the January Primary Teacher.

* Copyright, 1864, by Edwin Leigh.

Comments

This article was edited, and the full paragraph from my copy of the "Sound Lessons" in *Leigh's McGuffey's New Eclectic Primer*. ©1868, page 5, was added to it.

Thomas Bicknell was the Commissioner of Public Schools of Rhode Island in the 1870's.

A link to the Sound Lessons in McGuffey's Primer is at: <http://www.thephonicspage.org/On%20Reading/leighprint.html>

March 12, 2010. This is the first release of this file. If anyone finds typographical errors in this file, please e-mail me about those. If anyone has a copy of the full version of Leigh's Sound Lessons, or Leigh's Sound Chart's published by Wilson Hinkle & Co. and referred to in *McGuffey's First Reader*, I would greatly appreciate getting copies of those.

Also, if anyone has other comments or suggestions that may improve this, please let me know.

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