

[Funnix Beginning Reading](#) and [Funnix 2](#) CD Programs

[Funnix Beginning Reading](#) is a 120-lesson CD program that provides over 60 hours of onscreen instruction. [Funnix 2](#) is a 100-lesson program that continues where *Funnix Beginning Reading* leaves off, providing another 50 hours of onscreen instruction. *Funnix* programs provide complete instruction in beginning reading. The instructor sits with children and views the computer monitor. The *Funnix* narrator presents tasks in a fast-paced sequence, the same way a good teacher would. The children answer. The instructor gives feedback, confirming correct responses, and providing the correct answer if children make a mistake.

According to the program developers, *Funnix Beginning Reading* will absolutely teach non-readers (including most preschool children) to read in 120 lessons. *Funnix Beginning Reading* starts at the beginning, teaches all the foundation and pre-reading skills, and systematically builds on these. By the end of *Funnix Beginning Reading*, children are reading at a solid second-grade level. *Funnix 2* introduces more sophisticated decoding strategies and expands children's comprehension skills. Children who complete *Funnix 2* are reading at a solid third-grade level.

The materials for *Funnix Beginning Reading* consist of two CDs that present the 30-minute lessons, a workbook with exercises for all 120 lessons, a parent guide on CD that explains the program and the instructor's role, and a parent manual that summarizes the parent guide. The materials for *Funnix 2* consist of two CDs, a parent manual, and a reader. One CD contains lessons 1-100 and the parent guide. The Placement and Review CD contains review lessons — lessons 101-120 from *Funnix Beginning Reading* — and transition exercises that teach *Funnix* reading conventions.

A teacher's guide describing how to use *Funnix* programs in a school setting is included with purchases made by schools.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

The senior author of the *Funnix* programs is Siegfried (Zig) Engelmann, professor of education at the University of Oregon, who developed a method of instruction called Direct Instruction which has consistently outperformed other approaches. The American Institutes for Research rank Direct Instruction as one of only two school-wide teaching

approaches that has substantial evidence of effectiveness.

Engelmann is senior author of over 50 Direct Instruction programs, including the popular *Reading Mastery* series.

According to Engelmann, "*Reading Mastery* is a very effective program, but using it effectively requires extensive teacher training in Direct Instruction techniques and procedures. *Funnix* programs, on the other hand, are much easier to use than *Reading Mastery* because the computer does the teaching. The instructor can concentrate on the children... And *Funnix Beginning Reading* stories are more entertaining."

DESIGN

Funnix lessons are designed so that about 10% of each lesson presents new material. The rest is review and practice of material taught earlier. In each lesson the child first works on letter sounds, then reads words that are in lists, and then reads a new story that is composed entirely of words that have been practiced in word lists. The story is presented twice. On the first reading, only the text is shown on the screen. The second reading presents an illustrated version, sometimes with characters' speech in "balloons." The narrator asks questions about the events and points things out. Some second-readings present animation. Children look forward to the small, unpredictable variations in the second reading of the story and to the entertaining pictures.

RESEARCH

Funnix programs meet all the criteria the research shows effective beginning-reading programs should meet.

PHONICS

The research shows that the most effective programs teach explicit phonics. *Funnix* goes a step further. The program is designed so that the children initially learn only one sound for each letter. Exceptions and letter combinations are systematically introduced. *Funnix* presents prompts that show children how to read some letter combinations. These prompts replace "phonics rules," which children in other programs recite but often fail to apply. For instance, in *Funnix* the letter combinations ai, oa, ea,

and ar are initially underlined. One letter is blue. That's the silent letter. The children are taught that the blue letter doesn't make a sound, but the black letter says its name. In "sai!" the *i* in ai is blue. The *a* is black and says *its name*. The sound for the combination ai is the letter name *a*. The sound for the combination oa is the letter name *o*. The sound for the combination ea is the letter name *e*. The sound for the combination ar is the letter name *r*.

The same blue-letter prompt applies when the combinations are "split up" in words like *mile* and *make*. The *e* at the end of the word is blue, so it doesn't make a sound. But another letter in the word says its name. The words *mile*, *late* and *hope* end in a blue *e*. After children have read various words with blue letters quite a few times, the prompts are dropped.

PHONOLOGICAL SKILLS

The research also shows that children who learn "phonological" pre-reading skills learn to read more easily. Phonemic awareness skills involve spoken words and sounds, not written words. For example, the teacher says a word a sound at a time: mmm-aaa-t. The child says it fast: "Mat."

Funnix Beginning Reading presents the full range of phonological tasks—verbal blending, saying words a part at a time (which is a useful spelling skill) and rhyming. The early lessons present phonological tasks in connection with all the early words children will read, so the students have all the foundation skills necessary to "sound out" a written word and then "say it fast."

DECODABLE TEXT

The research says that the stories children read should have "decodable texts," which means that the instructional sequence should first teach the words that will appear in a story before the story is presented. All the stories in *Funnix* are composed entirely of words that have been taught earlier in the program. This design feature assures that when children read a story, they will be able to concentrate

more on comprehending the story rather than on decoding unfamiliar words **and** trying to attend to the story events at the same time.

CUMULATIVE REVIEWS

The research shows that material should have "cumulative reviews" of what has been taught. The programs that Engelmann has developed have pioneered this concept since the 70s. *Funnix* programs continue in the tradition of using and reviewing **everything** that's taught.

AUTOMATICITY

Finally, the research shows that instruction in reading skills should present enough repetition and practice that children achieve a high level of "automaticity," which means that they automatically recognize words without sounding them out. *Funnix Beginning Reading* systematically teaches fluency strategies and *Funnix 2* provides ample practice applying the strategies to a variety of story formats.

IS FUNNIX FOR YOU?

Funnix Reading Programs are tools that enable average adults to teach like effective reading instructors and experienced teachers to teach reading skills more thoroughly and efficiently ever before. In addition to meeting the needs of English-speaking learners, *Funnix* narrators provide non-English-speaking children with good models of how to pronounce sounds, words, and sentences the children read.

The web-site *Funnix.com* provides more details on the program, the authors, and the research that validates it. Visitors may view a sample lesson and download an alphabet game. This game teaches the letter names that are used early in the *Funnix* sequence. The developers may be reached to answer instructional or technical questions at (541) 284-2441 **or** email: fun@funnix.com.

