

Characteristics that Make OG Unique and Effective:

Why OG in the 21st Century?

By Ronald Yoshimoto, Fellow /AOGPE

OG is multisensory – simultaneously – visual/auditory/kinesthetic/tactile. This is the characteristic that distinguishes OG from phonics programs as well as some of the OG-based programs. Every part of the OG lesson utilizes multisensory procedures for inputting and reinforcing or reviewing information – card drill, decoding words, spelling, introduction of concepts, dictation of sentences, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. All of these procedures are also neurologically sound.

OG is phonetic/alphabetic/morphemic/syntactic/semantic. Most of the basal reading programs cover components of phonics but differ in the way they address the syllabic, morphemic, syntactic and semantic levels. Additionally, the emphasis of these programs is on reading and not on spelling. If they do address spelling, their scope and sequence causes more confusion. Overall, programs are not structured and sequential.

OG is linguistically sound. This is a broader view of the complexity of OG and how it differs from other programs. It looks at the grammatical, phonological, and the morphological components of language. As such, OG is ideal for teaching ELL children and adults (and general education students) and represents a more comprehensive and multimodal way of addressing the reading and spelling needs of dyslexic students.

OG is neurologically sound. Multisensory techniques are derived from an understanding of the neurological basis of learning, and more specifically, reading and spelling.

OG is based on best teaching practices or principles. OG differentiates for learners and their styles of learning. OG provides a structured and sequential format, moving from concrete to abstract, and from simple to complex. There is sufficient repetition until a certain level of automaticity

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is demonstrated. OG has built-in scaffolding techniques throughout the instructional process. Because of this characteristic, OG is applicable for ALL students. Teachers can also use the principles of OG to teach science, math, social studies, etc.

OG is not a program but an approach. This is a critical difference between OG and other phonics programs or OG-based kits. A program is not geared to the needs of an individual student. It tends not to be diagnostic/prescriptive (and, hence, it is not clinical). There are very few multisensory procedures incorporated into most other {phonics} programs. The flexibility of OG practices/instruction/techniques/etc. is also not evidenced in these programs.

OG is flexible. OG is inherently flexible, as it must be, when one considers the needs of the dyslexic student. It can be used in one-on-one settings, small group settings

and whole classrooms. As a result, it is an excellent approach for the RTI model. It should be used in Tier One for all children. If some students evidence problems, OG in small groups can provide additional help in Tier Two. At times, a few students need more intensive help which OG will provide in Tier Three.

OG is emotionally and socially sound. As the students achieve success in learning, not only does their self-esteem improve, but also their way of interacting with peers and adults. They begin to look at themselves differently. OG helps students to identify their areas of strengths, and helps students develop compensatory strategies which give them a sense of empowerment. In other words, every part of the OG framework is geared to the enhancement of self-esteem – multisensory procedures, correction procedures, teacher verbalizations during instruction, structured and sequential progression, and integration with other areas of reading/spelling and writing.

OG is structured, sequential, cumulative and repetitive. OG is different from other phonics programs because it provides structured and sequential learning experiences. There is also sufficient repetition to enhance automaticity, and the practice is provided in many different formats to prevent boredom.

OG is clinical. OG is diagnostic/prescriptive. OG trained teachers are somewhat analogous to doctors who must assess the symptoms, plan a treatment program and then implement the treatment program. The treatment program may change based on

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how the patient has responded to the treatment. OG requires that practitioners assess, plan a lesson based on this assessment, then implement the lesson while noting issues/concerns, and revise the lesson and lesson implementation based on what has happened previously. Also, a new lesson plan is developed based on what happened in the preceding lesson.

OG is a vehicle for integrating thinking skills, vocabulary development, writing skills, and content subjects. OG can be used to enhance thinking and writing skills, as well as reinforce concepts in math, science, and social studies.

OG is efficient. From one activity, such as decoding words in isolation, a teacher can differentiate, teach tracking skills, nurture vocabulary development, reinforce grammar skills, and promote development of analogical skills. From the learned word section of the lesson, a teacher can teach far/near point copying and help students to identify the unfamiliar parts of the words. Dictation provides an opportunity not only to reinforce spelling skills in the sentence level, but also to teach punctuation, capitalization, grammar, sentence structures, paragraphing skills, and creative writing.

OG makes connections between reading, spelling, writing and oral language. This is not the case for many of the other

phonics or basal programs. The basal programs may impact decoding skills, but are not structured well for spelling. For many basal and phonics programs, the focus is on reading and not spelling. OG sees the connections between reading and spelling. There is little recognition that spelling is dependent on reading for building visual memory. By the same token, spelling instruction reinforces reading skills.

OG is a powerful instructional approach for teaching reading and spelling.

It is the grandfather of all other multisensory structured language programs, and has been proven to be effective for over 80 years. Because of the above characteristics, it empowers both students and teachers. For the students, immediate progress is seen in language arts, thereby enhancing self-esteem. It does not just teach a series of strategies or discrete skills, but helps the students to look at learning and themselves in an integrated and holistic manner. For the teachers and tutors, OG provides a comprehensive, multi-modal, systematic, and multisensory framework and philosophy for teaching reading and spelling to ALL students.

OG is financially or fiscally sound. Schools do not need to spend so much money on basal programs or other multisensory structured language program kits. With the exception of teacher training expenses, the cost of the OG reading and spelling instructional approach is very reasonable. It is important for schools to invest in OG teacher training and provide support to the teachers. 

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NEW

Starting with this issue of the Academy News, we are inviting members of the Academy to share their experiences as they continue their studies and strive to achieve membership at a higher level of professional competency in the Academy. We hope that these shared experiences will encourage and motivate other Academy trainees as they continue their own professional development.

Fellow member, Ronald Yoshimoto has kindly established an Academy scholarship fund to allow two public school teachers to attend the Annual Conference. Scholarship recipient, Brenda Mackaness has graciously offered to write about her experiences in her Academy coursework and practicum.

My Journey

By Brenda Mackaness, Certified/AOGPE

Looking back to the year of 1997, when I became employed at Trident Academy, I realize that the seed of passion for the Orton-Gillingham approach to educating students with dyslexia was planted in the classrooms of that school. Trident Academy's administrator insisted that all

of its faculty members be trained in the Orton-Gillingham methodology. I taught for six years at Trident Academy (Mount Pleasant, SC), immersed in their LEAD program. This is a setting consisting of one-to-one and/or small group instruction with OG instruction as its backbone. I was guided, inspired and encouraged by the Fellows Susan McConoughey and Joannie Gerken to attain my Subscriber and Associate levels of training by 2001.

Interested in pursuing an opportunity to teach older students, I followed Fellow Susan McConoughey to a university setting (Johnson & Wales University). I found that I could generalize my OG training to any academic subject, and apply it with students of any age. Using the OG principles, I was able to assist many students to overcome reading and writing issues in their language, science, and math requirements that were hampering their goals for graduation. When Johnson & Wales University relocated its campus to North Carolina, I, unable to follow the move with them, pursued opportunities to teach in the public school system in Charleston, South Carolina. I continued employing my OG skills when I became a teacher at a public middle school, although I was sternly encouraged not to do so! I was "let go" at that school because of my "inappropriate approach to teaching." Luckily, I was given the opportunity to use my OG skills when I became employed by an innovative principal at James Island Charter High School. I realized that this new responsibility required the obligation for me to receive more OG training. I located a Fellow who was willing to train me for the requirements of the Certified level of instruction and competence. I travelled from Charleston, South Carolina to Rhode Island three to four times a year, for three years, working under the Fellow Andrea Greer Sylvia. She flew to Charleston twice during that three year period and observed and critiqued my tutoring sessions with students at the charter high school as well as with my students at the Outreach Program at Trident Academy in Mount Pleasant. I achieved "Certified" level of competency in October of 2010. With encouragement from Fellow, Andrea Sylvia, and an offer of mentorship from Fellow, Sheila Costello, I started the process of fulfilling my Fellow-in-training requirements shortly after receiving my Certified Level certificate.

Since I have begun my FIT, I have been twice publicly acknowledged by my principal at the charter high school for the significant progress that my students have achieved. He has been sufficiently impressed with improved student academic test scores and consistent positive parental and faculty feedback, that he made the unprecedented decision to allow me to exclusively teach OG based support classes for students who are significantly challenged with reading and writing. As far as I know, this is the only school in Charleston, SC who has a full time, FIT faculty member using OG therapy with students at the high school level. These students come from diverse cultures, and those students struggling with the challenges, restrictions and lack of academic support that often evolve from low, socioeconomic family situations. The challenges are many, but the rewards are huge. These students, once trust has been established, flourish and thrive with the individualized instruction and attention. Every student that I have been able to work with broadens my experience and knowledge with not only specific OG skills, but they offer opportunities to

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