

Feedback from Schools using Sound Discovery® and Snappy Lesson

Dr Marlynne Grant
BSc, Cert Ed, M Ed Psych, PhD, AFBPsS, C Psychol.
Chartered Educational Psychologist

1 The Norfolk Trial on Sound Discovery® as a Wave 3 Intervention¹ results have now been published.

The results are as follows:

- Average Ratio Gains over a teaching period of 10 weeks for reading **3.8**
- Average Ratio Gains over a teaching period of 10 weeks for spelling **2.7**

(Ratio Gains of 1.3 and above are significant)

Extracts from the summary by the Head Teacher:-

"...Sound Discovery had a variety of attractions; cheap and easy to introduce, claims of good rates of progress, economical in terms of time, all combined in a multi-sensory, easy to use, hands-on package... After a day's training the support staff found the scheme easy to introduce. They were highly motivated by its simplicity and the enjoyment expressed by the children. Quite simply, they were sold on the idea. Their belief in its success was transmitted to the children, whose enthusiasm then drove the scheme forward. ..The data from retesting validated what we knew was happening. It illustrated the substantial gains we were looking for. ..There were social benefits too. The skills involved in sharing, or playing games in a constructive setting, met other needs. ...It works. When you read the children's own comments, hear their opinions round the lunch table, observe their enthusiasm and enhanced self-esteem then you know Sound Discovery works without even looking at the statistical gains."

Norfolk LEA are now offering wider training in *Sound Discovery*.

2 HMI Inspection of Snappy Lesson® (November 2003)

The HMI in her report wrote as follows that the Snappy Lesson was characterised by the following:

- *"the teaching was excellent (privilege to have observed it)*
- *teacher's excellent subject knowledge*
- *meticulous planning*
- *brisk but appropriate pace*
- *good variety of judiciously chosen activities ...*
 - *linked exactly to lesson's objectives*
- *careful assessment of all pupils*
- *pupils responded very positively to: the teaching*
 - *the teacher's specific praise*

¹ *Sound Discovery Programme at North Elmham Primary School. Report of the Trial, Spring 2004.* Sarah Seymour, Advisory Support Teacher, Norfolk LEA

- *pupils made good progress."*

The teacher who delivered this Snappy Lesson used a lesson plan, with lesson objectives and success criteria from the *Sound Discovery Selected Snappy Lesson Plans*.

3 Bath and North East Somerset LEA ran a Wave 3 pilot with *Sound Discovery*® in 2004

There is a growing demand for training in this LEA and Mary Adams, Senior Learning Support Teacher, and Richard Barker, Educational Psychologist, were central to this initiative.

Richard Barker also reported an example of using *Sound Discovery* as quality first teaching (QFT) in Reception: he introduced it into the Reception class of Welton Primary School in September 2002.

He reported in December 2002 that the class had covered all 42 phonemes and that all pupils except one of the 25 cohort had "*got it*" and were beginning to blend and segment.

The school was also pleased that it was possible to make early identification of the one pupil likely to have special educational needs for the Educational Psychologist to see. In previous years identification this early would not have been possible because there would have been a large number of children failing to make a start with literacy.

4 *Sound Discovery*® Intervention in Key Stage 2

The literacy levels at Staple Hill Primary School, Bristol, were transformed by *Sound Discovery* interventions.

The Educational Psychologist advised the school to create three separate intervention groups for the whole of KS2 based on the level of literacy development as assessed on the *Sound Discovery Placement Test*, rather than on individual year groups.

They identified three intervention groups:

- Group 1 worked on Step 1 of the phonics progression (alphabet phoneme words and sentences for reading and writing);
- Group 2 worked on Step 2 of the phonics progression (consonant and vowel digraph phoneme words and sentences);
- Group 3 worked on Step 3 of the phonics progression (the most frequently occurring alternative spellings for sounds at word and sentence levels).

5 Bowsland Green School and *Sound Discovery*

Following a 30 minute presentation of *Sound Discovery*® and the *Snappy Lesson*® method of teaching in September 2002, Acting Head and SENCo at Bowsland Green School, Rachel Williamson felt that it made such sense that she could start a pilot project straight away.

Her class was a Year 4 class whom she said could all have been placed on the Special Needs Register.

One month later in October 2002, she reported that the programme had made a difference.

She had assessed all her class on standardised tests of reading and spelling to establish a base line and administered the *Sound Discovery Placement Test* to see where to start the programme. Virtually every child in the class was on Step 1.1 (cvc alphabet phoneme words and sentences). They all had a whole class *Sound Discovery* input daily.

One month later, in November 2002, she reported that she had noted a "major, major improvement":

- written work was presented more clearly with spaces between words
- children were "looking at words with more scrutiny"
- previously children in the class would have "sat looking at a word" and would have expected an adult to read it for them, but after *Sound Discovery* all Mrs Williamson had to say was, "remember the magic word - blending" and the pupils were reminded to sound out the word and say it for themselves
- previously a number of children were thought to be dyslexic but following *Sound Discovery*, their teacher reported that they cannot be considered as such because they are understanding and making real progress.

A national dyslexia organisation had placed a dyslexia teacher in the school because of the very high level of special needs, and this specialist teacher was extremely positive about the pupils' progress

- Sound Discovery* had also improved the self-esteem of class members, and confidence in their ability as readers and writers.

The teacher asked for a show of hands on 5th November 2002 to the question, "Who is finding spelling a bit easier?" and saw each child's hand go up. The same happened when she asked, "Who is finding reading a bit easier?"

Mrs Williamson reported that in Sept 2002 she had taken stock of her class and realised she had an uphill struggle as their projected Level 4 percentage for KS2 SATs was 45%. However, her pilot had been so successful that she did not want to wait any longer to extend *Sound Discovery* to the rest of the school. She now felt much more optimistic.

6 *Sound Discovery*® at Secondary (KS3 and KS4)

Sue Hunt, SENCo from King Edmund's Comprehensive school was a reluctant convert to *Sound Discovery*. She was initially not keen to try the programme because she was happy using Corrective Reading. However, her school Educational Psychologist was persuasive and now Mrs Hunt is a real enthusiast.

In September 2001 she started with a class of 20 of the lowest achieving pupils in Year 7, for about 3 sessions per week of *Sound Discovery*, supported by some Corrective Reading work at text level. It is worth noting that the teaching took place as a whole class, not as individual teaching.

At the start of the *Sound Discovery* programme Mrs Hunt used the *Sound Discovery Placement Test*.

She found that her Year 7 pupils were not secure with alphabet phonemes and that they were making their first spelling-from-dictation errors and reading errors at Step 1.1 of the phonic progression with cvc alphabet phoneme words.

Before starting the literacy programme she "sold" it to the class by promising to improve their spelling.

She started them at Step 1.2 of the programme with cvccvc words and sentences. The class were happy with this as they all felt able to admit a spelling difficulty whereas to have to admit to a reading difficulty would have been more threatening. They were impressed that they were starting with 'big' words although the words were just two cvc words tagged together. In reality, Mrs Hunt was addressing their reading as well as their spelling because she was integrating the two with a *Snappy Lesson* structure.

The pupils did a lot of blending as well as segmenting in her version of the *Snappy Lesson*. This was appropriate for their age level and they were learning that the literacy code is reversible.

Mrs Hunt reported a high level of engagement with this group of disaffected pupils and she was amazed by how good their listening skills became.

Progress was recorded as follows:

Reading and spelling scores:

- September 2001 No measurable scores on standardised tests
- June 2002 Reading Ages in range 8.05 to 10.05 years. Spelling Ages even higher.

7 Sound Discovery® with a Year 10 pupil with chronic dyslexia

Mary Adams, Senior Learning Support Teacher, found *Sound Discovery* effective with a Year 10 pupil with a Statement of Special Educational Needs for dyslexic difficulties. His family had been through 2 SEN and Disability Tribunals and the pupil had received specialist intensive dyslexia-type input but this had made little impact. He had persistent chronic literacy difficulties.

Mary Adams started *Sound Discovery* with him in September 2001. She gave him 2 hours individual input per week in the form of 2 sessions of *Snappy Lesson* and this helped to generalise his new literacy skills to other curriculum activities. A Teaching Assistant and a class teacher also tried to help him to generalise his new literacy skills in the classroom, using the *Sound Discovery* approach.

At first he demonstrated a lot of resistance and Mrs Adams needed to use games to engage him, but she gradually dropped the games as he became more confident. He progressed from Step 1.1 of the programme (with cvc words and sentences) to Step 2.2 (with vowel digraph phoneme words and sentences). She still had to do lots of recapping at about Step 1.5 of the programme. His attitude and his speed of working had improved.

He now thinks he can do it and he likes to write.

8 Whole School Approaches with Sound Discovery®

It is always most effective for synthetic phonics to be used for whole classes throughout the entire school. Ideally this should start as soon as possible in Reception with whole classes (Jolly Phonics and *Sound Discovery*).

Early identification of slow-to-start children should arise after about the first term of teaching. The slow-to-start children should then receive extra *Snappy Lessons*. *Sound Discovery* provides materials to take children through all the Key Stages: KS1, KS2, KS3 and 16+ if necessary.

The progressive, age-independent nature of the materials allows interventions to be given at any stage.

The most impressive results have been obtained when the process is well managed within the school with the clear support of the Head Teacher and Senior Management Team.

Very often schools are introduced to *Sound Discovery* by their Educational Psychologist or Inclusion Support Co-ordinator for use as an intervention. However staff can then often see its potential for quality first-time teaching (QFT) and for whole class teaching.

Examples of this are:

- Culverhill School (a special school for complex learning difficulties) who decided to use it in each of its classrooms following INSET from Educational Psychologists and an Advanced Skills Teacher
- Pucklechurch Primary School, whose Headteacher wished to extend it to the whole school following INSET from an Advanced Skills Teacher.