

## Passport Learning Focus on Research Abstract

Since its inception under Drs. Christina Fiedorowicz and Ronald Trites, Passport Learning®'s Academy of Reading® (AOR) program has been rooted in the science of learning. With origins in the influential studies by Fiedorowicz and Trites on reading skill components, AOR has firmly established itself as a solution for those with reading difficulties and anyone who wants to improve his reading skills.

AOR is based on understanding the specific deficiencies in the reader. This document will show the principles of subtype identification and its subsequent development to be a most effective foundation for the Computerized Programmed Learning (CPL) method that AOR employs. This method, dividing student needs into oral, visual, and auditory-visual classifications, is further broken into a variety of smaller techniques for reaching different goals with different students. Seeking a balance between the core fundamentals and higher level literacy development, AOR uses these micro-methods both to build foundations and to develop fluency. This also helps AOR achieve results with a diverse range of students, because every learning style and need is different, requiring a different combination of instructional components.

Balanced skills training begins with the basics. Mastery Learning, for example, in which a student strives for one specific goal and receives only positive and corrective feedback, is essential to the motivation and confidence necessary for fundamental development. , Passport Learning incorporates this method, using only these types of feedback in the Reading Subskills Module to create a positive atmosphere of learning and achievement.

Phonemic awareness, or the recognition and identification of basic language sound forms, is one of the most important subskills AOR incorporates. The importance of phonemes is lost on the average person, because the blending of these sounds is so innate and ingrained, but improvement in areas where these skills are lacking is imperative to reading success. As such, this is one of the first obstacles addressed by AOR in a series of oral exercises within the Phonemic Awareness Training Module to improve phonemic analysis, synthesis, and blending.

Decoding accuracy and fluency is another key component in AOR's subskill development. Laborious and inefficient decoding of text is a major obstacle to comprehension and retention of information and background knowledge. Readers who do not possess this skill are forced to rely on their sense of context to derive meaning from text, expending valuable energy in decoding rather than purely on comprehension alone. AOR's goal with this set of subskills is to bring a sense of intuitive recognition and efficient deciphering of words to make understanding a more rapid and automatic process. This goal to make reading an automatic process is also the focus of our next subskill component—automaticity.

Automaticity, whereby we seek to make immediate the processes and response by which text is decoded, read, and understood, is an important part of the Passport Learning process. Automaticity benefits the reader by saving time, energy, attention, and effort, freeing his mind from the act of decoding phonics structures and instead allowing him to jump straight to higher levels of understanding and comprehension. Because it is a highly complex process, AOR was designed with automaticity exercises integrated into the software to allow students to perform the practice they need to reach that level of automatic response.



Additionally, in the subskills module, certain exercises and elements are introduced to assist students in navigating the complex phonic waters of the English language. To prevent gaps in comprehension, this training allows for the introduction of language structures so that students become familiar and comfortable with the nuances as they are improving their overall reading skill level.

Of course, it is the purely educational elements that truly set Passport Learning's Academy of Reading apart from other tutoring programs, but the software also incorporates several benefits that provide students and teachers, parents, or administrators increased possibilities for management and ultimately for success. Complete records management capabilities track multiple data sources such as time on task, percentage of correct answers, and words per minute, allowing for valuable individual assessment and performance analysis. Ultimately, this level of personalization will benefit all students in the program by providing a clearer indication of the student's needs.

Many real-world studies of the AOR have been conducted. For instance, in Washington, D.C., a total of 28 schools participated in an independent study by the Washington, D.C., Public Schools TIAP Evaluation, Linked to Learn. The study showed that students who participated in AOR outperformed the control group in all four categories of reading-skills assessment. Of the group of struggling readers who completed the program, 68 percent scored higher than the control group in post-program testing. Additionally, AOR was used in a reading-intervention program for grades three to five in Calvert County, Maryland. The students who completed the program showed an average gain of approximately 31 percent and two grade levels in reading skills. Because of the program's success, the Calvert County School Board approved a plan to implement AOR in all of its elementary schools.

The Academy of Reading from Passport Learning is founded in a scientific method of reading improvement. In many cases, gains were shown not just in the component skills but in general reading skills as well, and students maintained these gains or continued improving even after using the program. During its thirty-year history, Academy of Reading has been recognized again and again for its effectiveness in enhancing reading skills of students at all stages of their academic careers. By incorporating research to make the complex process of reading improvement easier and targeting essential subskills to develop automaticity, this incremental approach to one of life's most important tasks enhances confidence and increases the motivation to learn.



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