

# Pictograph Mnemonic Tiered Intervention Accelerates Beginning Literacy

## Background

Academic Support Teachers Casey Gentry and Heather Williams began piloting the Sunform Alphabet System in the fall 2017 as a Tiered Intervention for pullout reading groups of primary grades students. Gentry and Williams received a one hour initial online webinar training at the beginning of the semester followed by two conference support calls later that fall.

## The Sunform™ Alphabet System

Sunform's unique integrated pictograph mnemonic method rapidly teaches students all 26 beginning letter sound symbol correspondences to automaticity. Mastering the alphabetic principle is essential for all students, but critical for students who lack ideal school readiness, and English Language Learners.

*"My students have almost mastered all 26 clues, and on their own, they are noticing that they have those letters in their names. I am so excited!"*

Casey Gentry,  
Academic Support Teacher

## Fast Facts

- Katy Independent School District
- 77,783 students total
- West Memorial Elementary School
- 35% Hispanic/Latino (District)

## Implementation

Mrs. Gentry and Ms. Williams both taught the Sunform Alphabet System to a group consisting of 6 kindergarten students each. These students were seen 5 days a week for 15 minutes each day. Both Academic Support teachers used the unique Sunform pictograph illustrations and letter clues to create an Alphabet Tracing Book, a Bang sight word game, alphabet bingo and a laminated writing practice card with all 26 illustrations. These activities reinforced the lessons and were engaging and fun for the students.



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## Outcomes

By winter break all of the students, except for one, graduated from phase 1 and 2 of the Sunform system. They mastered naming the pictograph picture by looking at the letter and naming the correct sound. “The kindergarten teachers were amazed that the students learned their sounds before they knew the letter names,” said Gentry. At the beginning of December, Williams began delivering Sunform lessons to 6 additional students who had not learned letter sounds in their regular classroom. By the end of January all but one student had learned all 26 Sunform pictograph illustrations which is typical progress. At the same time, Gentry’s letters and sounds group had moved on to blending, sight words, and reading A level books.

*“For the struggling learner, it is very unfortunate that they need to know the names of the letters and sounds at the same time. I applaud Sunform for focusing on just the sounds to avoid confusion for struggling learners.”*

Casey Gentry,  
Academic Support Teacher

*“I was skeptical of yet another new program introduced into the curriculum to introduce the letters and sounds to kindergartners, especially a program that uses a slanted, cursive-style font instead of the block print that we use in the classroom. I was afraid that it would confuse the students who were already having difficulties with learning. I was wrong! My students learned the letters and sounds much quicker than in previous years. One of my students who started the year as a non-reader and could only identify a few letters and sounds has ended the year on a grade appropriate reading level to enter first grade in the fall. I expect this foundation will ensure her success as she continues through school.”*

Carla Redhair,  
Kindergarten Teacher

## Beginning Letter and Sound Recognition

Beginning September	0%	12 students
Beginning December	100%	11 of the 12 students

Mrs. Williams began a new group of students that did not successfully learn their letters and sounds in the classroom and by the end of March, all but 1 student had mastered letter and sound recognition with 100%. Mrs. Williams said, “In our academic support classes, we have never before had such a successful system to help the struggling learner and second language learner master the letter sounds so quickly!”

## About Sunform

Sunform’s unique integrated pictograph mnemonic-based approach to alphabet instruction establishes the foundational letter sound proficiency necessary for the subsequent development of automatic word recognition and word memorization. Daily 10–15 minute lessons enable students to master the 26 beginning letter sound-symbol correspondences to automaticity. Most English speakers will begin blending after just 8–10 weeks of instruction. This approach is consistent with the latest evidence (Roberts, 2021) and produces dramatic literacy gains in Pre-K, K-2 and remedial settings.

## About Ventris Learning

Our linguistically responsive instructional and assessment resources help educators better meet the needs of all students including those who become underserved in literacy.

*Roberts, T.A (2021). Learning Letters: Evidence and Questions From a “Science of Reading” Perspective. Read Res Q, 00(00), 1–22.*

