

Tier 2 Pictograph Mnemonic Instruction Accelerates Letter Sound Acquisition for English Language Learners

Lisa Umans, an English Language Learner (ELL) Resource Teacher, learned of the Sunform Alphabet System at a reading conference. Lisa was searching for ways to accelerate beginning literacy acquisition for her twenty Tier 2 intervention 5 and 6 year old age ELL students, most of whom are native Spanish speakers. Lisa supports her school's Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) students who receive supplemental English literacy and content area English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction with native language support as necessary. They receive a minimum of 225 minutes per week of support (150 minutes per week for kindergarten students) through a pull-out or push-in model.

The Sunform™ Alphabet System

Sunform's unique integrated pictograph mnemonic method rapidly teaches students all 26 beginning letter sound symbol correspondences to automaticity. The method was designed to complement the core curriculum with daily 15–20 minute lessons and to help all students quickly become beginning readers.

Fast Facts

- Mundelein School District 75
- Northern Chicago Suburban Village
- Washington Early Learning Center K–2
- 51% Students Hispanic/Latino

Implementation

Lisa delivered the Sunform lessons three or four times each week during guided reading center time. She followed the Sunform sequence of instructional phases which are spelled out on the back of each of the 26 letter devices. The students initially learn an integrated picture image for each letter, and rapidly transition from the images to letter clues and finally to the letters. Lisa and the students developed hand signals some of which were American Sign Language which the students responded to.

"They especially loved the hand movements for jack in the box, and high chair. Physical movement is an important ELL strategy, more important than front-loading vocabulary."

Lisa Umans,
ELL Resource Teacher

Outcomes

Lisa administered the AIMSweb® assessment one time per week to monitor progress using an end point rubric of 29 correctly identified sounds per minute. Ten of the twenty students (those already knowing about one half of the sounds) very quickly met the rubric end point and exited after three weeks. At that time four other students were close to exit and three were moved to a separate Tier 2 group. Examples of weekly student scores:

Date	2/10	2/23	3/03	3/09			
Corrects	11	30	42	49			
Errors		1	2	1			
Goal/Trend ROI	1.20/9.97						

Date	2/10	2/23	3/03	3/09	3/23	4/06	4/12
Corrects	7	10	11	18	23	29	36
Errors		5	8	4	3	1	2
Goal/Trend ROI	1.47/3.31						

Date	2/10	2/23	3/03	3/10	3/15		
Corrects	6	24	32	38	42		
Errors		6	6	4	7		
Goal/Trend ROI	1.53/7.60						

Date	2/10	3/03	3/09	3/15	3/23	4/06	4/12
Corrects	2	3	8	5	8	11	13
Errors		5	4	6	7	4	8
Goal/Trend ROI	1.80/1.27						

Date	2/10	3/03	3/15	3/23	4/06	4/12	
Corrects	3	10	8	13	18	19	
Errors		4	7	5	3	4	
Goal/Trend ROI	1.73/1.82						

Date	2/10	3/03	3/09	3/15	3/23	4/06	4/12
Corrects	3	10	12	17	19	21	21
Errors		3	3	4	2	4	2
Goal/Trend ROI	1.73/2.18						

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.

"The students enjoyed Sunform, and we've seen huge improvements. It works, and the lessons are short. I would take just 5 minutes to get through everything. Their confidence and self esteem improved. The majority of them would love getting called on in the group. They understood what was going on and they felt successful."

Lisa Umans,
ELL Resource Teacher

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.

