

# Teaching teachers: Youths learn quicker with phonics

BY JENNIFER PLACINTO  
STAFF WRITER

Oakland County special education teachers will have a lot fewer children to instruct in the years to come if Jeanne Liuzzo and Bronwyn Hain have it their way.

The two joined forces last July to form the Institute for Multi-Sensory Education in Birmingham and have been busy gathering troops throughout the county and the rest of the state in the battle against illiteracy.

"We are working with sixth graders who don't know how to spell, who are at first-, second- and third-grade reading levels," Liuzzo said. "Something happened."

Their goal is to have children reading independently by the third grade, something 40 percent of American children today are unable to do, according to Liuzzo and Hain, who cited President Bill Clinton as their source.

The method is revised Orton-Gillingham training, which teaches children how to read through phonetic and kinesthetic methods. Lessons involve sensory, visual and auditory learning.

"It starts easy and it really builds children's self-esteem," Hain said. "We have first graders who can read and write

the word contemplative," Liuzzo of Royal Oak and Hain of Bloomfield Township worked together three years teaching the Orton-Gillingham method with a larger organization before deciding to venture on their own with the "revised" method. Widely used to treat dyslexic students, the aim of the institute is to bring the revised method to the general-education classroom setting, versus one-on-one remedial instruction.

"I think that it has come to the forefront lately because there's a lot of national research that shows these skills are extremely important for emerging readers," Hain said. "We're trying to reach students before they fail so they're not referred to special education. It can also benefit children who are doing well and help them become the readers they were meant to be."

The institute provides public and private school teacher training on site in the method and all the materials that go along with it. Fees are based on the extent of training and the number of persons involved. Title 1, federal grant funding, can be applied toward the training.

As a former teacher, Liuzzo recognizes the need for the Orton-Gillingham method. "I didn't have the strategies to help children to read if they were struggling," she said.

Karen Burk, a Detroit Country Day Lower School reading instructor, said what Liuzzo experienced is a common concern among teachers.

"Many of the new teachers do not have a phonics class when they come out of college," the Huntington Woods resident said.

Detroit Country Day introduced their second- and third-grade instructors to the institute in January. The private school system has used Orton-Gillingham in a remedial manner through tutors from the Dyslexic Resource Center in West Bloomfield, Burk said.

Now Detroit Country Day, which services mainly Oakland County students, plans to begin implementing phonetic training in all their lower grades via the institute.

Remediation training for middle and high school teachers is also available.

"This program is so outstanding, it can reach any child," Hain said.

The Birmingham-based institute is conducting 30-hour training sessions from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. May 1, 2, 5, 6, and 12. For more information, call (810) 583-9920 or (810) 646-2872.



**Teachers' teachers:** Jeanne Liuzzo of Royal Oak (above, left) and Bronwyn Hain of Bloomfield Township trained teachers at Roosevelt Elementary School in a new learning method in Birmingham. Roosevelt Elementary first graders (from right of teacher) Justine Calhoun, Jonathan Rickard, Kory Brown, Sierra Caldwell and Lauren Ledford recite sounds as reading instructor Julie Abeska (back center) displays flash cards.



Staff Photos  
By Lawrence McKee

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