

How did Patty get her kindergartners to write like this?

Spring Spring
I Luve Spring
Spring is Byouif
Spring is Full
I Like Spring

Rabbit can hop
And Rabbit can eat carrots
And Rabbit can hop in Rocks
I Like Babbie

Date Monday May 14, 2001
I WENT TO PLAY OUT
SOFD. because MY MOM
LET ME.

Date Monday 11/11/01
I play with
my skooter.

I Like TO PLAY
IN THE Oshen



I Think They Like TO
Go in The
Bech



And why was hers the only kindergarten class in the district that didn't need intervention?

What did she do to get such amazing results?

Let Virginia Lake School* tell you in their own words...

Having a jolly good time

by Patty Clark, kindergarten teacher

ONE MORNING, two years ago, I was surprised to find my husband, Terry, who does not like phones, calmly making a call to England. "Who do you know in England?" I exclaimed. He replied that he was getting case study results to support his decision to use a program called *Jolly Phonics* with his first and second grade Title One students. He described the structure to me and suggested that I try it, since it was designed for kindergarten and first grade. As an early childhood teacher for 15 years, and having taught kindergarten for 7 years, I was unsure about using a program that was direct and systematic, reminiscent of what I had encountered in my own schooling. What would it offer all my students – even those who had begun to read? And how could it possibly make them better writers? Terry's enthusiasm proved to be the turning point for me. Until then, every year I had taught the letter names with charts and themes,

"I was unsure about using a program that was direct and systematic"

and I always had difficulty trying to explain how some letters made more than one sound, and how vowel sounds could be spelled in different ways. How frustrating it was to work on one letter and then discover that by the time we got to the next letter, the kids had forgotten all about the ones we had done! Their lack of interest in letters was puzzling. I gritted my teeth each time I introduced journal writing, knowing that I would be hard-pressed to convince those students who were stringing letters together to take the next step toward closer spelling

approximations. I tried to find ways to keep the writing developmentally appropriate while encouraging the kids to be turned on to words.

After listening to Terry's daily accounts of his students practicing their sounds at lunch and coming to class eager for the next sound, I decided to take a chance on *Jolly Phonics*. During the first week of teaching the sounds, I became more confident with elaborating

on the stories and getting the kids to be the 'actors.' More and more of them were anxious to be part of the story lines. They were eager to figure out what the next sound would be. A day did not go by without a group of kids saying, "I bet that is the sound!" If we had an assembly or could not get to a sound, they were very disappointed and told me they would rather skip their snack and do a sound!

As the weeks went on, I observed that my students were feeling more confident about tackling print in books and in their writing. The group of students eager to learn grew to the entire class. One boy told me while he was working on his sound sheet and letter formation that "this is what my friend does in first grade!" Parents would stop by the classroom and tell me how their child would come home eager to tell the story we had done in class and to practice sounds. One mother told me that her daughter would not leave the house until she had practiced all her sounds for the day!

During free time/job time, my

"I could not keep up with the speed at which my students were acquiring words!"

students were frequenting the 'Printing Press' and classroom library more than in the past. Copies of the *Finger Phonics* books we had used in class were fought over, hidden for later acquisition, and bargain-shared with friends. The kids suggested that I increase the number of chairs at the Printing Press so that more "authors could write stories!" So I did! Each day eight to 10 children parked themselves at the Printing Press writing books, as they assisted each other with sounds.

At a district meeting, I shared my tales of success, and one of my colleagues decided to give *Jolly Phonics* a whirl. She invited me over to demonstrate a lesson. Her class was just as excited as mine to be part of the acting and to complete the sound sheets. As with my students, all the kids were attentive and eager to make the "signs and sounds" for us.

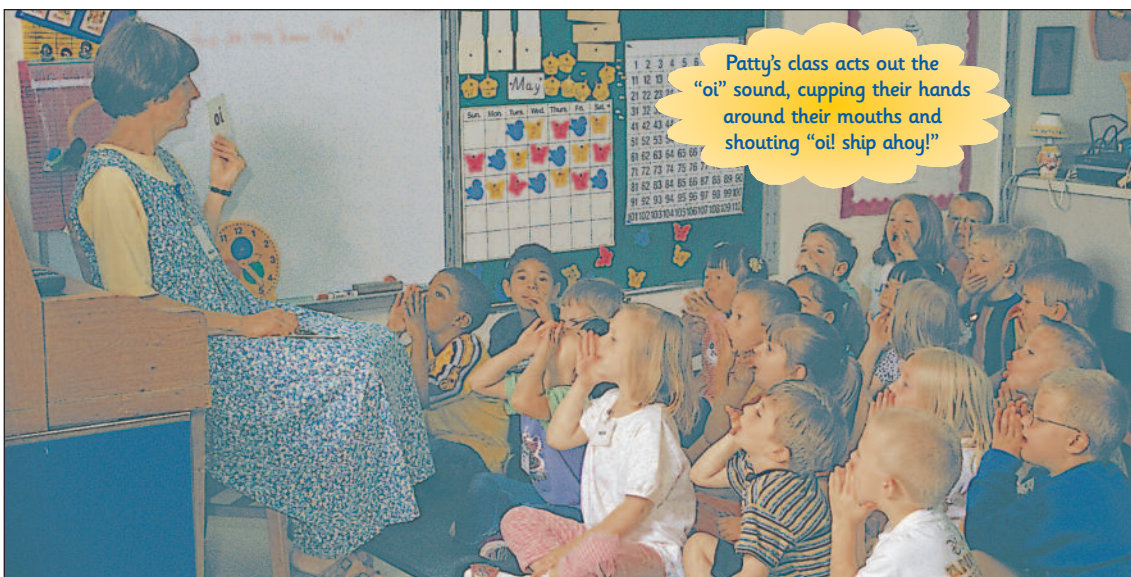
During that year, my district introduced a new program to provide kindergartners some intervention in literacy. My classes were the only ones in the district that did not need intervention! In January, my students began to write in formal journals. They did not hesitate to use the 'Tricky Word Wall' (displaying irregular words) and the *Jolly Phonics Wall Frieze* to help them.

These students proceeded to first grade confident and ready to tackle the rigors of their first full year in school. They had strategies for tackling words in print, and did not fear reading and writing. First grade teachers were impressed with the abilities and independence of my former students. These teachers were able to introduce word families sooner. They liked that the kids had been exposed to a word wall and were making the signs for the sounds as they spelled words.

During my second year with *Jolly Phonics*, I began teaching sounds the first day of school and was able



* in Palatine, Illinois



Patty's class acts out the "oi" sound, cupping their hands around their mouths and shouting "oi! ship ahoy!"

to finish the 42 sounds by December. Parents were amazed at the knowledge base their child had acquired, and visiting teachers and administrators were impressed with my students' reading and writing skills – and their independence.

The children visited the school library more often and shared both fiction and nonfiction texts with each other. When I obtained the *Finger Phonics Big Books* and *Jolly Phonics Puppets*, they would place the books on the floor and use the puppets to point to the words and sounds.

I also began to use the word boxes, from *The Phonics Handbook*, and had to adapt them because I could not keep up with the speed at which my students were acquiring words! After each child had been able to take home at least one box, I sent copies of the words to all parents to work on at home. When we reviewed words, each student was eager and willing to take a chance on

sounding out and reading the words. They would ask for "a hard word!"

When I administered the Richard Gentry 'monster' test in January, the class breakdown was typical: a few students at the transitional spellings, a few more at the phonetic stage, but most at the semiphonetic stage, with the rest at the precommunicative stage. Through the year, we studied more 'tricky words' and practiced them every day for a few minutes. Each day I noticed more correct spellings. The children's journal writing was also becoming more precise. One child, aged 5 years, 8 months, described his pet as a 'shnouz'. I noted that more of my students were taking time with writing and sounding out. Their spelling accuracy, sentence sense, and grammar were all better than in previous classes. In May, I gave the 'monster' test again. This time the results were amazing! I now had students who had moved up into the transitional stage from phonetic, more students moving to phonetic from semiphonetic, and just one or two children still in the precommunicative stage. I never expected to see these

"Jolly Phonics lets me be me!"

"I see results that astound me each year – I have found a program that works for ALL kids!"

kinds of results in kindergartners! So, my skepticism vanished – so much so that Terry and I presented a session on *Jolly Phonics* at the Illinois Reading Conference. We expected about 80 attendees, but our session was packed with over 135 people. Terry had made a video of me teaching a lesson, to show the audience how simple and fun this program is. Sharing writing samples and test results convinced them that the price was not just reasonable, but right!

What I love about *Jolly Phonics* is that it has afforded me more time to teach. I am now able to spend more time strengthening skills and concepts such as author's intention, purpose for listening to a story, retelling/acting out stories, main ideas, details, and prediction, as well as completing science, social studies, and health units. Now when I read literature books my students apply their experiences from *Jolly Phonics* to analyze them.

This program lets me be me! Its adaptable structure and variety of methods provides me with the chance to teach a sound a day whether I have 10 minutes or 30! I enjoyed doing the stories so much that I would search for props to use! Each day I loved watching my students' faces as I told a story; when I asked for actors, every hand would go up to participate. The effectiveness of the program and the joy we all got from it is proved by one student's statement when we were on our last sound: "Couldn't we make some more up?" I see results that astound me each year, and see former students excel in first grade, and grow stronger in second grade. Finally, I have found a program that works for ALL kids! They love learning this way, and I love teaching this way!



It's fun and it works!

by Pat Juza, kindergarten teacher



Having taught kindergarten for over 20 years, I have lived through sound worksheets, whole language, a letter a week, and fitting the letter sounds into the curriculum. For instance, I tried to teach the "o," "h," and "g" sounds as we talked about October, Halloween, and ghosts. While this last approach worked, I never taught the same units two years in a row, and some years did not make it through the 26 sounds I had been teaching.

A year and a half ago I went to the district's monthly meeting armed with samples of my children's work and ready to exchange ideas on how to make five- and six-year-olds more comfortable with writing. When I saw Patty's children's work, the first words out of my mouth were: "How do you get them to write like that?" For the first time, I heard those two wonderful words: *Jolly Phonics*. Patty came to do a lesson with my kids, and we were all hooked! Since

then, my enthusiasm and confidence in this program have only grown. The actions for each sound help the children, especially those who need extra reinforcement. They can make many words after the first six sounds are introduced, and have learned all the sounds by January, leaving the rest of the year to use them to read and write. The 'Tricky Word Wall' helps them learn words that don't follow the rules. Their writing is so much better than before. Discussing and retelling the stories that go with each sound help develop comprehension skills, and it is very easy to incorporate language experience activities and good literature. The children love it! They were not happy when we did not do a sound due to some other commitment. I guess the best way to sum it up is that it's fun and it works!

"The children love it!"

Thank you for giving my son

the best head start!

by Karen Aprile, mother of two



I AM a teacher of mentally disabled children as well as the mother of two boys. My oldest, Dominic, is in second grade. Anthony is in Mrs. Clark's kindergarten class at Virginia Lake. I've been very impressed with the *Jolly Phonics* this year and am extremely grateful that Anthony was able to participate in it. Dominic was in Mrs. Clark's class two years ago, but *Jolly Phonics* wasn't used at that time. For the past two years he has struggled with learning to sound out and spell words. Anthony, after using the program for a short time, was able to help his brother with

his spelling. What a joy for Anthony to be able to do something to help his BIG brother! Anthony likes reading to us at night. He really enjoyed the movements to the sounds, and we learned along with him. Being a teacher myself, I have looked for a program to help my students with cognitive impairments to learn to read. Most of them have difficulty recognizing letters, let alone associate them with sounds. My students tend to learn best through multisensory approaches and I think *Jolly Phonics* would be great for them, too! Thank you, Mr. Jolly, for giving my son the best head start he could have! I feel he now has the confidence he needs to succeed in first grade and to continue on his path of learning.

"After using the program, Anthony was able to help his big brother with his spelling"

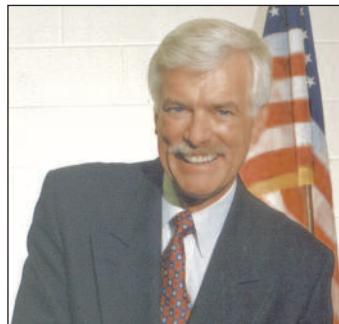
Jolly Phonics helps make our students 'world-class learners'

by Dr. John G. Conyers, Superintendent of Schools

Reading excellence is a top priority in all 19 of our schools in District 15. We encourage teachers to try new teaching techniques, and to actively seek out best practices that have proven successful elsewhere. Two years ago, Terry Clark, then a reading specialist at Willow Bend School, came across *Jolly Phonics*, a program that helps children learn the basic sounds

"What I saw was remarkable"

of English. With over one-third of his students second-language learners, Terry felt that this would provide a solid foundation to improve the reading skills of those having difficulty. He tested it with first and second graders and documented significant reading improvement. These results convinced other teachers, including Terry's wife Patty, to try the program. Patty's enthusiastic



reports intrigued me, and I visited her classroom to see what all the excitement was about. What I saw was remarkable. Using techniques learned from *Jolly Phonics*, these five- and six-year-olds could read at levels beyond what we normally expect of kindergartners. In addition,

they were doing some very sophisticated journal writing, making whole sentences, properly using capital letters and punctuation, and spacing between their words.

Our district's quality improvement process means we are data-driven. A teacher's enthusiasm and my positive impressions aren't enough to keep a program in place unless we see quantifiable results. Students who've been through *Jolly Phonics* show a lower incidence of the need for reading intervention as they move into first grade. Next year, several other District 15 schools will add it to their kindergarten curriculum. *Jolly Phonics* is one tool that is helping us to achieve our goal of making our students 'world-class learners.'



"Any uncertainties I had are long drowned out by the resounding successes we have seen"

by Gretchen Ludwig, Principal of Virginia Lake Elementary School

WHEN KINDERGARTEN teacher Patty Clark first approached me about introducing a program called *Jolly Phonics*, I was a bit skeptical. After all, there had been a phase in education when 'phonics' was like the 'F' word... and I wasn't sure how it might be perceived by the administration above me.

Actually, I assumed it would be frowned upon. At the same time, it seemed that something named 'Jolly' couldn't be all bad.

"Can any kindergarten teacher use Jolly Phonics? I think so!"

There were two things of which I was certain. Our school's population is diverse, and many students come ill prepared for learning to read. I was convinced that – for many, if not most, of them – learning to decipher the 'codes' of English certainly couldn't hurt, and might even be helpful. The other certainty was the teacher herself. An experienced professional, she seemed so enthusiastic about the program; if nothing else, it seemed that her sheer zeal would spur success. And, in truth, I trusted her and was

confident that if she found it wasn't helpful to her students, she would drop it! It was one of those 'better to ask for forgiveness later than permission now' situations! So I told Patty to go ahead and use *Jolly Phonics* beginning in the fall. Watching the children that first fall, I must confess to feeling 'Will this really help?' mixed with mild amusement at seeing an adult lead her little charges through the gestures, head movements, and sounds of the program. But both teacher and students – even the ones who were already reading –

seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves. I guess it was 'jolly' after all! My first inkling of success came from the reaction of the kindergarten parents. They were thrilled! One said: "Finally, we have a phonics program in kindergarten!" Even more impressive, however, were comments such as: "I can't believe how much my child can read now!" and "My older child was never doing this much at this stage!" Those preliminary, anecdotal findings were borne out when we tested our kindergarten children at the end of January. Designed to target children having difficulty with phonemic awareness, the

assessment was used to identify those at risk for not learning to read. Patty's classes were the only kindergarten classes in a district of 15 elementary schools to have no children eligible for intervention! When I sent those results to the district office, I

think I had their attention. The first phone call from a district administrator started with: "How do you explain the unusually high performance of your kindergarten students?" In the subsequent months, the children moved quickly to sounding out words and beginning reading strategies. Not only were they mastering the first stages of reading, but they also had a confidence I had not seen before. When faced with a new word, they simply 'sounded it out' – and usually came up with the correct word. Yes, there are still 'tricky' words that must be learned, but most of their reading followed a more regular letter pattern.

During our second year using the program, we had similar remarkable results. The children were reading more, at a younger age, and seemed to enjoy it more. Our first grade teachers reported that their students were "better prepared" for reading.

Our second kindergarten teacher

also adopted *Jolly Phonics* this year, and she is finding similar success. In her class, too, students waggle their heads and signal to themselves as they sound out words. Once again, January testing showed that we had fewer kindergartners eligible for

intervention than any other school in the district. Can any kindergarten teacher use *Jolly*

"The children's faces light up with pride and delight in their own ability"

Phonics? I think so! Each may need to adapt it slightly to suit his or her needs and style. Patty makes it fun, and the children respond to her contagious excitement as well as the mechanics of the program itself. After two years, I wouldn't give it up. Any uncertainties I may have had at the beginning are long drowned out by the resounding successes we have seen. The results here – from the struggling child to the proficient

"After two years, I wouldn't give it up!"

reader – support our continued use of *Jolly Phonics*. It has been a pleasure to see how Patty has successfully woven it into her kindergarten program. And the greatest joy comes in seeing little children's faces light up with pride and delight in their own ability to conquer the complexities of decoding and reading that marvelous linguistic euphemism we call 'English!'