

Florida Center for Reading Research

Seeing Stars

What is Seeing Stars?

Seeing Stars: Symbol Imagery for Phonemic Awareness, Sight Words and Spelling Program (Seeing Stars) is a supplemental/intervention program designed to instruct and improve students' phonemic awareness, sight word knowledge and spelling through the development of symbol imagery. *Seeing Stars* was created by Nanci Bell of Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes. *Seeing Stars* is one of three reading programs developed and supported by Lindamood Bell Learning Processes: the other two are LiPS and Visualizing and Verbalizing. (See individual FCRR Reports on LiPS and Visualizing and Verbalizing for further information). *Seeing Stars* is for students from kindergarten through adulthood and can be taught by classroom teachers, specialists, tutors, volunteers or parents. The *Seeing Stars* program can be utilized in whole group, small group, or individualized instruction. It is designed to provide instruction for individuals with weakness in symbol imagery, the ability to visualize letters in words.

Seeing Stars utilizes specific routines in each lesson. They include setting the purpose for the lesson, instruction in the new skill, and practice with corrective feedback using the Socratic method. The frequency and duration of each lesson is not delineated within the instructional materials. *Seeing Stars* is designed to be flexible to align with other phonics programs and complements the Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program (LiPS). The instructional sequence begins with a lesson to identify a purpose for students known as "setting the climate" and continues with imaging letters, simple and complex syllables, sequencing syllables, imaging sight words, spelling patterns, affixes, spelling two and three syllables and integrating into contextual reading. The author emphasizes the importance of maintaining student engagement with a Practice and Pacing section for each skill which highlights four basic concepts: lesson energy, task levels, overlapping of steps, self-correction, and automaticity. The scope and sequence of letter/sound introduction is designed to be used alone or can be modified to match the scope and sequence of the core reading program.

The *Seeing Stars* program kit comes in an organized, easy to use box and includes all materials necessary to provide instruction using this technique. The kit includes the Teacher's Manual and Kit Manual, consonant and vowel cards, individual sound and symbol charts/star words charts, 2500 syllable cards for single and multisyllabic words, individual syllable card charts, first 500 Star Words, 1000 Star Words sight vocabulary list, syllable boards, prefix and suffix cards, visual spelling charts, and colored star stickers to chart progress. Additional student workbooks are available to provide practice in decoding, spelling, and comprehending the meaning of high frequency words. Due to the cumulative nature and precise terminology used in this program, all students start at the beginning. The pacing is determined by student performance. New skills in this program build upon previously learned skills; therefore it is necessary to teach each skill to the level of mastery.



How is Seeing Stars aligned with Current Reading Research?

Seeing Stars was first published in 1997 and utilizes the work of Allan Paivio and his Dual Coding Theory (DCT) as research support for the imagery techniques. It is not designed to address all five components of reading, but focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency through symbol imagery. It aligns with current

reading research in that each lesson is systematic and explicit with new information linked to previously taught skills. For example, a typical letter imaging lesson might look something like this: 1. teacher shows the letter card for two-three seconds, 2. student(s) sees, says, and writes in the air, while saying the sound and/or letter. It is important that the student(s) speak and air-write simultaneously, the air-writing is done in lowercase letters, and air-writing should be large enough to see a "shadow" effect. Explicit explanations and instructional procedures are provided for the teacher and scaffolding is built into the program to encourage students to continually improve their skills at an appropriate pace.

Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes offer a two-day workshop in the implementation of *Seeing Stars*. A listing of the dates and locations of these workshops can be found in their catalog or on their website. The workshop is not a requirement when the program is purchased. The teacher's manual is written in clear and concise language to facilitate appropriate implementation.

Research Support for Seeing Stars



A study of the *Seeing Stars* program was conducted with 2nd grade students in Idaho. The experimental classroom of 18 students received small group instruction in symbol imagery for approximately 56 hours. In the same school, the control classroom of 18 students participated in their typical language arts curriculum which included instruction in phonological processing and synthetic phonics. Results indicated the experimental group made significant improvements relative to the control group ($p < .05$) in the areas of word attack, word recognition, and spelling in a pre/post assessment of skills. However, there was a serious problem with the design of this study, in that the treatment was provided by a single teacher and so was the control instruction. Thus, it is not possible to determine whether the differences in outcome between the treatment and control group was due to the specific differences in the instructional programs they followed or to differences in other teacher characteristics that may have influenced the outcomes.

As has been mentioned in other reports on the Lindamood- Bell programs, Sadoski and Willson (2006) conducted a six year study in one school district where with each passing year additional schools gradually implemented the three Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes (LBLP) programs. The study began in one school and by the end of the six years 31 schools were included. The state mandated reading comprehension test, Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP), served as the instrument to assess program effectiveness in pretest and posttest administrations for grades 3-5. Implementation included teacher training in the LBLP programs with on-site consultants to provide additional training and monitor the fidelity of program usage. Schools were used as the units of analyses in all analyses. Four covariates: school size, school minority student percentage, socio-economic status, and number of years in LBLP intervention were used in analyses. Grade by grade analysis using the CSAP indicated significantly greater performance for schools using the LBLP programs than the state average, once student demographic factors were accounted for. Another positive outcome of the results is that scores increased each year on the CSAP over grades 3-5, with the most growth seen in grades 3 and 4. Our conclusion from reviewing this study on the LBLP programs is that while it is consistent with the idea that the programs can be used effectively to help "close the gap" in reading skills for struggling readers; it is difficult to know which of several aspects of the total school intervention program were responsible for the improved performance of the students.

Although the instructional design of the Seeing Stars program has many features that are consistent with findings from current research in instruction and reading, we must conclude that empirical demonstration of its effectiveness as a complete program still awaits the design and execution of research that can be unambiguously interpreted as supporting its unique combination of content and instructional features.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Seeing Stars*:

- Systematic and explicit instruction.
- Clear detailed lesson examples at each step of instruction.
- Accompanying materials are well organized.
- Can be utilized in whole or small group format.

Weaknesses of *Seeing Stars*:

- Short vowels are initially introduced in an open syllable format when beginning simple syllable work with the syllable cards.

Which Florida districts have schools that implement Seeing Stars?

Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes currently has a contract with Hernando County (352-797-7001) to implement their programs based on their diagnostic, intervention and professional development protocol. Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes also has Learning Centers where individuals may inquire for additional information.

Coral Gables	786-552-6470
Tampa	813-253-0453
Weston	954-349-1688

For More Information

<http://www.lblp.com/programs/symbolimagery.shtml>

References

Bell, N. (2005, May). *Symbol imagery: A new sensory-cognitive factor underlying phonological & orthographic processing*. Poster session presented at the International Reading Association 50th annual convention. San Antonio, TX.

National Reading Panel (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. NIH Publication No. 00-4754. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.



Paivio, A. (1986). *Mental representations: A dual coding approach*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sadoski, M., & Willson, V. L. (2006). Effects of a theoretically based large-scale reading intervention in a multicultural urban school district. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43, 135-152.

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Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR.

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