

# Florida Center for Reading Research

Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself

## What is Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself?

*Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself* is a K-adult phonics program that provides instruction in 42 sounds, 5 phonetic rules, and a two-step decoding system and may be taught by teachers or well-trained paraprofessionals. The program lends itself to flexible use in multiple situations: as a supplement to a school's core reading program, as extra support to students who are reading below grade level, for ESL students, and as a remediation tool for older students reading below grade level. The goal of the program is for students to learn the phonic elements to mastery so that they will become fluent readers and spellers. The program is published in two formats, one for elementary students and one for older students. The content is the same for both versions, differing only in more age appropriate material.

Instruction with *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself* takes place daily for the entire school year, but the amount of time will vary depending on the grade level. It is recommended that students in K receive 30 minutes of instruction, 1½ hours in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and 30-45 minutes in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The instructional time recommended for older students in grades 3-6 who have not learned foundational phonic patterns is 30 minutes daily, for 3-6 months. The developers stress the importance of placing all students at the beginning of the program to ensure mastery of foundational phonic elements, including older students. However, if students demonstrate a firm understanding of the letter-sound correspondences, a teacher may move them through the early parts of the program more quickly. Also integrated into the program is instruction in spelling, vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, and dictionary skills.

The daily lesson format is structured and consistent across all lessons. Teachers model, provide guided practice, and then students apply the newly learned skills independently. This program is characterized by lively responses between the teacher and the students coupled with active participation at the board, both which serve to heighten student engagement and motivation. With larger classes, several students work at the board while the remaining students work at their desks with marker boards. Mastery checks are included in the program to determine which skills need re-teaching, and which students require extra support.



The materials for *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself* have been recently updated with new instructional content as well as improvements to the program's organizational features. All components of the program are teacher friendly and use language that is clear and concise. In addition, the publishers of *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself* have begun to provide plans for integrating their program with a school's particular core reading program. Included in the teacher's kit are two highly detailed teacher's manuals with a scope and sequence, helpful tips on instruction, how to set up the room for successful teaching and behavior management; reverse listening cards; 13 posters with sounds of the alphabet, most common words, and the 5 phonetic skills; two flip charts; an enrichment CD; a set of little books for applying skills learned, the Sound Essentials manual which replaces the appendix and contains reinforcing practice activities, games, mastery checks, section assessments, and other materials pertinent to instruction. There is a software component to the program, one for elementary students and another for older students called *Reading Horizons*, which

is purchased separately. Even though the software portion of the program is optional, it is recommended since it offers students another avenue of extra practice.

An additional section has been added to the Teacher's Manual that includes lessons, activities, and assessments in phonological awareness and phonemic awareness. Although the lesson format is typical of all *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself* lessons, they are not directly linked to the program's sequence of phonics lessons. Instead, this new section offers teachers a framework for teaching lessons on the identification of words in sentences, rhyme, syllable identification, and phoneme segmentation, blending, and manipulation. The assessments are to be administered on a one-to-one basis. Presently, the new section on phonological and phonemic awareness can be downloaded from the company's website.

### How is Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself aligned with Reading First?

*Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself* is primarily an intensive phonics program and includes unique elements of phonemic awareness with an important emphasis on vocabulary. It offers students a means to approach the subtleties of the English language. Instruction in *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself* is not isolated phonics instruction. Once students learn a few individual sounds, the sounds are placed into words, they learn the meaning of the words, and the words are placed in sentences. Students immediately apply the phonics skills they learn.

*Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself* contains several pedagogical features helpful for all readers and for struggling readers in particular. Instruction is explicit, systematic, and follows a logical sequence. Basic foundational skills are learned first, and gradually, more complex skills and strategies are introduced. Information is broken into small manageable units, builds cumulatively, and is then reviewed on a frequent basis. Students receive immediate corrective feedback.

Oral phonemic awareness does not occur separately within a *Discover Intensive Phonics* lesson, but rather, is woven into phonics instruction such that the student moves seamlessly back and forth between the two. The interactive nature of instruction is intended to constantly stimulate students' phonological and orthographic memories in order to secure an understanding of the alphabetic principal. The alphabet is learned in groups of 4 consonants and 1 vowel. With the teacher and the students at the board, the teacher presents one of the four consonants introducing its name and sound using a visual, oral, and written demonstration. Students respond by repeating the teacher's demonstration. Dictation lessons for individual sounds, phonic elements, words, nonsense words, and sentences follow. This responsive process continues throughout all lessons as more phonic elements are gradually layered onto the instructional sequence. Once students have learned the letters and sounds of the alphabet, they are taught blends, long and short vowel variations, r-controlled vowels, digraphs, diphthongs, the sounds of y, decoding multisyllabic words, and exceptions.

Blending is introduced through a technique called "the slide" that permits the student to move smoothly from a consonant to a vowel. While working within one of the groups of five letters, *a, b, f, d, g* for example, students learn to combine each consonant with the vowel and form the following slides: *ba, fa, da, ga*. Eventually, students build words by adding a consonant to the end of the slide, resulting in cvc words such as *fad, dad*, etc.

The program's system of decoding is accomplished through a marking system intended to aid in pronunciation, spelling, and breaking words into syllables. Diacritical

markings enable the student to recognize spelling sequences they've been taught. To assist in decoding words, five phonetic skills are taught to help students understand why a word is pronounced in a certain manner. Students are taught to analyze irregular words. They learn that although these words may contain vowels that do not follow a regular phonetic pattern and/or pronunciation, such words may begin and/or end with a regular letter-sound correspondence.

Reverse listening cards contain letters, letter patterns, words, nonsense words, and sentences and are used to reinforce previously taught skills. They may be used in a variety of ways: students work independently at the board, with partners, and the teacher might work with individual students to assess whether they have learned the lesson's content. Because students are at the board listening and responding and writing during *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself*, reverse listening cards give them the opportunity to reverse the listening process to a reading process. Cards correspond to specific lessons with the target skill written across the top.

Vocabulary is taught immediately within the *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself* program, and this includes phonetically regular and irregular high frequency words as well. Once CVC words are built, students learn their meaning, any multiple meanings, and the words are used in a sentence. When learning to decode words with affixes, students are taught the meaning of the prefixes and suffixes.

It is important to note that the most struggling readers in K and 1<sup>st</sup> grade may require more intensive instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness than is offered by the present framework of activities offered in the new section of *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself*. However, teachers with deep knowledge in phonemic awareness and phonics should be able to adapt the present framework to scaffold struggling readers. Additionally, the use of the decodable books should be considered essential rather than optional as it would be a lost instructional opportunity to not include them in the daily lesson.

Professional development is available for a fee. Participation in the 3-day Discover Intensive Phonics teacher certification workshop and completion of follow-up requirements qualifies a teacher to become "teacher certified". Certified teachers may then go on to become "instructor certified", allowing them to train other teachers. Instructor certification necessitates an additional 160 practicum hours and attendance at a teacher certification workshop.

## Research Support for Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself

There are several implementation trials of *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself*; the absence of randomized control groups and statistical information however, make it impossible to draw a conclusive statement about the efficacy of the program. Although phonics instruction used within the program is consistent with findings reported by the National Reading Panel (2000), future studies with sound experimental designs including control groups may determine the efficacy of *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself* in the classroom.

## Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself*:

- The design of the program enables teachers to strengthen their understanding of the underlying phonetic structure of our language.
- Instruction is explicit, systematic, and builds cumulatively, progressing from simpler skills to more complex.

- Through the use of simple diacritical markings, students learn to decode one syllable and multisyllabic words by analyzing the internal structure of the word.
- Once a strong foundation of most common sounds and spelling patterns has been built, students are taught to be flexible when decoding words with variant vowel spelling patterns and with variant pronunciations.
- The speech to print connection is reinforced by listening, seeing, saying, and then printing the letter, letter patterns, and/or words.
- Instruction is highly interactive and multisensory, which can increase student motivation and time on task.
- Materials are organized, highly detailed, and teacher friendly.

Weaknesses of *Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself*:

- None were noted.

### Which Florida districts have schools that implement Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself?

Baker	904-259-0401	Lee	239-337-8301
Brevard	321-631-1911	Leon	850-487-7147
Collier	239-377-0212	Pasco	813-794-2651
Hillsborough	813-272-4050	Seminole	407-320-0006
Indian River	772-564-3150	St. Lucie	772-429-3925
Jackson	850-482-1200	Sumter	352-793-2315
Lake	352-253-6510	Washington	850-638-6222

### For More Information

[www.readinghorizons.com](http://www.readinghorizons.com)

### References

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*. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Washington, D.C.



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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.

For more information about FCRR go to: [www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)