

# DAILY LOCAL

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## Hooked on 'Easy Steps to Reading'

Program teaches children to sound out words 'from the inside out'

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Staff Writer

EXTON — While they might not be ready for the national spelling bee, the kindergarten class at Ss. Philip and James School may be on their way.

The students showed off their skills reading words like embellish, terminate, skeptical and indulgent.

They also read full sentences ranging from a

first- to third-grade level.

The success of the students is credited to a system developed by Karen Truncellito, a former teacher who has tutored children over the past 25 years, called "Easy Steps to Reading."

"It uses a multisensory approach and teaches children to sound out words from the inside out, instead of right to left," Truncellito said.

The program utilizes games, music, dancing and other competitions, with teachers using nothing more than a piece of chalk and a blackboard.

Kindergarten teacher Linda Valdiserri said the

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approach has been invaluable and was pleased with agreeing to pilot the program this year.

"There has been success with children coming in not knowing letters to kids already reading," Valdiserri said. "It's another strategy for kids to be able to read and have fun."

According to Truncellito, the students learned all the phonetic components of reading, including consonants, vowels, blends, digraphs and diphthongs, along with the ability to take on three syllable words.

Students also learned to count by fives and 10s, helping them to tell time and count money.

After 20 hours of instruction, Truncellito claimed average reading scores in the class increased 197.3 percent.

Truncellito showed that more than 40 percent of the students were able to read at a third-grade level, while more than 20 percent could read near a fifth-grade level.

Yet with all of the success,

Truncellito has had trouble getting school districts to try out the program.

In 13 years since developing Easy Steps to Reading, no district embraced it.

Much of the criticism has been focused on educational standards, however, Truncellito said tests administered with the program include Dibels Benchmark assessments.

Still, Truncellito maintains that the program helps identify children who are having problems with reading.

"The ultimate goal is to change the way reading is taught, especially among students with learning difficulties and in economically disadvantaged areas," she said. "If this could get out to children when they are really young, they wouldn't be left behind in the first place."

But one person who has taken interest in Easy Steps is U.S. Rep. Jim Gerlach, R-6th, of West Pikeland, whom Truncelli-

to contacted about two years ago about the program, and who was on hand Wednesday to see the results.

"It was very impressive," Gerlach said. "She's demonstrated the quality of the program and we need to help her get a few other doors open to expand it."

Truncellito first stumbled across the idea around 1984, when a parent of a student who couldn't read came to her for help.

"We tried all kinds of concepts, but the student had a learning disability and I had no experience with that," she said. "I told them I'd think of something. Then I just tried inside out, refined the program and have used only that method since."

To learn more, visit the National Right to Read Web site at [www.nrrf.org](http://www.nrrf.org).

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