

Don Potter's Career

Outline of My Journey as an Educator in Texas (Preliminary to a Detailed Study)

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Dear Sam,

I have started a little study of my life as an educator. I started out to be preacher. I never intended to be a public or private school teacher, but God had different plans for me. I had to supplement my income for five years with substitute teaching on every grade level. All the principals begged me to consider becoming a teacher and teaching for them. I was a very popular substitute teacher. I went ahead and got my bilingual certification and started teaching full time. I poured everything into my teaching all those years. The most difficult thing was the whole-language tsunami that swept through education about the time I started teaching. I saw language books, spelling, books, and handwriting books swept out of the classrooms in the name of liberating students to learn for themselves. Teachers on the elementary level started writing their own so called thematic units instead of using textbook. It was a disaster for education, but it probably gave me room to experiment and to discover the tremendous power of intensive phonics to produce highly literate students. I am going to flesh out this outline as I have time. I want to go back and see exactly when I started corresponding with Charlie Richardson, Paul, Geraldine Rodgers, and others. I have been telling everyone I started teaching Alpha-Phonics in 1994 or 93, but my chart indicates it was in 92. It is tricky to remember when a teacher does things in his life because the calendar starts when school starts so the year is broken up and harder to keep track of.

I am not sure when I read Flesch's *Johnny and The New Illiterates*. I think I looked at them sometime before I started teaching. There are copies in our public library. I know that I retyped all of Flesch's 72 Exercises either my first or second year teaching. My principal at Travis Elem. let me take a dyslexia course (Rene Herman) during my first or second year at her school. Herman's programs is somewhat similar to Alpha-Phonics and uses cursive handwriting. That was a good influence. When I finally got the opportunity to teach the dyslexia program, I was already teaching Alpha-Phonics so I cheated a bit and mixed the Herman and Alpha-Phonics lessons. The Herman program, although very good, is like all the other Orton-Gillingham programs in that they are taught VERY slowly. They in-depth phonics, but teach it so slowly that it loses much of its intensity.

YEARS	SCHOOLS	Position	Reading
84-85		Substitute	
85-86		Substitute	
86-87		Substitute	
87-88		Substitute	
88-89		Substitute	
89-90	Travis Elem.	2nd Bil. Classroom Ph., Riverside	
90-91	Travis Elem.	2nd Bil.	(Herman Dyslexia)
91-92	Travis Elem.	2nd Bil.	
92-93	Burnet Elem.	Bil 1st – 6th	Saxon & Alpha-Phonics
93-94	Burnet Elem.	Bil 1st – 6th	Alpha-Phonics
94-95	Burnet Elem.	Bil 1st – 6th	Alpha-Phonics
95-96	Burnet Elem.	Bil 1st – 6th	Alpha-Phonics
96-97	Burnet Elem.	Bil 1st – 6th	Alpha-Phonics
97-98	Fly Elem.	Bil. 1st	Spalding WRTR
99-00	Fly Elem.	Bil 2nd.	Alpha-Phonics & Cursive
00-01	Fly Elem.	Bil. 2nd	WISE OWL (TATRAS)
01-02	Fly Elem.	Bil 2nd.	WISE OWL (TATRAS)
02-03	Fly Elem.	Instr. Res.	MWIA , PHON. PATH.
03-04	GPA Elem.	4th Bil.	Alpha-Phonics
04-05	Bowie Jr. Hi.	Spanish	
05-06	Bowie Jr. Hi.	Spanish	PSRS – Pat Doran & A-F
06-07	OCS Elem.	4th Grade	A BEKA, etc.
07-08	OCS Elem.	Spa. & Rdg.	Blend Phonics
08-09	OCS Elem.	Spa. & Rdg.	Blend Phonics
09-10	OCS Elem.	Spa. & Rdg.	Alpha-Phonics & Cursive
10-11	OCS Elem.	Spa. & Rdg.	Alpha-Phonics & Cursive