

Beat Learning

Dayna Camarena

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I began working with the Beat Learning System on June 2, 2010. I was intrigued by the idea that children could use their gross motor skills to “beat” letters and words on a punching bag to help them learn letters and phonemes. As a credentialed teacher of over 10 years teaching various levels from pre-school to high school, I have learned that children learn in a variety of different ways. Some children are visual learners, others are kinesthetic learners, some are auditory, etc.

What interested me the most about this system was that this style of learning is so very DIFFERENT than how we usually teach in the classroom with traditional pen and paper.

I was skeptical at first that we would see improvement within the three week period that I worked with the control group of sixteen students. Some of the students were only available for me to work with on a limited basis, perhaps once or twice. Others, I saw an average of five times for about fifteen minutes a session. Since I was unfamiliar with these students, I had to quickly evaluate their skill level and areas that needed improvement.

To my surprise, “beating” the bags was fun and engaging experience for the children. Not only did the method capture their attention, but I could see that the physical process of beating the words would help their brain “click”.

For instance, Alexandra confused the sound of “th” and “f”. We made a bag with these letters on it and also had some words. By the time she punched these letters and practiced these sounds as I helped correct her, she was properly saying and punching these letters. The improvement was quick and Alexandra was engaged and proud of herself. I showed her how to position her tongue so that the correct sound came out.

Giovanni was tested low on the Dibel’s Test in the area of phoneme segmentation, so we punched out phonemes on a bag. For instance we punched out b-a-t, h-oo-t, or g-r-ou-n-d. His pre-test score was 35 sounds. His post-test score was 58 sounds!

Kimberly went from being able to name 35 letters in a one minute period to being able to name 40 correctly. Her phoneme segmentation went from 28 sounds to 39 in a one minute period. What was exciting to watch with her is how the sounds “clicked” with her...and THEN she was able to physically show me from left to right how to not only say the sounds, but how to pronounce the whole word correctly. She used her fist to punch and then to swipe across the word to reading it! Her pre-score for the Dibel’s section on nonsense words went from 0 words decoded correctly to 12!

Alex was another great example of success. We only worked together 3 days for 15 minutes or so a session. His main problem was b and d confusion. We did a b and d bag. This bag had upper and lower case b’s and d’s as well as words like bad and dad. We

practiced punching the Momma D and Baby D and talked about how the Daddy D and the Baby D are “different”. I asked him to show me the “different” letters and he would punch all the Baby D’s. When he did his post-test, he correctly guessed b’s and d’s and was able to go from a 57 to a 63 in letter naming fluency. His phoneme segmentation fluency went from 17 to 40!

Another exciting development was working with students in a group. While one student would punch out the sounds on a bag with blank squares on it, the other students would move blocks into boxes on the papers in front of them...again, a kinesthetic exercise. Groups of three worked well, along with positive reinforcement of course.

The Beat System of Learning worked well for the children and offers a unique and powerful tool to educators!

Teacher BIO

Dayna Camarena has been a credentialed teacher since 1999. She holds both a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential and a Single Subject Teaching Credential with an emphasis in English. She also holds a CLAD (Crosscultural, Language, and Academic Development) Certificate. While she has spent her career enriching the lives of children ranging in ages from pre-school to high-school, she has spent the past several years teaching English as a Second Language to Adults. She is currently pursuing a Master’s Degree in Speech Pathology.