

**AP, 2003**

"When comparing the previous methods I used for teaching reading to the explicit phonics method I learned with STEPS, I get an overwhelming sense of relief. This relief comes from knowing now that I am really making a difference in my students' ability to read. I'm not crossing my fingers and hoping they'll get it as I listen to them read aloud by my side during a conference. During conferences, I used to say "Sound it out." However, I couldn't explain how to sound it out. The frustration that arose made me wonder about the role of a reading teacher if he/she couldn't teach a student how to read. Are teachers just supposed to throw the book at them and expect them to get it? I didn't understand how students were supposed to be able to break a word into chunks to sound out the word if they couldn't even sound out the chunks.

With explicit phonics, students are able to sound out words, chunks, and letters. This skill gives students the ability to rapidly decode words. The rapid decoding provided students with a brain that has enough energy to comprehend text. Without knowing how to sound out words, the brain spends all its energy on figuring out the word instead of figuring out the meaning of the passage.

... They want to practice at home because they see how this method will help them understand what they read. They love playing Phono Bingo. They feel successful. Explicit phonics has brought a love of letters, words, and reading to my classroom. Spelling tests are fun. The phonograms are being learned at a rate that is shocking to me. They know the sounds and even the rules that follow.

I'm very thankful for the STEPS program and for the scientific brain research that backs the benefits of it. I plan to use the principals and methods in order to teach students how to read. I will no longer wonder about my role as their reading teacher."