

Testimonial

Ideal for classroom, clinic or home, the *Ring Around the Phonics* game (Ages 4 and up; for 1 to 4 players) engages children joyfully in confident learning and produces instant growth in phonics, comprehension, reading, listening and speaking. Start down the magical road to reading success with this adorable, easy to learn, board game which includes 336 static cling letters, fun activity cards, phonics books and motivating certificates. I loved the adaptability of the game for educators to be able to be an instructional decision maker, and address his/her own program's standards for spelling, writing, language, and more. Nile Stanley, Ph.D. reading professor, University of North Florida. nstanley@unf.edu.

Product Review

Ideal for classroom, clinic or home, the *Ring Around the Phonics* game (Ages 4 and up; for 1 to 4 players) engages children joyfully in confident learning and produces instant growth in phonics, comprehension, reading, listening and speaking. In this game the children's learning sticks because they learn by doing, they learn by using language.

Research with game-based teaching indicate successful teaching and learning activities are characterized by meeting three criteria: engagement, internalization and transfer, and promotion of collaborative, independent, and interdependent learning. This game meets all three! The children start immediately down the magical road to reading success because it is an adorable, easy to learn, engaging board game, sort of like *Candy Land* except the reward of learning to read is even sweeter than winning a race. It includes 336 static cling letters, and fun activity cards for internalizing and practicing the sound symbol connection. Phonics books provide the transfer to real reading. Motivating certificates ensure continued engagement. Learning is optimized when younger readers can play the game with older, more capable peers and adults. The learning theorist Vygotsky's research showed that play functions as powerful scaffold for developing language and thinking. He stated, "In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior. In play, it is though he was a head taller than himself." Older struggling readers can be accommodated in the game by modifying the level of difficulty. I loved the adaptability of the game for educators to be able to be an instructional decision maker, and address his/her own program's standards and needs for spelling, writing, language, and more.

The game should be a part of every classroom because it will help children to practice sounding out letters and words, which research confirm will help them to read. Initially, by playing the game children will learn basic letter sounds, such as "S-a-m" for "SAM". The

children practice the sounds in meaningful context by reading the game's included phonic books.

Later they will move a total of 3 book levels on to sounds such as "th", "sh" and "ch", then "oo", "oa" and so on. Once they recognize a few basic letter sounds, they will be able to work out what a written word says for themselves, a skill which they will be very proud to show off when they receive a progress ring and are awarded a certificate of achievement. A real strength of the game is that not only do children learn phonics effortlessly, they also develop reading comprehension and the language arts skills of speaking, and listening.

I really like the way the game activity cards assess and teach reading comprehension. Instead of the passive workbook page, the game encourages active learning. The children choose a card (e.g. Show everyone your best dance move.") and then read the command and act it out. The teacher may read the command aloud to the child. This is a great exercise for reinforcing decoding words and developing reading comprehension. Eventually the child will be able to read the commands without "sounding out" each word. A variation of the activity is the child writes out simple commands for another child (e.g. Tap your fingers.) The game activity cards are another example of a research based best practice known as Total Physical Response (TPR) which is an ESL methodology that has been in use for thirty years.

I recommend highly *The Ring Around the Phonics* game. Beginning and struggling readers and English language learners will love the confidence they gain playing with sounds, using language, and understanding reading.

A question from teachers and administrators often arises when considering the purchase of an instructional game for their school. – "Can we purchase the *Ring Around the Phonics* game for our school if it is not on the state-adopted list? "Yes! According to Florida Statute 1006. (4)(B) www.fldoe.org/bii/instruct_mat/pdf/statutes.pdf: *up to 50 percent of the annual allocation may be used for the purchase of instructional materials, including library and reference books and nonprint materials, not included on the state-adopted list.*

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