

History of Spalding

History of Thomas Edison Charter Schools



Thomas Edison Charter Schools (TECS) educational program and philosophy is built around the Spalding Total Language arts curriculum. The direct instruction approach applied to teaching Spalding is also applied to the other core subjects taught in the school – particularly in the elementary grades. Without Spalding, the incentive for the founders to start TECS would not have existed. Thus, TECS's existence is, in part, owed to the Spalding method and the instructional philosophy it brings to education.

The following history and description comes partly from Spalding Education International and partly from an article written in September 2008 by Carol Forsloff titled, "No Child Left Behind: Spalding May be the Answer".

History of the Spalding Method / Total Language Arts Program

Reading is like walking, an important and essential way to get around and move ahead. Without it an individual is virtually doomed to a life of poverty and ignorance.

The Spalding Method for teaching reading is adapted from the work of Orton-Gillingham. It is a systematic, highly individualized way of teaching language skills successfully through a multi-sensory approach that involves seeing, hearing, saying, writing. It has also been used successfully to teach reading to poor, disadvantaged children who otherwise might have failed.

Samuel T. Orton, M.D. was a neurologist, who in the early 20th century began to expand his practice in the study of reading problems, looking at a population of individuals who had specific reading difficulties which Orton termed "stropho symbolia" or twisted symbols. It is now called dyslexia. Orton's wife, June Day Orton, developed a handbook and reading materials based upon her husband's medical research, which continue to be used by many reading specialists and specialists in the area of learning disabilities education. Later in 1939, Anna Gillingham, language arts teacher at Punahou School in Honolulu, incorporated Orton's techniques and information into the highly integrated, systematic, individualized approach to reading known as the Orton-Gillingham method that is popular with instructors of dyslexics in many parts of the country. Romalda Spalding took these techniques and adapted them for group and classroom use.

Romalda B. Spalding

Although Romalda Spalding earned a bachelors degree from the University of Illinois and a masters degree from Columbia University, she discovered that her preparation was not adequate for teaching all children to read and write successfully.

Her search for a reading method that empowered children to become fluent, thoughtful readers and writers led her in 1938 to the distinguished neurologist Dr. Samuel T. Orton. Orton specialized in helping dyslexic and other disabled children. After tutoring children under his supervision, Mrs. Spalding soon realized that the children taught using Dr. Orton's techniques experienced more success than her regular education students.

Drawing on what she learned from Dr. Orton and her own experience



working with children at Massachusetts General Hospital, Children's Hospital at Harvard Medical School, and public and private schools as a classroom teacher, she wrote the textbook, *The Writing Road to Reading*, first published in 1957.

The Spalding Method continues to be validated by current research on the way children learn. During her lifetime she received numerous awards and served on advisory boards of the Orton Dyslexic Society and the International Montessori Society.

With the Spalding method, students learn to read in a systematic manner through the presentation of phonograms, or letters connected with their sounds. The 26 letters of the alphabet include 70 phonograms representing 45 English sounds. For example, there are several sounds for the letter "a," as in bag and in away. The teacher presents the student with flash cards, the student hears the sound pronounced, repeats it, then writes it. The basis of the method is phonics but one that integrates speaking, writing, spelling, listening and reading comprehension.

The Spalding method is holistic, applicable for readers of any age, and a method that can be applied to any reading material, story or text. It does not require the traditional basal reader approach with its reliance on the look-say method. . The Spalding Method can be used to teach young people to read everything from stories written at elementary levels to adaptations of Shakespeare. Children begin early to apply skills to quality literature. The goal of the method is to develop skilled readers, good listeners and speakers and writers who want to continue to learn, grow and develop their abilities. In short it is the system that parents talk about when they express the best and highest goals for their children.

John Winston, a former educator in Natchitoches, Louisiana introduced the Spalding method to a local elementary school in crisis. The school is largely African-American and serves many disadvantaged children. There were problems with discipline, and children were not learning. Spalding was applied at Parks Elementary, and teachers watched the children's achievement and reading scores dramatically improve.

Winston had known that the reading program previously used was inadequate. After reading a report entitled "Becoming a Nation of Readers", he recognized the potential of the Spalding method for working with the children at Parks. He made a proposal to the Superintendent of Schools for a pilot study using Spalding for teaching reading for the first three grades at Parks, where he was Principal at the time. The new program was instituted in 1993. Children were given pre and post tests before it began. By 1996 the children of Parks Elementary had the highest reading scores in Natchitoches Parish, including the lab school. Discipline problems disappeared. There were oral reading contests where children got dressed up to perform for proud parents. It was an exciting time for the school, given the struggles it had.

Given its track record of success with diverse populations as demonstrated by the success of Parks Elementary in Natchitoches, the Spalding method may be worth a second look for teaching children in inner city schools. There are teachers trained in the method who could provide support and guidance in helping implement reading programs based upon this method. Perhaps this method for teaching reading could be re-examined as the tool for teaching reading so that all children become the proficient learners, and no child will be left behind.

Spalding Education International

In 1986, Romalda B. Spalding established the Spalding Education Foundation (SEF) (now Spalding Education International) as a resource for Spalding materials, to perpetuate her *Method* of teaching language arts, and to maintain the principles and procedures which have made *The Spalding Method* so effective.

Spalding Education International (SEI) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) corporation. It is the only organization authorized by Romalda B. Spalding to provide instruction in *The Spalding Method*. SEI certifies tutors, teachers and instructors in *The Spalding Method*. Spalding courses are held through contracts with schools, districts, colleges, and universities. In addition, the Spalding Professional Development Program (SPDP) provides on-site staff development for schools that have adopted *The Spalding Method* as their total language arts program. Schools may also apply for SEI Accreditation signifying that they qualify as Spalding instructional models.

SEI also provides instructional materials and publishes a quarterly newsletter which provides instructional tips and reports on current research and SEI events. Spalding Education International is accredited by the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council for its literacy instructional programs for teachers and Spalding teacher trainers.