

SMILE: Structured Methods in Language Education



Introduction to SMILE

SMILE is a step-by-step multisensory program that teaches spoken language, reading and writing in an integrated way to individuals who are struggling with the most severe language learning and literacy problems. It is based on the Association Method that assumes you learn best when various forms of verbal, visual and motor attributes behaviors are combined. *SMILE* can serve as the primary speech-language and literacy approach in the classroom, or can be encompassed within other components of the curriculum.

***SMILE* emphasizes:**

- Attention getting
- Phonemic awareness
- Sound-letter knowledge
- Auditory and visual discrimination
- Sound and letter sequencing
- Word recognition
- Word building by syllable
- Development of picture-word association
- Transition into short sentences
- Development of concept stories using speech, reading and writing.

SMILE can be an important part of the literacy development program for pupils because it is possible to employ any print modification; books and exercises are adapted to the visual as well as auditory needs of pupils. The importance of sensory organization skills in general, which this program emphasizes, cannot be overlooked in the development of improved auditory and visual function which in turn can help lead to improved speech and reading skills.

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SMILE has been used successfully with a wide variety of students with special needs including those with autism, traumatic brain disorder, intellectual deficits, hearing and vision disorders and other problems. SMILE teaches habits of attention and imitation going from the most basic attending skills to the use of language in a descriptive and conversational manner. SMILE can serve as the major speech-language and literacy approach in the classroom with its various components encompassed within the ongoing curriculum. It works well alongside Auditory-Verbal, ABA and other approaches. SMILE can be readily learned by speech-language pathologists and regular and special education teachers. A team approach, including all staff working with the pupil, is best.

Scope of SMILE

SMILE is divided into 5 Language MODULES each building upon the other: As soon as pupils achieve one step they immediately go on to the next. An important part of the routine for each module is the production of personalized reading books and workbooks that are started only after a skill is learned and only contain material familiar to individual pupils. These are adapted to meet the visual capability of the pupil.

LANGUAGE MODULE 1

Begins with attention-getting activities. Auditory and visual attending and tracking skills are addressed. It continues with teaching of an initial 10 phonemes and graphemes, including steps that require visual as well as auditory discrimination and memory. Consonant—vowel combinations are introduced in a format called drop drills.

LANGUAGE MODULE 2

Teaches 60 nouns by a process called cross drills. A cross drill is a series of 3 consonant—vowel combinations in three or four rows that teaches speaking, reading and writing of sound combinations that will be the foundation for many words. Cross drills lead to words which are reinforced by saying, reading and writing as well as associating them with objects and pictures. Secondary spellings and additional phonemes are taught as needed.

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LANGUAGE MODULE 4

Teaches simple sentences followed by the appropriate question to elicit the sentence. Language forms including possessives, prepositions, and past tense are also taught.

LANGUAGE MODULE 5

Develops description stories about animals, inanimate objects, people and experiences. Each story includes questions and answers. The stories start out very simply, and gradually become longer and more complex.

Materials

In addition to its systematic teaching process described in the Manual, the SMILE Kit includes 5 supplementary Teacher's Guides, one for each module, that contain forms, worksheets and activities. These can be reproduced to make an individualized workbook for each pupil. The materials also include sound, word and picture cards and a CD that prints out pupil workbooks. In short, SMILE offers a complete package, making it easy for practitioners to implement the teaching of speech, reading and writing.

SMILE Plus, including a three CD Set including Support Materials, Basal Readers and the Farm Family Reading series, Discrimination Activities and "My Book of Tools" is also available.

Conclusion

Intelligible speech and literacy can be a goal for any pupil. With a structured teaching method such as SMILE, incorporating appropriate modifications, almost all pupils whether they have a severe language-learning disorder, hearing impairment, and or other significant handicaps, should achieve success. It is suggested that the teacher attend a workshop, or study the manual, so they feel comfortable with the program.

SMILE is published by the *Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing* (Contact telephone: 1.866.337.5220). For additional information contact Dr. Enid Wolf-Schein at scheinej@aol.com