



Literacy Links

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Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First

Previous issues of Literacy Links have spotlighted each of the five essential elements of reading. This is the second in a series of issues that will take a deeper look at each of these elements.

Spotlight on...

Phonics at the K-2 Grade Span

The October, 2005, edition of Literacy Links (<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/newsletters/1005newsletter.htm>) provided an introduction to phonics instruction and its relationship to the four other essential elements. This issue revisits phonics in respect to explicit, systematic instruction at the K-2 grade span. The February 2008 issue of Literacy Links will examine phonics instruction at the grade 3-5 span.

What is phonics?

Phonics is one of the five essential elements of reading and writing. It is defined by Vaughn and Linan-Thompson (2004) as "the systematic process of teaching sound-symbol relationships to decode words". According to Beck (2006), phonics is the relationship between speech and print, and is also used as an umbrella term for various instructional strategies that are used to teach the relationships between print and speech. English is based on the alphabetic principle that:

1. written words are composed of letters, and those letters correspond to segments of spoken words; and
2. a letter (grapheme) is associated with a unit of speech (phoneme).

As Moore (2003) states, "Phonics is not so simple." There are a lot of different and conflicting sound-symbol relationships to learn. Students must learn letter-sound correspondences, as well as the exceptions to the rules and sight vocabulary, to sound out words to read connected text.

A hierarchy of skills appears to exist within basic letter-sound correspondence instruction. In most sequences, the consonants and short vowels are presented before long vowels and vowel digraphs are introduced." (Beck, 2006). As suggested by Blevins (1998), a typical instructional sequence for phonics might be:

- initial consonants (m, n, t, s, p)
- short vowels and consonants in combination (-at, -in, -ot)
- blends (bl, dr, st)
- digraphs (ch, sh, th, wh, ph)
- final e (a_e, e_e, i_e, o_e, u_e)
- long vowels (-eat, -oak) and r-controlled vowels (-ar, -ir)
- variant vowels (oo, ew, au, aw) and diphthongs (ou, ow, oi, oy)
- silent letters and inflectional endings (kn, wr, -ed, -es)



"To read is to empower
To empower is to write
To write is to influence
To influence is to change
To change is to live."

Jane Evershed



Upcoming Events

April 2, 2008~
Fluency Assessment and Instruction Workshop with Marcia Davidson.
Sponsored by Maine Reading First and MDOE. More details to follow in upcoming Literacy Links editions.

Save the dates:

Early Language & Literacy on the Horizon Conference, March 7 & 8, 2008 at the Augusta Civic Center.
Contact asulliva@usm.maine.edu for more information.

Why is phonics instruction critical to reading and writing?

Phonics instruction helps children learn the relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language. It leads to an understanding of the alphabetic principle—the systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken words. Researchers (Stanovich, 1986; Liberman, 1990; Juel, 1991; Ehri, 1991; and NRP, 2000) report:

- Letter-sound knowledge is a prerequisite to effective word identification. A primary difference between good and poor readers is the ability to use letter-sound correspondences to identify words.
- Students who acquire and apply the alphabetic principle early in their reading careers reap long-term benefits.
- During the alphabetic phase, readers must have lots of practice phonologically recoding the same words to become familiar with spelling patterns.
- Good readers must have a strategy to phonologically recode words.
- Teaching students to phonologically recode words is a difficult and demanding, yet achievable goal with long-lasting effects.
- Awareness of the relationship between sounds and the alphabet can be taught.

Because our language is alphabetic, **decoding is an essential and primary means of recognizing words.** There are simply too many words in the English language to rely on memorization as a primary word identification strategy (Bay Area Reading Task Force, 1996).

When and how should phonics be taught?

Systematic and explicit phonics instruction significantly improves children's word recognition, spelling and reading comprehension. It is most effective when it begins in Kindergarten or first grade. (Put Reading First, 2001). Recognizing that students' levels of learning differ and that phonics skill development follows a hierarchy, using assessments to group students for phonics instruction is essential. Curriculum maps from the University of Oregon at <http://reading.uoregon.edu/pa/index.php> provide instructional guidance through grade three for the alphabetic principle and spelling. In **Phonics from A to Z** (1998), Blevins lists "Phonics Lesson Dos":

- Use a logical sequence.
- Be explicit in your introduction of sound-spelling relationships.
- Provide frequent daily lessons.
- Keep the lessons relatively brief and fast-paced.
- Keep the lessons focused.
- Begin lessons with what children know.
- Create a classroom environment in which children become active word watchers.
- Provide a built-in review.
- Adjust the pace and scope of learning according to children's needs.
- Regroup children according to children's needs.
- Link phonics instruction to spelling.
- Make learning public by creating word walls, making letter charts and sharing student writing.
- Provide reflective instruction (see instructional idea later in this issue).

Phonics and word work instruction should continue through the grade spans as needed in order for a child to become an efficient adult reader.

August 5,6,7, 2008~
Annual Seamless Transitions Conference: Celebrating Literacy and the Arts, for Pre K-Grades 12. University of Maine, Orono. Organizers of this conference are excited to announce J. Patrick Lewis, children's poet extraordinaire a keynote. Contact Amy Cates at 581-2438 for more information.

Summer 2008~
Maine Reading First Summer Institute, August 20 & 21, 2008.
Look for a visit from Debbie Diller. More details concerning this session will follow in upcoming *Literacy Links* editions.

Again, keep in mind that **phonics is one of five essential elements within a balanced literacy program**. Explicit and systematic teaching of phonics skills includes integrating the use of these skills in the context of reading and writing. Effective phonics programs provide ample opportunities for children to apply what they are learning about letters and sounds to both reading and writing of words, sentences, stories and other authentic texts.

Description of Instructional Ideas...

Here are several instructional ideas and resources for phonics instruction to check out.

Reflective Instruction: "Talk -To -Yourself Chart"

To teach students to reflect on their learning, make and use a "Talk-to-yourself Chart" (Gaskins, et al., 1997) to engage them in thinking about words on the **Word Wall**. Here is a completed chart for the word *high*.

- 1) The word is high.
- 2) Stretch the word. I hear 2 sounds.
- 3) I see 4 letters because igh stands for one sound.
- 4) The spelling pattern is igh.
- 5) This is what I know about the vowel: It is the long-I sound---/i/.
- 6) Another word on the **Word Wall** with the same vowel sound is light.

Critical Phonics Skills and Ideas for Selecting Materials to Teach Phonics

The following link from Oregon's Big Ideas site includes guidance for teaching and learning critical phonics skills. This site includes video clips of teachers demonstrating phonics lessons:

Teaching the Alphabetic Principle: Critical Alphabetic Principles Skills (http://reading.uoregon.edu/au/au_skills.php)

1. Letter-Sound Correspondences
2. Sounding Out Words
3. Reading Connected Text

Additionally, the University of Oregon's website, *Big Ideas in Reading*: http://reading.uoregon.edu/pa/pa_teach.php, provides the following guidance for selecting materials to teach phonics based on the work of Carnine, Silbert, and Kame'enui, 1998:

September 27, 2008 ~ 2nd Annual Nonfiction Institute, Featuring Susan Kirch, science education scholar and associate professor at NYU. Sponsored by the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development— Literacy Unit; Contact Amy Cates at 581-2438 for registration information



Letter-Sound materials should:

- Provide an acceptable sequence for introducing letters, such as:

a m t s l f d r o g l h u c b n k v e w j p y

T L M F D I N A R H G B x q z J E Q

- Separate auditorily and/or visually similar letters (e.g., e/i, d/b).
- Introduce some continuous sounds early (e.g., /m/, /s/).
- Teach the sounds of letters that can be used to build many words (e.g., m, s, a, t).
- Introduce lower case letters first unless upper case letters are similar in configuration (e.g., Similar: S, s, U, u, W, w; Dissimilar: R, r, T, t, F, f).

Summary of Professional Literacy Texts...

There are many resources now available that provide activities which correlate with the hierarchy of phonics development. The following list of professional texts provide a variety of tools for teaching phonics:

Phonics from A to Z: A practical Guide (Grades K-3), (1998) by Wiley Blevins is available from Scholastic. The ISBN is 0-590-31510-2. This text was highlighted in the October 2005 issue of *Literacy Links*.

Making and Writing Words (Grades K-1) (2005, reprint 2007) ISBN: 1-425-9401-2
Making and Writing Words (Grades 2-3), (2006, reprint 2007) ISBN 1-4258-0402-0 by Timothy Rasinski and Roger Heym is available from Shell Education. Each text has 40/41 sequenced word building lessons with reproducibles & transparencies.

Making Sense of Phonics: The Hows and Whys (2006) by Isabel L. Beck is available from Guilford Press. The ISBN is 1-59385-257-6. This text was highlighted in the February 2006 issue of the *Literacy Links*.

Sound Systems:Explicit, Systematic Phonics in Early Literacy Contexts(2003), by Anna Lyons and Paula Moore is available from Stenhouse. The ISBN is 1-57110-346-5. This text includes "key concepts to teach a different grade levels.

Children's Literature Title...

Beetle Bop

Written and illustrated by Denise Fleming

Caldecott Honor and ALA Notable Children's book winning author, Denise Fleming's favorite beetles are lightning bugs. The illustrations and rhyming text in her new picture book, **Beetle Bop**, reveal the great variety of beetles and their swirling, humming, crashing activities. Librarian, Mary Beth Varvey, suggests this text for integrating phonics instruction because: "The *ee*

“Good children’s literature appeals not only to the child in the adult, but to the adult in the child.”

Anonymous

family is highlighted, and there are also great rhymes and a few pages featuring the *-ing* ending and the *-ed* ending.” It is fiction, but at the end there is a short factual segment about beetles. This book could be coupled with other related nonfiction about beetles. The colorful spreads were created by pouring colored cotton fiber through hand-cut stencils.

This picture book would compliment a variety of literacy text sets as well as integrating phonics skills into related science or art content areas.

Beetle Bop was published in 2007 by Harcourt Books and the ISBN is 978-0-15-205936-1. For more about Denise Fleming’s work visit www.denisefleming.com.

News from Maine Reading First...

Maine Reading First is sponsoring a workshop entitled **Fluency Assessment and Instruction** featuring Marcia Davidson on April 2, 2008. Marcia Davidson is a professor from the University of Maine, and a nationally recognized authority on fluency instruction and assessment practices. If you would like more information about this session please contact: Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov.

Check it out...

<http://reading.uoregon.edu/au/>

The University of Oregon’s Big Ideas in Reading website is useful for information about phonics instruction and assessment. In addition to a clear description of the research that supports phonics, this site includes specific information about the critical features of phonics instruction and assessment, including a sequence of instruction, appropriate benchmarks for kindergarten through grade three students, and guidance for selecting instructional materials and programs.

Curriculum maps from this site give clear guidance to follow when considering the hierarchy of skills and determining benchmarks. The numbers in the top row of the curriculum map correspond to the months of the school year. For example, if your school year begins in September, then September would be month 1 on the map. If your school year begins in August, then August would be month 1.



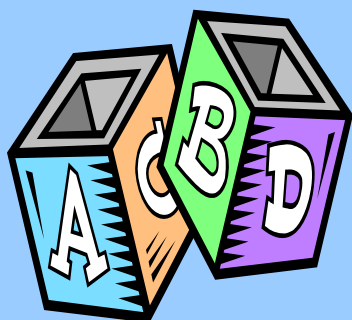
Mapping of Instruction to Achieve Instructional Priorities Kindergarten

Instructional Priority: Alphabetic Principle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Focus 1: Letter-Sound Correspondence									
1a: Identifies letter matched to a sound	X	X	X	X	X	X			
* 1b: Says the most common sound associated with individual letters			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus 2: Decoding (Sounding Out Words)									
* 2a: Blends letter sounds in 1-syllable words									20 ^a
Focus 3: Sight-Word Reading									
3a: Recognizes some words by sight						X	X	X	X

* High priority skill
a. Sounds per minute

“Before children can make any sense of the alphabetic principle, they must understand that those sounds that are paired with the letters are one and the same as the sounds of speech.”

---- Adams, Foorman, Lundberg and Beeler. 1998



Mapping of Instruction to Achieve Instructional Priorities First Grade

Instructional Priority: Alphabetic Principle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Focus 1: Letter & Letter Combinations									
1a: Produces L-S correspondences (1/sec)	X	X	X						
1b: Produces sounds to common letter combinations			X	X	X	X			
Focus 2: Decoding (Sounding Out)									
2a: Decodes words with consonant blends		X	X	X					
2b: Decodes words with letter combinations			X	X	X	X	X		
2c: Reads regular 1-syllable words fluently						X	X	X	X
2d: Reads words with common word parts				X	X	X	X		
Focus 3: Sight-Word Reading									
3a: Reads common sight words automatically	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus 4: Reading Connected Text									
4a: Read accurately (1 error in 20 words)				X	X	X	X	X	X
4b: Reads fluently (1 word per 2-3 sec mid year; 1 word per sec end of year)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	40-60
4c: Phrasing attending to ending punctuation						X	X	X	X
4d: Reads and rereads to increase familiarity						X	X	X	X
4e: Rereads and self-corrects while reading		X	X	X	X				

* High priority skill

Mapping of Instruction to Achieve Instructional Priorities Second Grade

Instructional Priority: Alphabetic Principle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Focus 1: Letter-Sound Knowledge									
* 1a: Produces diphthongs and digraphs	X	X							
Focus 2: Decoding and Word Recognition									
* 2a: Uses advanced phonic elements to recognize words	X	X	X	X					
2b: Reads compound words, contractions, possessives, inflectional endings			X	X	X	X			
* 2c: Reads multisyllabic words					X	X	X		
Focus 3: Sight-Word Reading									
* 3a: Reads more sight words accurately	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus 4: Reading Connected Text									
* 4a: Reads 90-100 wpm	40-60	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	90-100
4b: Reads with phrasing and expression			X	X	X				
4c: Listens to fluent oral reading and practices increasing oral reading fluency	10 ^a	10	10	15	15	20	20	20	20
4d: Reads and rereads to increase familiarity	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4e: Self-corrects word recognition errors	X	X							

* High priority skill

a. Minutes of practice per day



"Reading is a fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends."
 Louisa Moats, Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science, 1999



There are several earlier editions of *Literacy Links* available on the Maine Reading First website at <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

Edition	Spotlight Topic
March, 2005	Maine Reading First
April, 2005	Maine Reading First Course
May, 2005	Reading Fluency
June, 2005	Vocabulary
September, 2005	Phonemic Awareness
October, 2005	Phonics
November, 2005	Comprehension
December, 2005/January, 2006	DIBELS
February, 2006	Literacy Centers
March, 2006	Interactive Read Aloud
April, 2006	Nonfiction
May, 2006	Word Walls
June, 2006	Classroom Design
September, 2006	Shared Reading
October, 2006	Automaticity
November, 2006	Using Assessment to Guide Instruction
December, 2006	Deepening Comprehension
January, 2007	Selecting Quality Children's Books (part 1)
February, 2007	Selecting Quality Children's Books (part 2)
March, 2007	Making Instruction Explicit
April, 2007	Motivation and Engagement
May-June 2007	Grouping for Instruction
September 2007	Making Instruction Systematic
October, 2007	Pacing Instruction
November, 2007	Managed Independent Practice
December, 2007	A Deeper Look at Phonemic Awareness



For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email leann.larson@maine.gov

Click here to view the Maine Reading First website
<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

The professional development opportunities and materials are listed in *Literacy Links* for informational purposes only and are not necessarily endorsed by the Maine Department of Education's Maine Reading First Initiative.

