



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. The last issue looked at Phonics K-2; this issue will take a deeper look at Phonics grades 3-5.

Spotlight on...

Phonics and Word Work Grades 3-5

The October, 2005, edition of Literacy Links gave an in depth definition of phonics and where it fits in the relation to the other four essential elements of reading (<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/newsletters/1005newsletter.htm>). In this issue we will revisit phonics in respect to explicit, systematic instruction in grades 3-5 in order to achieve independence in learning.

What should be the focus of phonics and word work in grades 3-5?

In the primary grades (K-2), children learn how letters and simple letter patterns correspond to spoken sounds. In grades 3-5, the focus of phonics and word study shifts to advanced phonics skills, such as complex vowel patterns and multi-syllabic decoding strategies. It also includes the study of structural analysis (prefixes, suffixes, and roots) and building reading fluency. Not only are students applying their knowledge of common spelling patterns or "chunks" to decoding and spelling, but they are also building greater knowledge of word meanings and how those meanings are impacted by their spellings or word parts (Blevins, 2001).

Why is phonics and word work in grades 3-5 important?

Children in grade 3-5 need a solid understanding of letter-sound patterns in order to decode and spell words automatically, and to determine word meanings. For most children, the ability to recognize words rapidly, leads to increased fluency with written text, which in turn frees their working memory to focus on constructing meaning, or comprehending, what they are reading. If children have to invest too much energy decoding words, their reading will become labored and their comprehension will often be negatively impacted (Blevins, 2001).

What is important to know about systematic and explicit phonics instruction in grades 3 to 5?

Good readers need strong phonics skills. Phonics instruction can support the development of these skills. To be able to make use of letter-sound information, children need to be able to blend sounds together to decode words, and they need to break spoken words into sounds to write words. Decoding and encoding are the two elements of phonics:

- To **decode**, readers translate graphemes (letters) into phonemes (sounds) and then blend the phonemes to form words with recognizable meanings.
- To **encode**, readers segment words into sounds and record them as graphemes.



Upcoming Events

April 2, 2008~
Fluency Assessment and Instruction Workshop with Marcia Davidson.
Registration materials are available at:
<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/materials.html>

Save the dates:

Maine Reading First Summer Institute ~ August 20 (Portland) and August 21 (Bangor). The featured speaker will be Debbie Diller. More details concerning this session can be found in the Check It Out section of this edition of *Literacy Links* and will follow in upcoming *Literacy Links* editions.

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

The goal for developing proficient readers is for them to recognize most words by sight. Words become **sight words** when the reader has formed a strong connection between the sequence of letters in the word's spelling (graphophonic representation), the word's pronunciation (phonological impression), and the word's meaning (oral vocabulary).

The National Reading Panel (2000) reported the following implications for reading instruction:

- Systematic, explicit phonics instruction is more effective than non-systematic or no phonics instruction.
- Systematic, explicit phonics instruction
 - **significantly improves** children's reading comprehension,
 - is beneficial **regardless** of the socioeconomic status of students,
 - is **particularly** beneficial for children who are having difficulty learning to read.

In systematic phonics instruction, the teacher utilizes a carefully selected sequence of letter-sound relationships rather than teaching letter-sound relationships randomly as students encounter them in stories and books. Systematic instruction also includes ample reading and writing opportunities to practice using the letter-sound relationships that students are learning.

In explicit phonics instruction, the teacher clearly explains that certain letters or letter combinations represent certain sounds and how to use this knowledge in reading and spelling. The teacher explains and models phonics concepts, gives guided practice and feedback, and plans extended practice based on individual needs.

"Phonics instruction helps students understand the "code", or relationship between letters and sounds, and strengthens their ability to use that knowledge to "decode" and read words. Phonics instruction is crucial for helping students recognize familiar words automatically, as well as for decoding words they have never seen before" (SEDL,2006). Many letter-sound relationships are predictable, but not completely consistent in the English language. However, they are predictable enough to be very useful to children who are learning to decode unfamiliar words. In When Kids Can't Read (2003), Kylene Beers provides an extensive list of "Common Phonics Generalizations" (Appendix H) with examples and exceptions. This list is useful for analyzing student assessments to align phonics instruction.

In addition to phonics generalizations, Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton and Johnston (1996) and Ganske (2000) provide a hierarchy of sounds for phonics and spelling by stage:

Letter Name Stage (grades K-1)	Initial and final consonants Initial consonant Blends and digraphs Short vowels Affricates Final consonant blends and digraphs
Within Word Stage (grades 1-3)	Long vowels (VCe) R-controlled vowels Other common long vowels Complex consonants Abstract Vowels
Syllable Juncture Stage (grades 3-5)	Doubling & e-drop with ed & ing Other syllable juncture doubling Long vowel patterns(stressed syllable) R-controlled vowels (stressed syllable) Unstressed syllable vowel patterns
Derivational Constancy Stage (grades 6-8/adults)	Silent and sounded consonants Consonant changes

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.

September 27,2008 ~ 2nd Annual Nonfiction Institute,
Featuring Susan Kirch, science education scholar and associate professor at NYU; And 2007 Orbis Pictus award-winning author Sy Montgomery Sponsored by the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development—Literacy Unit; Contact Amy Cates at 581-2438 for registration information

Vowel changes
Latin-derived suffixes
Assimilated prefixes

Most students in grades 3-5 should have opportunities to continue practicing phonics concepts at the Within Word stage, and should be learning to apply phonics concepts at the Syllable Juncture Stage. Assessments and routines for explicit, systematic word work instruction in grades 3 to 5 are found in several sources: **Word Journeys** (Ganske, 2003), **Words their Way** (Bear, et. al., 1996), and **Inside Words** (Allen, 2008).

What should be done for students who haven't consistently received explicit and systematic phonics instruction or for students who have received good instruction but still don't "get it"?

In reference to phonics in third grade, the Reading First Notebook (SEDL, 2006) reports, "To comprehend written material, children need to be able to identify the words in text used to convey meaning, and they must be able to construct meaning once they have identified the individual words in print" (Torgesen, 2000, p. 56). Although there may be a variety of causes, if students in grades 3 have not yet mastered basic phonics, their teachers must take immediate action to ensure that those students have the skills comprehend proficiently so they will be prepared to meet increased reading demands."

This action can be extended to all students in grades 3-5, especially struggling readers. SEDL (2006) goes on to outline a three step process for teachers to follow designed to address the needs of students with gaps in phonics this process should also extend to advanced phonics instruction:

Three steps teachers can take in order to address deficits in basic phonics

- First, the teacher should establish what type of decoding problem the student has.
- Once it has been determined that a student has difficulty with phonics, he or she should be given a diagnostic assessment to determine which phonics skills are lacking. The assessment may take many forms; it can be a commercially available assessment or the assessment included in the school's core or supplemental reading program. Teachers will get a good understanding of where to begin instruction once this diagnosis has been completed.
- This instruction should occur during supplemental or intervention instructional time. Customized instruction, usually provided in a very small group, provides the specialized instruction, focused attention, and immediate teacher feedback that these struggling students need. Instruction should be explicit and systematic to ensure that instruction can begin where assessment indicates it is necessary and no gaps will result. Isolated phonics instruction should be practiced, reinforced, and immediately applied to the reading of a connected text. This can be accomplished through the use of decodable texts that contain the specific types of words the student needs to practice. Then extended to more appropriately leveled text application. Learning should be monitored frequently to determine if this concentrated instruction is benefiting the student.

In summary, it is critical for teachers to be able to select, optimally integrate, and implement **a systematic phonics program within a complete and balanced reading program**. The research demonstrates that phonics instruction is important. Assessment that can guide instruction ensures that students' needs are met. Phonics should be integrated into a comprehensive reading program. Strong phonics skills are essential to reading fluency so that children can decode effortlessly and focus on comprehension. Students learn sounds and letters best when teachers use explicit and systematic instruction involving teacher modeling and extensive practice before independent application.

Description of Instructional Ideas....

Blending Routines for struggling readers

Struggling readers who continue to confuse short vowel sounds when reading and writing may benefit from being taught the following blending routine:

Vowel First Blending

Procedure	Example: sat
1. Display or write the letter that stands for the vowel sound in the word. Point to the letter as you say the sound.	Display a and say /a/. a
2. Have students say the sound as you point to the letter and say the sound again. Explain that when you come to this letter as you blend the word, you will remember to say that sound.	Students say short /a/ as you point to the letter a. Say: When you come to this letter in the word, we will say (short) /a/. a
3. Display the letter for the first sound in the word/syllable and say the sound. Then have the students say it with you.	Display s and a. Point to s and say /a/. Have students say /s/ with you. s a
4. Model blending the word through the vowel, pointing to the letters in a sweeping motion as you say the sounds. Then have student repeat this with you.	Model blending sa, saying sssaaa. Repeat, having students blend sa with you. Sa
5. Display the letter for the final sound and say the sound. Then have the students say it with you.	Add t to display sat. Point to t and say /t/. Then have students say /t/with you. Sa t
6. Model blending the whole word/syllable left to right, pointing to the letters in a sweeping motion as you blend the sounds. Have the students blend the word with you and then silently in their heads. Have the students say the whole word and use it in a sentence.	Model blending sat, saying sssaaat. Repeat, having students blend sat with you. Students blend sat silently in their heads, then say the whole word. Have a volunteer use sat in a sentence.

[HMCO 2006]

There are two additional **Syllable Division Routines** that struggling readers should learn as word analysis strategies when reading and writing. In these routines, students learn to apply a syllable division strategy to multi-syllabic words they encounter in text when reading and can extend this process to spelling when writing.

- 1) **Using the VCCV Pattern:** In this routine,
 - Students learn to identify vowels within VCCV syllable patterns and determine where to divide words when decoding. They also determine when a syllable is open or closed in order to read each syllable with the correct short or long vowel sound.
 - Then, students are taught to cover the syllables to blend the entire word. Students cover the second syllable and blend the first syllable, then cover the first syllable and blend the second syllable



“They (schools) can help to uncover parts of the world that children would not otherwise know how to tackle.”

---Eleanor Duckworth



“Reading is to the mind
what exercise is to the
body.”

Richard Steele

- Finally, they blend all syllables to read the word.
- This same process can be used in reverse to encode in writing.

2) **Using the VCV Pattern:** In this routine,

- Students learn to identify vowels within VCV syllable patterns and determine where to divide a word,
- Students are taught to blend the word syllable by syllable beginning with the first syllable in the word.
- If the word does not make sense, have the student divide the word before or after the consonant and repeat the blending process.
- If the word makes sense -read the word.

These routines are described in the “*Teacher Resource Blackline Masters*” found in Houghton-Mifflin Reading 2006.

Word Way [Morpheme Structures]

Word Way is an activity found in the Florida Center for Reading Research’s (fcrr) student center activities for grades 4-5 under *Advanced Phonics*. The objective is for students to identify affixes, roots, base words, syllables, and variant correspondences in words. This activity would be appropriate after direct instruction that included the morpheme structures listed above. Once the routine of the task has been learned it could be used systematically by students as they problem-solve new words in connected text. In this way it integrates advanced phonics skills into application and independent practice.

TASK: STUDENTS DECODE UNFAMILIAR WORDS BY ANALYZING THEIR PARTS

- 1) Provide the student with a copy of the text, highlighter and dictionary.
- 2) Student starts to read text.
- 3) If unable to read a word, highlights the word, and writes on paper.
- 4) Uses pencil to underline any prefix or suffix.
- 5) Identifies the vowel sounds and puts slash marks in between the syllables.
- 6) Attempts to pronounce the word. Reads the word again faster.
- 7) Rereads the sentence with the word. If the word makes sense continues reading. If the word does not make sense, pronounce word a different way until it does make sense. Looks up word in the dictionary if necessary.
- 8) Continues until the text is read.
- 9) Teacher evaluation

A detailed description of this activity with variations is found at the Florida Center for Reading Research website. www.fcrr.org/Curriculum/StudentCenterActivities45.htm.

Summary of Professional Literacy Texts...

When Kids Can't Read, What Teachers can Do:

A guide for Teachers 6-12

By Kylene Beers (2003) is available from Heinemann the ISBN is 0-86709-519-9. This text provides teachers with instructional strategies and skills for gaps in phonics learning for upper level students. Chapters 11-12 focus on words and spelling and appendixes G to N list concrete information teachers and students need to solve words.

Teaching Phonics & Word Study in the Intermediate Grades



*Reading is the transfer
of meaning from one
mind to another
through the medium of
written language*

---Anonymous



By Wiley Blevins (2001) is available from Scholastic the ISBN is 0-439-16352-8. This text is a clear and concise "how-to" book for teachers to teach phonics and study words with intermediate level students. It explains what, why, and how intermediate students should learn phonics.

Word Journeys: Assessment-Guided Phonics, Spelling, and Vocabulary Instruction

By Cathy Ganske (2000) is available from Guilford Press the ISBN is 1-57230-559-2. This book provides teachers with a detailed easy to administer whole class assessment for the hierarchy of spelling/phonics development (noted above). It goes on to provide teaching activities for each stage of spelling development matching phonics skills learning based on the student assessment.

Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction (4th Edition)

By Donald R. Bear , Marcia Invernizzi , Shane R. Templeton, Francine Johnston (2008) is available from Prentice Hall the ISBN is ISBN-10: 013223968X. This new edition includes a DVD tutorial that walks users through every step of the *Words Their Way* approach, from assessment to classroom organization to developmentally-driven, hands on instruction.

Inside Words: Tools for Teaching Academic Vocabulary Grades 4-12

By Janet Allen (2007) is available from Stenhouse Publishers the ISBN is 978-1-57110-399-4 (alk. Paper). This text builds on Janet's previous books, Words, Words, Words and Tools for Teaching Content Literacy, to provide a resource for teaching vocabulary, not only in language arts, but in all content areas. It is an excellent companion "how-to" text for teaching vocabulary in conjunction with word work. The content meaning activities provided would enhance word solving skills for all learners.

Children's Literature Title...

Waiting for the Evening Star

Written by Rosemary Wells and illustrated by Susan Jeffers

In 1993, well-known author Rosemary Wells and noted illustrator Susan Jeffers teamed again to provide a heart touching story of the contrast of two brother's desire and aspirations due to their age and the timeliness of their lives in rural Vermont. Wells' departure from her highly marketed Max and Ruby books coupled with Jeffers' full color art provides captivating fiction for upper level students.

Although not a new publication, this text would be an excellent addition for mature listeners and readers in text set topics of: Farm Life, Vermont, Brothers, and World War I. Waiting for the Evening Star was published in 1993 by Dial Books for Young readers and the ISBN is 0-8037-1398-3.

News from Maine Reading First...

Maine Reading First is pleased to announce that the 2008 Maine Reading First Summer Institute will be held on August 20 in the Portland area and on August 21 in the Bangor area. The featured speaker will be Debbie Diller, author of Making the Most of Small Groups: Differentiation for All, Literacy Work Stations: Making Centers Work, and Practice with Purpose: Literacy Work Stations for Grades 3-6. Debbie will be focusing on small group reading instruction practices and literacy center design to promote student learning. Registration information will be included in future issues of *Literacy Links*. If you would like more information about this session please contact: Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov.

Check it out...

On-line resources for word study...

www.edhelper.com

This easy to navigate website offers Literature Units from grades Kindergarten through High School centered on trade books. A key element included beyond extended activities and quizzes are teacher friendly tools for creating word walls and word work activities for each title.

www.readwritethink.org

The IRA/NCTE website gives literacy teachers multiple supports including Lessons at all grade levels K-12. Lessons are organized under Grade Band, Literacy Strand, and Literacy Engagement. This easy to follow set-up helps you narrow searches to specific activities for phonics, spelling and word work at all levels.

www.sedl.org

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) through their Reading First Supports publications provide teachers specialized information in **The Reading First Notebook**. Themed issues contain pertinent articles and information that refine teachers thinking of a wide variety of literacy topics often focusing the five essential elements, details of literacy teaching and resources for student learning. This newsletter can be downloaded at: <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/read100.html>.

www.fcrr.org

In the February and September 2006 editions of *Literacy Links*, the "Check it out..." section described the K-3 Student Center Activities developed by The **Florida Center for Reading Research**. It is exciting to report that The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) have completed the Student Center Activities for Fourth and Fifth Grades. The activities for grades 2-3 and 4-5 are categorized by the 5 essential elements (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). This resource has many appropriate activities for advanced phonics and word work. A Teacher Resource Guide is also available and includes ideas about implementing and managing student centers within the classroom. All of these materials are available for download at <http://www.fcrr.org>. Again, please be aware these downloadable files are extremely large.

<http://reading.uoregon.edu/pa/index.php>

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



"If we want children to learn to read well, we must find a way to induce them to read lots. If we want to induce children to read lots, we must teach them to read well."

Marilyn Jager Adams

through grade three students, and guidance for selecting instructional materials and programs.

Curriculum maps from this site give a 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 one.

Sequencing Alphabetic Principle skills:

**Mapping of Instruction to Achieve Instructional Priorities
Third Grade**



Instructional Priority: Alphabetic Principle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Focus 1: Decoding and Word Recognition									
* 1a: Produces common word parts	X	X							
* 1b: Reads regular multisyllabic words		X	X	X	X				
1c: Reads compound words, contractions, possessives, inflectional endings		X	X	X	X	X			
1d: Uses word meaning and order in the sentence to confirm decoding efforts		X	X	X					
1e: Uses word structure knowledge to recognize multisyllabic words		X	X	X					
Focus 2: Sight-Word Reading									
2a: Increases sight words read fluently	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus 3: Reading Connected Text									
* 3a: Reads 120 wpm	90	94	98	102	106	110	112	116	120
3b: Reads with phrasing, expression, and inflection	X	X	X						
* 3c: Increases independent reading	5	10	10	15	15	20	20	25	30 minutes per day

* High priority skill

**Mapping of Instruction to Achieve Instructional Priorities
Third Grade**

Instructional Priority: Spelling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Focus 1: Word Spelling									
* 1a: Spells phonetically regular words correctly	X								
1b: Spells previously studied contractions, possessives, compound words, and words with inflectional endings		X	X	X	X	X			
1c: Organizes words in alphabetical order			X	X	X				
1d: Uses the dictionary or glossary to confirm and correct uncertain spellings					X	X	X		

* High priority skill

Newsletter Archives

There are several earlier editions of *Literacy Links* available 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
January, 2008	Phonics at the K-2 Grade Span

For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email leanne.larsen@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.

