Phonics
What Is It & Where Does Special Education Fit In?

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Introduction to Phonics

What Does The Literature Say?
• What is Phonics?
• History of Phonics in Reading
• Role in Becoming Literate

What Are The Stages To Phonics Learning?
• Stages to Phonics
• Development of Invented Spellings

Applications And Examples
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What is Phonics?

Phonics – sound (phoneme) and symbol (grapheme) correspondences (alphabetic principle); system for reading words (Hawken, p.46)
- “links the spellings of words to their pronunciations”
  (Ehri and Nunes, p.122)

Grapheme–Phoneme correspondences seen with (Ehri and Nunes, p.122):
- Consonant letters and sounds
- Short and long vowel letters and sounds
- Consonant digraphs (e.g., oi, ea, sh, th)

Phonics Instruction ≠ Phonemic Awareness Instruction
- Phonemic awareness instruction teaches focus and manipulate of phonemes (Ehri and Nunes, p.123)
  - blending sounds to form words (/t/-/o/-/d/= “toad”)
  - segmenting words into phonemes (“shock” = /ʃ/-/a/-/k/)
Some programs teach students to manipulate phonemes with letters. “This makes them more similar to phonics programs that may teach children to sound out and blend letters to decode words or to segment words into phonemes to spell words” (Ehri and Nunes, p.123)
- Phonics instruction covers this, and includes instruction and application with reading words (Ehri and Nunes, p.123)

“Phonics programs teach children the alphabetic system and how to apply it to read words both in and out of text”
  (Ehri and Nunes, p.149)
History of Phonics in Reading

- Historic debate on whether reading programs should start with instruction in symbol–sound correspondences (phonics) or with whole words, or be meaning-centered taught in context (whole-language) since the 1800s
- Research suggest using systematic phonics approaches over non-systematic approaches in a balanced reading program (Ehri and Nunes, p.122)

Looking in the Past:
- John Dewey (1972) was against teaching reading early in childhood; Edward L. Thorndike had a similar view where “drills in phonics have little value in the early grades” (J. J. Walczyk et al. p.610)
- Whole-word approaches popular because of Bernice Elizabeth Leary and Arthur Irving Gates
- Rudolph Flesch published *Why Johnny Can’t Read— and What You Can Do About It* (1955) holding experts accountable with the implementation of whole-word approach early on
- Societal misconception that young children could not comprehend phonemes/alphabetic principle; view shared by Huey, Dewey and Thorndike
- “In the 1967 edition of her review, Jeanne Chall did not recommend any particular type of phonics instruction, but in the 1983 edition she suggested that synthetic phonics instruction held a slight edge over analytic phonics instruction. Chall’s basic finding has been reaffirmed in many research reviews conducted since then” (Ehri and Nunes, p.124)
- Whole-language teachers teach phonics, but only as needed for meaning making or writing (Stahl, et al p.339)
- Recent evidence reviewed by Snow and Juel (2005) and Torgesen (2005) documents the benefit and debate favoring phonics instruction over whole word methods (J. J. Walczyk et al. p.611)
Role in Becoming Literate

- Phonemes – concept that letters link to sounds; correspondences and spelling patterns
  - alphabetic knowledge

- Alphabetic knowledge needed for phonemic awareness helps with reading development. Those that can read find it easier to complete more complex phonemic-awareness tasks (de Graaff, et al., p.331)
- Learning of conventional spelling usually happens in grades 1-3 as they solidify alphabetic principles (Hawken, p.49)
- Research as shown that phonics instruction help kindergarteners and grade 1’s acquire alphabetic knowledge needed to learn how to spell (Ehri and Nunes, p.150)
- Application of phonics helps to decode new words (Mesmer & Griffith, p.367)
- Phonological awareness is required to develop/learn the alphabetic principle, word recognition, and invented spelling (Stahl, et al., p. 340)
- Phoneme awareness involves sounds in spoken words. With spoken word, sounds cannot be said individually, where the “spoken word /cat/ has one continuous sound and is not pronounced ‘kuh-a-tuh’” (Stahl, et al., p. 340)
- Importance with the alphabetic principle to know that words have meaning and sound (Stahl, et al., p. 340)

“Phonics needs to be combined with other essential instructional components to create a complete and balanced reading program” (Ehri and Nunes, p.153)
Stages to Phonics

- Reading develops as alphabetic principles are consolidated (Stahl, et al., p.340)
  - Pre-alphabetic stage - use the word itself; not applying letters/sounds to reading
  - Phonetic cue reading – developing phonological awareness; focus on partial sounds in words (i.e. initial and final sounds)
  - Cipher/full alphabetic stage – full knowledge and application of alphabetic principles; start developing automatic word recognition
- Systematic phonics programs have pre-specified sets of elements taught sequentially (i.e. Simple grapheme-phoneme correspondences to onset and rimes) (de Graaff, et al., p.330)

“The phonics elements, such as consonants, vowels, digraphs, blends, and diphthongs, are taught in an orderly fashion. When simple elements are mastered, more complex elements such as syllables and affixes are introduced. Simultaneously, previously trained elements are reviewed until automaticity has been reached” (de Graaff, et al., p.319)

**Single consonants** - have one or one of two sounds (Gates and Yale, p.335)
- Examples: bib, cat, dad
- Exceptions with phonograms (i.e. cent, city, gem, magic)

*Consonants have greater letter–sound predictability and are less challenge for learners than vowels* (Gates and Yale, p.331)

**Single vowels** - have short sounds (Gates and Yale, p.335)
- Examples: cat, pet, bug
- Exceptions with phonograms (i.e. ball, edge (no sound), ruby (open-syllable u), fly (one-syllable words))
Stages to Phonics cont.

Final single vowel-consonant-e(-VCe) patterns - have long first vowels and a silent final e (Gates and Yale, p.335)
- Examples: bake, cute
- Exceptions with phonograms (i.e. ace/palace, massive)

Vowel digraphs - have one sound or one of two sounds (Gates and Yale, p.335)
- Examples: nail, soap, head, cow
- Exceptions with phonograms (i.e. diet, book)

Consonant di/trigraphs - have one or one of two sounds (Gates and Yale, p.335)
- Examples: phone, match, wreck, hang
- Exceptions with phonograms (i.e. who, whole)

*diphthongs - aw, au, ou, ow

https://taots.org/2016/11/16/reading-workshop-vowel-teams/
Development of Invented Spellings

Stahl, et al. (1998) discuss how alphabetic principle seen with invented spelling:

• Spelling with scribbles; drawing of a picture
• Start using random letters to make words when they understand that words need letters
• Prephonemic Stage
  • Start thinking about sounds in words (i.e. initial and final sounds)
  • Spelling words with a single first letter to represent initial letter sound
  • Use of correct first letter (for sound) and random letters proceeding it
  • Use consonant letters/sounds, but not often vowels
  • Letter Name Stage
• Use of vowels in spelling
• Looks similar to actual word, but is not always conventional in spelling (i.e. dragun for ‘dragon’)
• Transitional Stage
Phonics Practices

Phonics instruction has a strong impact on reading in the primary grades when introduced early; older students start to rely on other reading strategies (Ehri and Nunes p.148)

Practices seen in phonics programs (Stahl et al., pp.342-343):

Reading words in isolation
- Examine letter-sound relationships and patterns in words without text distractions
- Should not dominate instruction
- Allows for students to automatically recognize words
- Can lead to boredom with excessive word practice

Reading words in stories
- Apply phonics while allowing for comprehension of text/message
- “Children who read stories with a high percentage of words that contained letter-sound correspondences that they were taught had significantly higher word recognition than children who read texts that did not contain words that matched their phonics lessons” (p. 342)
- Many texts used not related to what is taught; stories with unrelated sentences

Writing words
- Practice writing through dictation and invented spellings
- Both used in early reading instruction
- Conventional spelling develops as students solidify letter-sound knowledge
- “Too often teachers have let children continue inventing spellings beyond the point where the practice is useful to fulfill these instructional goals. The result is that some children do not learn to spell conventionally, and the practice of invented spelling in the early grades, where it is particularly useful, has come under attack” (p. 343)
Special Education and Phonics

National Center for Education Statistics (2013) found that 89% of students with disabilities fall below proficiency in reading by grade 4 (Carlisle et al, p.87)

Research has shown that students with moderate intellectual disabilities can learn phonics

- Use of explicit instructional strategies (i.e. direct instruction, systematic prompting) (Ahlgrim-Delzell et al, p.87, 94)
- Use of computer assisted instruction (Ahlgrim-Delzell et al, p.87)
- Takes about 3 years of instruction for 1 year of ‘typical’ literacy/reading development; at least 2 years to master phonemes (Ahlgrim-Delzell et al, p.95-96)
- Intensive interventions delivered in small groups (Vaughn and Swanson, p.15)

Feedback is important in all programming and is also vital for exceptional students (Vaughn and Swanson, p.13):

- Instructional method that has more impact than socioeconomic status and prior abilities
- Needs to be differentiated for students to be effective
- Moderate to large effect sizes seen
Almost 40% of students below 15 years old with developmental disabilities have severe speech difficulties in the US (Ahlgrim-Delzell et al., p.87)

- They represent an underrepresented group in reading research
- Rely on alternative augmentative communication (AAC) tools
- Phonics programs allow for letter-sound knowledge; no method to manipulate phonemes (i.e. produce letter sounds, blend)

**Determine what particular sounds can be found in a word (i.e. /m/ in man)**
(Stahl, et al., p. 340-341)

**Select picture that begins with the same sound as the voiced phoneme**
(Ahlgrim-Delzell et al, p.87)

**Decoding by pointing to pictures for first sounds or segmented words**
(Ahlgrim-Delzell et al, p.87)

Additional Tools?
- iPad
- Eye gaze technology (i.e. My Gaze)
- E-tran board
Resources/References


HWDSB Reading Resources

A Tiered Approach to Literacy Assessment, Instruction and Intervention (K-2) - App & Virtual Library Supports
- list of catalogue apps for reading development
- Phonics Apps: Learn360, Montessorium: Intro to Letters, ABC Magic Phonics, Partners in Rhyme


Building Blocks for Early Literacy Development (2017)
- Overview of reading development and use of START Reading Kit


Early Literacy Diagnostic Tools & Skills For Kindergarten and Grade 1
- Phonics: DRA Word Analysis Kit