READING

A broad range of topics is incorporated in this **Section** including the following-

- Acquisition and Development of Language
- Literacy Learning and Instruction
- Literacy Instruction: Concepts, Approaches and Activities

- Approaches to Teaching Reading

  A Whole Language Approach
  Skill Centred Approaches

  Phonological Awareness

    A Range of Phonological Activities
    Phonological Awareness and Decoding in a Whole Language Program

  Phonics
  Development of Grapho-phonic Knowledge
  Word Recognition Skills

- Reading Comprehension and Instruction
- Reading: A Miscue Analysis
- Reading Research Findings Summarised Recently by ACER
- National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy

ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE

In understanding the acquisition and development of literacy skills, it is important to be aware of the normal development of language and literacy skills. The following developmental hierarchy (Myklebust, 1964) identifies the critical areas of expected oral and written language development-top down.

EARLY EXPERIENCES

LISTENING

SPEAKING

READING

SPELLING AND WRITTEN EXPRESSION

The early experiences of the child provide the basis for language acquisition and development. The infant is immersed in the spoken language of his/her family and begins to associate people, places, objects, events, needs and wants with

spoken words. These experiences form the foundations for the development of primary language.

Listening, or the comprehension of spoken language, is a necessary prerequisite for speaking or oral language. The input and understanding of aural language precedes the output of oral language. Normally during this stage of development, the child's vocabulary is expanding rapidly and an awareness and ability to manipulate speech sounds (phonological skills) are established.

Following these early stages of primary language development (listening and speaking), the child is introduced to symbolic, secondary language (reading, spelling and written expression). While print is usually present in the child's early environment, and the child encouraged to take an interest in it, a formal focus on symbolic language is introduced at school.

Again, input (reading) precedes output (spelling and written expression).

Primary language continues to develop as secondary language is acquired, and through reciprocal interaction, more mature and refined communication gradually evolves.

For some children, difficulties are experienced that arrest or delay the acquisition or development of language at one or more of these stages. Difficulties at the early stages usually affect later stages of development. For instance, problems with listening often influence speech, reading and spelling, while reading difficulties will frequently be associated with spelling problems.

LITERACY LEARNING AND INSTRUCTION

The most sophisticated levels of language development are represented by the literacy skills of reading, spelling and written expression. The following diagram suggests the important interrelationships of some of the skills involved in reading. While the acquisition of these skills and the achievement of independent reading status appear to be almost effortless for the majority of students, some encounter difficulties in one or more of these areas.

The progression of development of basic literacy skills is represented diagrammatically below and draws on the contributions of Ehri (1980) and Frith (1985). The model reflects the complexities of the acquisition of literacy skills and highlights the many levels at which difficulties can occur.

In the early stages of learning to read, global visual strategies are usually used to identify words.

Gradually, word attack skills involving the knowledge and use of phonics are required to complement these visual strategies, particularly in reading visually unfamiliar words. The ability to sound out words, or use phonics, in reading is dependent upon adequate phonological skills, that is, the ability to identify and manipulate speech sounds.

Other strategies also become important and include using semantic and syntactic cues. These develop from an understanding of the meaning and grammar of oral language and written language.

As reading skills develop, greater use is made of the language-centred, semantic and syntactic cues, than the word-centred, visual and phonic cues.

Spelling may be viewed as the reproduction of spoken words in print. Early spelling strategies parallel the early reading strategies outlined. With maturation, experience and instruction the strategies used in spelling, i.e., visual memory for whole words or letter clusters, orthographic skills (knowledge of written spelling patterns and rules), phonological skills (awareness and manipulation of speech sounds) and phonic skills (letter-sound associations), become integrated and automatic.

Written expression, the ability to represent thoughts and ideas in print, comprises the final stage of literacy learning and involves basic spelling, grammatical and punctuation skills and high-order vocabulary and thinking skills

A MODEL OF THE ACQUISITION OF LITERACY SKILLS

LOGOGRAPHIC:

- visual strategy in early identification of words
- context
- whole word pattern
- salient graphic features

- development of visual processing skills
- development of phonological processing skills e.g. phonological awareness
- experience with print (instruction, practice)

ALPHABETIC:

- emerging awareness of alphabetic principle
- relationship between phonemes and graphemes
- application of phonics

- cognitive maturation
- experience with print (instruction, practice)

ORTHOGRAPHIC:

- sophistication, refinement, automaticity and flexibility of use of variety of strategies - decoding and encoding
- integration of information
- visual and phonological
- orthographic
- semantic
- syntactic

Sources: Ehri, L. (1980) and Frith, U. (1985)

LITERACY INSTRUCTION: CONCEPTS, APPROACHES AND ACTIVITIES

Approaches to literacy instruction can be broadly divided into those based upon a whole language philosophy and those which are skill based, emphasising visual recognition of whole words, the alphabetic system and word-attack skills. It needs to be recognised, however, that individuals have different learning experiences, styles and needs and that **NO ONE APPROACH WILL BE APPROPRIATE FOR ALL STUDENTS.**

Teachers need to have a thorough understanding of the development of literacy skills and a comprehensive knowledge of the range of concepts, approaches, activities and programmes to enable them to respond eclectically to the individual learning needs of their students.

Teachers should have a working familiarity with the following important aspects of literacy instruction:

CONCEPTS

- Whole language or language experience (natural language of children, wide range of material, child centred, reading for meaning).
- Phonological Awareness (awareness of the sound structure of language).
- Phonics (letter-sound correspondence; grapho-phonics for use in spelling and word-attack).
- Orthographics (spelling rules, expectancies and conventions).
- Sight Vocabulary (visual store of words recognised or recalled, to be used in reading or spelling).
- Reading Comprehension (main idea, factual, vocabulary, inferential, cause and effect, retelling, evaluation and appreciation).
- Written Expression (structure, coherence, grammar, punctuation, spelling, genre, tone and style).

ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES

- Whole Language Experiences (language experience books, natural learning, direct connection between spoken and written language, simultaneous use of semantic, syntactic and grapho-phonic cues).
- Phonological Awareness and Skill Development (rhyming, synthesis, analysis).
- Phonics Knowledge and Skill Development (sequence of instruction, word similarities and analogies).
- Orthographic Knowledge of Spelling Rules and Conventions (rule instruction, morphology, commonly occurring letter clusters).
- Sight Vocabulary Development (shared reading, paired reading, guided reading, modelled reading, Neurological Impress Method, specific activities).
- Reading Comprehension Strategies (cloze, SQ3R, recall and retelling).
- Written Expression.

NOTES ON SOME OF THESE CONCEPTS, METHODS, APPROACHES AND ACTIVITIES FOLLOW.

APPROACHES TO LEARNING TO READ

Basically, two broad philosophical approaches to reading can be identified-

1. The language experience or whole language approach with an emphasis on meaning. It is assumed that the child best learns to read by being immersed in natural language experiences. In the context of meaningful activities the child gradually learns the basic subskills of reading.

2. The skill centred approach focuses on the development of the subskills considered important in reading. The emphasis is on the code. It is assumed that the child learns to read best by the explicit, systematic teaching of basic alphabetic, phonological and phonic skills.

Typically, a teacher will use an eclectic approach drawing on the best features of the two broad approaches.

For older students who have been slow to acquire and develop appropriate reading skills, the common remedial approach is to focus on the underdeveloped basic skills and hence a code or skill centred approach is preferred.

A WHOLE-LANGUAGE APPROACH

The child not the “method” is the centre of attention and instruction. Through talking, listening, hearing stories, telling stories and other meaningful activities, a rich environment is created for the students. The teacher of parent will read stories to children and discussion follows. The material selected is not restricted in the sense of having a limited, repetitive vocabulary. Books are chosen to interest, stimulate and excite the child. Drawings often become the stimuli for the first word/sentence. To expand the language experience, the child’s sentences/short stories are written down by the teacher and these can become the child’s early readers. Later the child might be encouraged to write/copy their own stories with the teacher’s help. Hence, a whole-language approach incorporates listening, talking, reading and writing.

The children are encouraged to take home simple books and read them with/to their parents. Hence, paired-reading and shared reading experiences are important activities.

A whole-language approach provides an excellent opportunity to introduce what Marie Clay (1972), in *Reading: The Patterning of Complex Behaviour*, calls Concepts About Print. The concepts and information that can be taught using books in a natural setting include the following-

Directional learning (left to right across the page and top to bottom down the page).
Observations of teacher/parent reading.
What constitutes reading?
Print can be turned into speech.
A message is recorded.
The picture can be a rough guide to that message.
There is a particular message, of particular words in a particular order.

Some key words/concepts that can be taught are as follows-

- Alphabet
- Letters, sounds, words, sentences
- Beginning, final and middle letters/sounds
- Punctuation marks
- Drawing, tracing, copying, invented writing, writing
- Reading
- Spelling
- Books
- Stories
- Authors

SKILL CENTRED APPROACHES

Methods and skills mentioned in this **Section** include the following-

- Phonological Awareness
- Phonic Skills
- Grapho-phonic Skills
- Word Recognition Skills

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Phonological processing involves using the sound structure of language in the processing of both oral and written information. This complements the visual processing of written information and contrasts with the semantic processing of information which relates to the meaning of the oral or written message.

One aspect of phonological processing is phonological awareness, the conscious, explicit awareness of the sound units of spoken language.

Phonological awareness is demonstrated by the ability to access, manipulate and identify the phonological units of language. The units, which represent progressive development, include the following-

- Words in sentences.
- Syllables in words.
- Intrasyllabic units (onset/rime).
- Individual phonemes in words.

Phonological awareness usually develops as a result of normal childhood language experiences which focus on the sounds of language:

e.g. nursery rhymes, alliteration, sound games

Relationship to Literacy Learning:

Phonological awareness is-

- Considered to be a better predictor of later reading ability than either measures of intellectual or vocabulary development.
- Frequently found to be underdeveloped in students experiencing reading and spelling difficulties.

Explicit phonological awareness is necessary for the mastery of an alphabetic script in which the student needs to understand how print "maps onto" speech:

Many students 'discover' the patterns and regularities in spoken and written language and develop an insight into the alphabet principle, with little formal instruction. Others are less sensitive to sounds in words and require systematic instruction.

Development of phonological skills may be delayed, interrupted or arrested by:

- General language delay
- Sequencing difficulties
- Hearing fluctuations

If a student, after a year of formal reading instruction, is unable to synthesise and analyse spoken words, to discriminate and manipulate their constituent sounds, then phonological awareness is unlikely to develop further without specific instruction.

Phonological awareness can be taught!

Explicit knowledge of the phonological features of spoken language can be developed as part of a:

- Developmental programme
- Intervention programme for students experiencing difficulty

Strategies

1. Direct attention to the sounds in words in pre-reading and beginning reading activities.

- Nursery rhymes
- Alliteration; rhyme
- Assonance (repetition of vowel sounds)
- Vocabulary development

2. Incorporate phonological awareness activities in literacy programmes, particularly segmentation and blending skills.

Segmentation and blending are most directly related to reading and spelling.

- More complex phonological awareness skills (eg. deletion) develop with reading instruction
- Teach segmentation and blending as complementary processes
- Systematically sequence instruction
- 2 sounds
- 3 sounds (onset/rime)
- Continuants (m, f, l, s) vs stops
- Single consonants vs blends

3. Combine phonological awareness training with instruction in letter-sound relationships.

- Phonological awareness is necessary but not sufficient for the development of phonics skills.
- Combination most effective for improving literacy skills.

4. Encourage transfer and generalisation.

- develop metacognitive strategies
- make explicit link between phonological awareness and reading and writing

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A RANGE OF PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

1. Recognise or produce rhyming words or alliterative words.

The onsets (consonants preceding the vowel) and rimes (vowel and the letters following it) of words determine whether they rhyme or are alliterative. Rhyming words have a common rime (e.g., bat, mat, cat, fat, splat, that), while alliterative words have a common onset (e.g., slip, slop, slap, slot, slam).

a) Given a target word, the student identifies rhyming or non-rhyming words (or alliterative or non- alliterative words) from:

- a series of pictures
- a spoken list

RHYME

For Example

- which pictures are of things that rhyme with hat?
- which pictures are of things that do not rhyme with met?
- which of these words rhymes with pig?
  dig, jug, twig
- which of these words does not rhyme with hid?
  fed, did, slid

ALLITERATION

For Example

- which pictures are of things that start the same way as sad (stop, etc.)?
- which pictures are of things that do not start the same way as bed (bread, etc.)?
  - which of these words starts the same way as
    top? *tap, toast, sip*
    slip? *slide, slap, shop*
- which of these words does not start the same way as
  rug? *ran, rave, hug*
  clap? *climb, crab, clip*

b) Given a target word, the student provides

- rhyming words e.g., what rhymes with hit?
- non-rhyming words e.g., what does not rhyme with pet?
- alliterative words e.g., what starts the same was as big? block?
- non-alliterative words e.g., what does not start the same way as
  cot?
  crisp?

2. Synthesis of words

- syllables
- onset and rime
- individual sounds

For Example
- per/haps » perhaps
  cu/cum/ber » cucumber
- s/it » sit
  bl/ack » black
  scr/ap » scrap
- s/a/d » sad
  s/a/n/d » sand
  s/t/a/n/d » stand
  s/t/r/a/n/d » strand

3. Segmentation of a word into:

- syllables
- onset and rime
- individual sounds

For Example
- because » be/cause
  conversation » con/ver/sa/tion
- cat » c/at
  slip » sl/ip
  strip » str/ip
- tip » t/i/p/
  stop » s/t/o/p
  start » s/t/a/r/t

4. Phoneme isolation

- The student recognises and isolates a sound in a particular position within a word.

For Example what is the first sound in sit
what is the last sound in ten?
what is the second sound in slot?
what is the middle sound in hut?

- The student listens for a target sound within a word.

For Example can you hear an /o/ in stop?
can you hear an /o/ in step?

5. Comparison of phonemes within words

- The student is asked if sounds in the corresponding positions in two words are the same or different.

  e.g., Do fig and fat start with the same sound?
  Do dog and hat have the same sound at the end?
  What sounds are the same in cat and pot?

- The student is asked to discriminate between words differing in one phoneme, the position of which will vary between tasks.

  e.g., Are these words the same or different?

  - mat/man
  - fat/man
  - met/mat

  What sound do you hear in hat but not in ham?

6. Phoneme sequence manipulation

Students are asked to manipulate the sequence of sounds to form new words.

a) Insertion of phonemes

The student is asked to add a given phoneme, in a specified position, to a target word.
e.g., what word is made if we put:

- /s/ before /and/
- /t/ before /s/ and /and/ in sand
- /r/ between /st/ and /and/ in stand

b) Deletion of phonemes

The student is asked what sound has been deleted from a word. e.g., what sound do you hear in:

- send, but not end?
- nets, but not net?
- bled, but not led?
- camp, but not cap?
- drum, but not dumb?
- trend, but not tread?
- split, but not slit?

The student is asked what word remains following deletions of a phoneme(s).

e.g., what do we have if we take:

- the h from hat?
- the t from trip?
- the r from trip?
- the s from strap?
- the st from strap?
- the r from strand?
- the tr from strand?
- the t from dent? the n from lent?

c) Substitutions

The student is asked to substitute a specified phoneme for a particular phoneme within a word.
e.g., what do we make if we swap:

- a /c/ for /t/ in tap?
- a /t/ for /d/ in had?
- an /a/ for /e/ in set?
- a /f/ for /s/ slap?
- a /l/ for /p/ in spit?
- a /t/ for /d/ in bend?
- a /n/ for /s/ in west?
- a /m/ for /d/ in date?
- an /a/ for /i/ in might?

d) Transposition of phoneme within or between words

The student is asked to "swap" sounds

- Within a word e.g., what word do we have if we:
  change the /n/ and /t/ in net?

- Between words e.g., what words do we make if we:
  swap the first sounds of "sore pole"?

7. General points to consider in the development of a phonological awareness programme

- Tasks differ in their level of difficulty from those involving syllables, through onset/rime activities, to the recognition, isolation and manipulation of phonemes.

- Synthesis tasks are generally easier than those involving analysis.

- Vary the position of the target phonemes in the activities. Generally initial and final phonemes will be easier to isolate and manipulate than medial or internal phonemes. Of particular difficulty are consonant phonemes within blends and clusters, and medial vowels.

- Physical movements (e.g., stepping, clapping) and concrete aids (e.g., coloured blocks or counters) are particularly valuable in the representation of specific sounds in phonological awareness training.

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PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS AND DECODING IN A WHOLE LANGUAGE PROGRAMME

Suggestions for incorporating instruction in phonological awareness, sound-symbol associations and decoding skills into a whole language approach to reading instruction.

1. Important considerations to keep in mind when planning instruction in these areas.

- Some children will need only incidental instruction in these skills as they arise in the texts they are reading.

- Other children will need structured and well sequenced instruction of these skills before they can apply them to the task of reading. It is then vitally important to supply reading material which will reinforce the skill they have been taught and enable the child to apply the skill to the task of reading and gaining meaning from text.

- Some children will need only implicit instruction in sound-symbol associations and decoding skills. This would involve instructions such as the letter /w/ makes the sound you hear at the beginning of *water*, *worm*, *window*, without necessarily isolating the sound itself. The child makes window, without necessarily isolating the sound itself. The child makes the association between the letter and the sound they hear in the word.

- Other children, however, need explicit instruction in sound-symbol associations and decoding skills. The sounds and the decoding skills need to be isolated from the words in order for the child to distinguish them enough to use in other situations.

- Yet again, some children could be taught with combinations of incidental and structured, implicit and explicit instruction.

- There should never be rigidity of instruction simply because that is the way the teacher believes it should be taught, instruction should entirely depend on the needs of the child.

2. Rhyming games

- Reading traditional rhymes and playing movement and action games to accompany some of these rhymes.

- Find and read to children, books that use rhyme as a main feature of the story such as Dr. Seuss books or Picture Puffins such as *Tog the dog, Jen the hen, Pat the cat and Mig the pig* (1988).

- Make up and print on large pieces of cardboard rhyming stories that are interesting and fun for children to discuss and illustrate, such as:

  Jenny was puzzled about her hat,
  The last time she saw it, it wasn't that flat
  But we know why
  We saw it all,
  Mum put a mat on it,
  The camel spat on it,
  The cake fell 'splat' on it
  And the hippo sat on it. (Setting: a trip to the zoo).

- Games for rhyme production or rhyme completion, such as showing children a picture illustrating three rhyming words. Start the rhyme and ask children to complete it, e.g.:

  The dog in the fog
  fell over a ..... (log).

  The picture should illustrate the event the rhyme depicts or, given an incomplete rhyme, children could be asked to supply a word of their own to complete the rhyme, so that it makes sense, and then illustrate it themselves.

- Games for rhyme recognition such as preparing several pairs of words, some that rhyme and some that don't. Children could skip, dance or jump around the room while the teacher says the pairs of words. If the two words rhyme, they keep skipping; if they don't rhyme they must stop immediately.

3. Early segmentation

- Games and exercises focusing on segmenting sentences into word units. With a picture clue for remembering, give children a sentence about that picture or ask children to give you one. Then ask them to put out a counter, card or block for each word in that sentence. They could also be asked to jump for each word they hear.

- Games and exercises investigating word length, such as giving children two pictures, asking them to say the word they represent and which of the words is longer. This could be built up to an emphasis on things that could be large or long and have a short name or vice versa. The key consideration should be the word we hear and not the object it represents or its meaning.

- Games involving segmenting syllables in multi-syllable words. They should begin perhaps with children's own names and move to words in the

immediate environment. The syllables can be signified by clapping hands, tapping sticks, beating a drum or bouncing a ball.

- Games involving syllable synthesis of multi-syllabic words. Lundberg, Frost and Petersen (1988) introduced a troll to the children for this task. This troll had a strange way of speaking and children were asked to tell what it was trying to say. Any mythical creature such as the 'bunyip' could be used, or even puppets children have made themselves.

4. Work with phonemes

This is the heart of phonemic awareness and involves activities incorporating all the phonemic awareness tasks: recognition of rhyme; recognition of phonemes within words; isolating phonemes in beginning, medial and final positions; phonemic segmentation; counting phonemes; blending, deleting and adding phonemes and substituting phonemes.

Activities with card games, music and physical activities can be organised around the skills listed previously for each of these tasks. For example, give children two cards, one with a tick on it, the other a cross. Say things such as 'Fish starts with /f/' or 'Dog starts with /m/'. Ask children to put out the appropriate card to say whether the teacher is right or wrong. The games that can be applied to these tasks are only limited by your imagination.

- Incorporate the tasks into Big Book reading. After reading the book together, for enjoyment, attention can be drawn to words within the text that can be emphasised or manipulated to give practice in the phonemic awareness tasks.

- Stories that incorporate rhyme and alliteration are very useful at this stage and place the skills within meaningful context. Rhymes are easy to find, but you may have to write and illustrate suitable alliteration stories or posters yourself such as: 'Willy the wombat wobbles the window while the worms watch from the wall'.

- These activities can all be done without drawing attention to sound-symbol correspondences prior to the introduction of letters and learning printed words, however, evidence is developing that would support the development of sound-symbol correspondence at the same time as these phonemic awareness tasks, to encourage quicker and better acquisition of reading skills (*Bradley and Bryant 1983; Hohn and Ehri 1983; Stuart and Coltheart 1988; Byrne and Fielding-Barnsley 1989*).

5. Teaching sound-symbol correspondence

- Some children will be able to learn these correspondences with only implicit instruction such as the letter/w/ makes the sound we hear at the beginning of *water*, *watch*, *window* without isolating the sound in order to identify it. However, a considerable number of children need to be taught the sound-symbol correspondences explicitly in order to be able to hear them within words. For these children the sounds must be isolated, and taught and then emphasised within words (Bruce 1964; Calfee, Chapman and Venezky 1972; Liberman 1973; Liberman, Cooper, Shankweiler and Studdert-Kennedy 1967).

- Finding an ideal sequence for the introduction of the sounds is something that needs to be researched. *Becoming a nation of readers* (1984) and *A guide to selecting basal reading programs* (1990) both suggest that a few double consonant sounds such as /th/, /ng/, and a few double vowel sounds such as /ea/, /ai/, should be introduced fairly early in a sequenced program together with the single consonant sounds and short vowels, so that children become aware early that sounds can be represented by more than one letter. By doing this, available reading vocabulary is considerably increased so that early texts can be interesting while remaining reasonable regular. The Lindamood and Lindamood (1975) program recommends the teaching of the consonant sounds first in similar pairs of unvoiced and voiced sounds such as /p, b/; /t, d/; /k, g/. At the same time Lundberg, et al. (1988) recommend that these similar sounds be taught some considerable time apart.

  If phonemic awareness and sound-symbol associations are being taught incidentally within context, then the sequence would be random, however, if the child needs to have these skills explicitly taught, then sequencing is recommended. Probably a combination of the approaches used in research would be the best at this time until research proves otherwise.

  Introduce some consonants, possibly following the Lindamood (1975) sequences, which require attention to finer discriminations, unless the child is particularly young or has inordinate trouble in this area. Encouraging these auditory discriminations early, usually mean less confusion than waiting to introduce the second of each pair. Introduce the short vowels next, so that children can begin to use the phonemic awareness skills in real words and context from a very early stage. After introducing the remaining single consonants introduce some double consonants (digraph) sounds such as /th/, /ch/, /wh/ and a few double vowels such as /ea/, /ai/, ee/, /ay/. This would considerably increase (1) the quantity of words that can be read and spelt and (2) the mastery of text. Follow this with the remaining consonant blends, consonant digraphs, vowel digraphs and vowel diphthongs (see Table 1. below).

6. Selecting appropriate reading material.

Selection of reading material becomes the key element that enables the reading program to function, and enables *all* the cueing systems to be used to their fullest advantage when reading text. The more confidence a child gains in reading text and the more text they read, the better reader they will become. If unknown words are to be read and word knowledge gained from text, the phonological and orthographic cueing system must be mastered. The best way for children to master these systems to a point of automaticity, is to supply texts appropriate to their stage of reading development that incorporate sufficient practice in the skills they are acquiring. During the early, pre-reading stages the reading material, both in Big Books and small should be ‘patterned books’. These books are repetitive and aim to teach a small selection of basic sight words such as:

I see a dog
I see a fish
I see a cat

As the child begins to develop phonemic awareness, the books could include simple rhyming stories, alliterative text and small books with a reasonable percentage of regular words that can be fully processed. The exact percentage of

regularity required has not yet been determined, but perhaps a 60 per cent regularity would be a good guideline. If it is any higher than this then the development of semantic and syntactic cueing systems would be jeopardised.

Don't teach the vocabulary prior to asking the child to read the text, but encourage them to read and then re-read the text using all the cueing systems, phonological, orthographic, semantic and syntactic, as appropriate.

If the text that is supplied has a low percentage of regularity (as judged by the child's stage of development in sound-symbol associations and phonemic knowledge) then they are unable to use this developing knowledge, and without appropriate use, the knowledge will be forgotten. So not only should the percentage of regular words within be appropriate, but the degree of difficulty of the words needs controlling. Very few single reading programs available at the moment supply these needs. It means a lot of searching and careful selection on the teacher's part from a wide variety of the schemes and other reading material available. The *Reading Recovery* scheme (Clay 1987) carefully grades a wide variety of reading material in this manner and has 20 levels available to children working with this program. But, as yet, the list of books used has not been published for general use.

Summary

Phonological awareness is an essential element in the beginning reading process. It is the foundation of the full development of the phonological and orthographic cueing systems used for fluent, efficient reading. The semantic and syntactic cueing systems are of equal importance to fluent reading, but if the phonological-orthographic system is not sufficiently developed in the beginning reading stages, the child will have significant difficulty with word identification, comprehension and growth in word knowledge, as reading complexity increases. Automatic word identification, both in context and in isolation, has been identified as the one real difference between good and poor readers (Stanovich, 1980, 1986).

Developing phonological awareness and phonological-orthographic word identification skills in the first two or three years of reading instruction should be a priority. This does not mean a return to old phonic-based reading programs. These skills can be developed within the context of whole language reading instruction. For some children these phonological skills can be developed incidentally and through using implicit instructions as they are exposed to appropriate reading material during Big Book and 'shared reading' lessons. However, sufficient individual reading material that is appropriate to their level of development should be made available for them to apply the skills they are learning. For other children, however, instruction will need to be sequenced and taught explicitly. But this does not require the complete isolation of instruction. The availability of a large amount of appropriate reading material is essential. The skills will not become automatic without using them for reading. The books should be small and interesting, so that they can be read in one session.

Re-reading should be encouraged to develop fluency but not to the point of memorisation of the entire text, as this will defeat the purpose.

Phonological awareness *can* be taught and *should* be taught in the first two to three years of instruction. However, once the child is reading automatically and fluently using all three cueing systems: phonological-orthographic, semantic and syntactic, effectively, then teaching phonological awareness is no longer necessary. Reading instruction does not stop at this point, however, as many

other skills such as those required for effective word study, understanding word meanings and comprehension, will still need developing.

Table 1. A suggested sequence for teaching the basic phonological elements of our language.

Step 1:	5 unvoiced and voiced pairs p, b; t, d; k, g; s, z; f, v;
Step 2:	5 short vowels a, o, i, e, u
Step 3:	3 similar sound groupings m, n, ng (nasal sounds) h, w, wh (windy sounds) l, r (tongue lifting sounds)
Step 4:	3 unvoiced and voiced pairs th, th sh, zh (treasure) ch, j
Step 5:	Early double vowel sounds ee, ea (meat), ai, ay, oo, oo
Step 6:	Remaining letters that borrow sounds c = /k/ or /s/ x = /ks/ qu = /kw/ y = /ee/ yoke, jelly /ie/ sky /i/ gym
Step 7:	Initial and final consonant blends Initial: sp st sc sk sm sn sl sw tw dw bl cl gl fl pl pr br tr dr cr gr fr Final: st ft lk ld pt sp ct lp xt nd nt nch mp nk
Step 8:	3 letter blends: thr, spr, squ, spl, shr, str, scr Long vowel sounds Long e spellings: ee, ea, e-e, y Long a spellings: ai, ay, a-e Long o spellings: oe, ow, oa, o-e Long u spellings: ew, ue, u-e Long i spellings: ie, i-e, y
Step 9:	Remaining diphthongs and r-controlled vowels ar, or, er, ir, ur oi, oy; ow, ou; au, aw

Source: Watson, A. and Badenhop, A. (Ed.) (1992). *Prevention of Reading Failure*. Ashton Scholastic.

Amanda Russell

PHONICS

The terms “phonological skills” and “phonic skills” are frequently confused. Unlike the development of phonological skills which begin to emerge naturally during the pre-school stage, phonic skills usually need to be taught. The term phonics refers to the associations between letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes). During the first year at school, children are typically introduced to the alphabet and learn the associations between letters and sounds. Some teachers do this formally and explicitly while others adopt a more informal or discovery approach.

The real challenge in teaching phonics is how to introduce the irregular letter-sound associations. As so many of the early, basic, essential words are phonetically irregular, “inconsistencies” in letter-sound associations frequently cause both uncertainty and problems for students.

Many special approaches and methods have been devised to minimise the uncertainty caused by irregular letter-sound associations and provide students with helpful colour or orthographic cues.

Some early methods / materials include the following-

Bannatyne, A. D. (1967). *Colour Phonics System***.** Academic Therapy Press. California.

Clay, M. M. (1993). *Reading Recovery: A Guide for Teachers in Training*. Heinemann Education. New Zealand

Daniels, J.C. and Diack, H. (1954). *The Royal Road Readers*. London: Chatto & Windus,

Downing, J. A. (1964). *The i.t.a (Initial Teaching Alphabet). Reading Experiment*. London: Evans.

Gattegno, C. (1965). *Words in Colour*. Chicago, Illinois.

Jones, J.K. (1967) *Colour Story Reading*. London: Nelson.

Stott, D.H. (1962). *Programmed Reading Kit*. Glasgow: Holmes.

More recently the following schemes have become popular-

Letterland Products. (Australian Special Book Services) Kew, Victoria.

Thrass (Australia). (1998). *The Phonics Program*.

The ACER also provides relevant materials and books including-

Beck, I. L. (2006). *Making Sense of Phonics;The Hows and Whys*. ACER Press.

The challenge for teachers in teaching phonics is to encourage children to learn that for many letters, there is not a consistent one-to-one correspondence between letter and sound. Such an awareness can be taught in both reading and spelling lessons.

Basically, the challenge is for children to:

- understand that most letters can make more than one sound
- distinguish between a letter's name and its sound
- distinguish between consonants and vowels
- develop a "set for diversity"

Suggested teaching activities will be included in the **Spelling Section** and the **Learning Disability Section**.

DEVELOPING GRAPHOPHONIC KNOWLEDGE

At the most sophisticated level of literacy development the student automatically integrates complex graphophonic knowledge with semantic and syntactic cues when decoding.

To achieve this automaticity, and to ensure successful encoding skills, graphophonic skills need to be specifically developed through an awareness of:

- spelling patterns- visual, phonological and morphemic,
- probabilities- the likely sequences of letters and the frequency of their occurrence,
- spelling rules or expectancies.

SPELLING PATTERNS

Use onsets and rimes as teaching units in the development of phonological, visual and orthographic skills; the onset of a word being the consonant(s) before the vowel (e.g., <u>s</u>and, <u>br</u>ain) and the rime being the vowel and all the letters that follow (e.g., s<u>and</u>, br<u>ain</u>). These units:

- "chunk" information and so reduce the burden on memory,
- reflect naturally occurring parts of oral language,
- help develop knowledge of sequencing, or the probability of certain letters occurring together,
- provide a foundation for making analogies between known and unknown words,
- reduce the difficulties associated with inconsistencies in letter-sound relationships.

The following rimes form the basis for the more than 500 words commonly used in the primary years of schooling.

ack	eat	ice	ock	uck
ail	ell	ick	oke	ug
ain	est	ide	op	ump
ake		ight	ore	unk
all		ill	or	
ame		in		
an		ine		
ark		ing		
ap		ink		
ash		ip		
at		ir		
aw				
ay				

(From Adams, M.J. (1990). *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT. Press)

A logical sequence of onset introduction is:

- single consonant,
- blend of two consonants,
- cluster of three consonant (e.g., **str**),
- cluster including a consonant digraph (e.g., **shr**).

Frith's (1985) model of the acquisition of literacy skills suggests that development progresses through stages as outlined below:

LOGOGRAPHIC:

- The student uses visual strategies in the early identification of words:

  recognising words as visual wholes, often within a visual context, with salient graphic features providing cues.

- visual perception and memory of letters
- phonological awareness

ALPHABETIC:

- emerging awareness of the alphabetic principle on which English is based
- the simple matching of visual and phonological units:
  letter to sound
  regular letter string to sound

- experience with patterns of English and spelling
- opportunity for practice

ORTHOGRAPHIC:

- with a more sophisticated knowledge of the writing system, the eventual automatic and flexible use of visual and phonological strategies, and complex rules to decode and encode

At this Orthographic stage, the student uses complex graphophonic knowledge in parallel with the semantic and syntactic systems in decoding. To encode successfully the graphophonic system is relied upon and must be developed to a level which involves an awareness of:

Spelling Patterns	~	orthographic
	~	phonological
	~	morphemic
Probabilities of Sequence / Occurrence	~	The likely sequences of letters and the frequency of their occurrence

Spelling Rules or Expectancies

Use of analogy or generalisation in the decoding or encoding of unfamiliar words.

SOME POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THESE ASPECTS OF GRAPHOPHONIC KNOWLEDGE

SPELLING PATTERNS

Focus on the onset and rime of a single syllable word, the onset being the consonant(s) before the vowel (eg. <u>s</u>and, <u>br</u>ain) and the rime being the vowel and all the letters that follow (eg. s<u>and</u>, br<u>ain</u>). These units:

- "chunk" information and so reduce the burden on memory,
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A logical sequence of onset introduction is:

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Simple, phonologically regular rimes should be introduced before those including vowel digraphs or "irregular" letter strings:

eg. et, up, and, ent should be used before ain and ight

Activities could include:

- oral and/or written segmentation of words into onset and rime,
- development of "word families", ie. words with similar visual patterns, based on onset or rime:

eg	hand	strip
	sand	strand
	band	strict
	stand	string
	brand	
	strand	

- making lists of rhyming words,
- finding rhyming words in text,
- making rhymes using words with a common rime:
- making alliterative sentences, or tongue twisters using words with a common onset:

  e.g. The three thin, thumping thugs threw thirty-three thousand thimbles through thirteen thick thorm.

- "visual dictation"

Presented visually using different colours for onset and rime, the child synthesises:

- an onset with a range of rimes

eg.

-and

str -ing

-ict

- a rime with a range of onsets

eg. **h-**

br- and

str-

* Progress to including more complex letter cluster-sound matches within rimes. Students learn that a sound can be represented by more than one letter and develop an understanding of vowel digraphs:
eg.
  - focus on rime "**ain**" list: main
    pain
    stain
    drain
    sprain

  - encourage student to generalise knowledge of "**ain**"; look for it and listen for it as a unit within unfamiliar words
  - segment known unit "**ain**" **ai** / **n**
  - focus on vowel digraphs **ai**
    related word families

    cl<u>ai</u>m s<u>ai</u>d w<u>ai</u>t

    m<u>ai</u>n f<u>ai</u>l b<u>ai</u>t

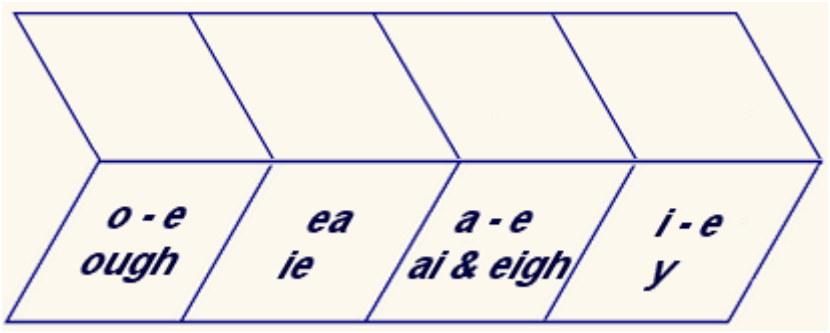
    fr<u>ai</u>l

* Letter pictographs and colour can be used to emphasise letter clusters and establish letter-sound patterns.
* Students need to be taught that the same group of letters may represent more than one sound and this can be developed by having students sort words with the same letter clusters according to their sound pattern.

e.g. frown throw
clown slow
town thrown
now

The knowledge that the same sound can be represented orthographically in more ways than one can be developed through student made “flip files".

e.g.



* **r** following a vowel digraph often changes the sound of the digraph
* eg. **oa - oar**, **ea - ear**. Again focussing on rimes can help deal with some of these inconsistencies.

* Students’ attention needs to be drawn to multisyllabic words and their segmentation.

* An awareness of the schwa, or indefinite vowel sound, should be developed
  eg. the /**i**/ in cabin, which phonetically could be justifiably represented by other vowels.

* Morphemic awareness can be developed through studying spelling parts based on units of meaning ie. prefixes, suffixes. (See below)

Resources:

Clutterbuck, P.M. (1990). *The art of teaching spelling*.
Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.

Clutterbuck, P.M. (1993). *Spelling steps: Book 2*:
Mastering the *Demon words*. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.

Munro, J. (1995). Explaining developmental dyslexia:
Orthographic processing difficulties.
Australian Journal of Remedial Education, 27 (1), 5-15.

SuperSpell-TM. (2006). Hoopers Multimedia, Ulverstone Tasmania (Computer Software).
Tasmania: Assessment technology (computer software)

ACER www.acerpress.com.au
Dataworks www.dataworks.com.au
Dominie www.dominie.com.au
Edsoft www.edsoft.com.au
Link Educational Supplies www.linkeducational.com.au

PROBABILITY OF SEQUENCE / OCCURRENCE

Use games and activities that focus attention on the sequence of sounds and letters in a word and help develop knowledge and expectations of the occurrence of specific letters in particular positions within words:

e.g., SuperSpell-TM (Computer software)

Stickybear Spellgrabber (Computer software)
WordShark (Computer software)
WordWiz (Computer software)
Hang the Butcher
Scrabble
Boggle

Work focussing on onsets and rimes will obviously help develop this knowledge.

Some particular points to address:

- morphemic units eg. **ed**, **ing**, **re**, **dis**, **pre**, **il**, **in**,
- **qu** occurs as a unit,
- when a /**k**/ sound is heard at the beginning of a word, it is usually represented by a **c**,
- a /**k**/ sound at the end of a word is usually represented by **ck** if preceded by a short vowel,
- **x** sounds like -/**ks**/ at the end of a word (fox), -/**ks**/ or /**gz**/ in the middle of words (exercise), -/**z**/ at the beginning of words (xylophone).
- no English word ends with v or j, a final /**j**/ sound is usually represented by **-ge**,
  e.g., rage
  plunge

  or **-dge**, when the preceding vowel is short,

  e.g., bridge
  bodge
  nudge
- **tch** usually follows a short vowel sound, **ch** usually follows a long vowel sound,
- **-nd**, **-nt** blends -both sounds in each of these blends are made by using the tongue,
  -mp -both sounds in this blend are made by using the lips,
- /**ee**/ at the end of a word is usually represented by **y**,
- **c** makes a soft /**s**/ sound before **e**, **i**, **y**,
  g makes a soft /**j**/ sound before **e**, **i**, **y**,
- **ti**, **ci**, **si** often represent /**sh**/ sounds within words (not at beginning!), digraphs (consonant and vowel),
- common “letter strings” eg - consonant clusters - str, scr, shr, spr.

SPELLING RULES AND EXPECTANCIES

e.g.

- "magic **e**" - long vowel sounds,
- plurals,
- adding - ing and other suffixes,
- dropping final **l** from - all, well, as first syllable,
  - fill, till as final syllable,
- **i** before **e** except after **c** or when part of **eigh**,
- when two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking.

Resources:

Bachor, P.G. & Crealock, C. (1986). *Instructional strategies for students with special needs.* Ontario:Prentice Hall.

Davidson, C & Wicking, B. (1994). *Wordswork*. Castlemaine: Richard Lee.

USE OF ANALOGY OR GENERALISATION

Encourage students to generalise their knowledge to new situations, to make analogies between familiar and unfamiliar words.

e.g., most students recognise the word <u>out</u> and can segment this into two sounds **ou**/**t**, - identification of /**ou**/ will help read and write other words such as round.

Analogies using onsets and rimes reduce some of the uncertainties and inconsistencies in English.

e.g., <u>ough</u> can be seen and heard as a unit in r / ough t / ough en / ough

TEACHING MATERIAL SUITABLE FOR USE IN DEVELOPMENT OF ORTHOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE

Onset/Rime

- Clutterbuck, P.M. (1990). *The art of teaching spelling*. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.
- Clutterbuck, P.M. (1993) *Spelling steps; Book 2: Mastering the Demon words.* Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.
- Frank Schaffer Publications. (1979). *Self-check: Consonant blends, consonant digraphs*. CA.
- Frank Schaffer Publications. (1986). *Consonant blends: Duplicating masters*. CA.
- Frank Schaffer. (1988). *Easy blends and digraphs: Flashcards*. CA.
- Hoopers Multimedia (2006). *SuperSpell-TM*. Ulverstone,Tasmania: (Computer software).
- Jennings, P., Greenwood, T. and Denton, T. (1992). *Spooner or later*. Melbourne: Penguin.
- Rawle, G. (1994). *Lost consonants: 1995 calendar*. NSW: The Ink Group.
- Shiotsu, V. (1989). *Blends and digraphs: Coloured activity cards*. CA: Frank Schaffer.
- Trend Enterprises. (1987). *Initial consonant bingo*. St. Paul, MN.

Digraphs

- Hoopers Multimedia (2006). *SuperSpell-TM*. Ulverstone,Tasmania: (Computer software)
- Stotts, D.H. (1971). *Programmed reading kit*. Edinburgh: Holmes McDougall.

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Syllables

- Stotts, D.H. (1971). *Programmed reading kit*. Edinburgh: Holmes McDougall.

Letters

- Alphabet strips.
- Hefter, R. and Worthington, S. (1985). Stickybear spellgrabber. Connecticut: Optimum Resource. (Computer software)
- Jennings, P., Greenwood, T. and Denton, T. (1992). Spooner or later. Melbourne: Penguin.
- Letterland programme.

Check the following websites for more recent material-

ACER www.acerpress.com.au
Dataworks www.dataworks.com.au
Dominie www.dominie.com.au
Edsoft www.edsoft.com.au
Hawker-Brownlow Education www.hbe.com.au
Link Educational Supplies www.linkeducational.com.au

Amanda Russell

WORD RECOGNITION SKILLS

Recognising words as whole units is an important skill in the development of reading competence. For many children, the acquisition of "sight words" seems a natural ability that readily develops from exposure to print. The advantages of such whole-word recognition are obvious-it reduces the dependency on the many phonological and phonic complexities, is less laborious and is the most efficient way to learn to read phonetically irregular words.

For those young children who are slow to establish a corpus of "sight words", explicit, rote, flashcard drill is required. Of course, for many older children who experience significant reading problems, underdeveloped word recognition skills are a common characteristic. Traditionally, basic word lists containing the most frequently used words were taught. The Dolch list of 200 common words was an early resource and continues to be used, often in a modified form. (See the **Spelling Section** for the actual list of words). Today, many basic word lists are readily available. A recent addition is the following resource available from the ACER-

- *M100W Magic100 Words*
- *M100W More Magic Words*

Learning whole-word reading strategies can be very challenging and a rather tedious task for many children. Usually, the slow development of "sight words" indicates difficulties recognising and retaining word patterns and shapes. For most students with a learning disability or dyslexia, these basic difficulties are a central feature of their underdeveloped reading and spelling skills.

Flashcard drill, with the emphasis on regular, sustained, repetitive practise, can be made more interesting in several ways. By using colour as a cue to the "tricky" parts and through the use of other techniques such as imagery, "personalising" words and fun activities including card games (snap, grab) and the ever expanding range of excellent computer-software.

Additional activities are included in the **Spelling Section**.

READING COMPREHENSION AND INSTRUCTION

THE KEY COMPONENTS OF READING COMPREHENSION ARE:

- Identification of specific ideas and their meanings.
- Discovery of the organisation of these ideas.
- Reaction-both intellectual and emotional - to these ideas.

MAJOR PRE-REQUISITES FOR ADEQUATE COMPREHENSION ARE:

- reading
    - word recognition
    - prose reading accuracy
    - appropriate rate

- broad experiences
- vocabulary and language knowledge
- concept formation
- cognitive abilities

A student will not be fully attending to the meaning of the text if she / he is still struggling at the more mechanical levels of word recognition and identification.

READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS INCLUDE:

- identifying details
- identifying main ideas
- identifying sequence
- following directions
- solving problems
- predicting outcomes
- identifying cause and effect relationships
- making inferences
- making generalisations and conclusions
- critical judgements

Some suggested activities include the following-

- Providing students with access to abridged and audio versions of texts preparing plot and character summaries of texts
- Providing access to booklists as early as possible to allow opportunities for pre-reading
- Oral reading/paired reading of sections of texts, to and with, students
- Consolidating prose reading accuracy and speed (using computer software)
- Using directed reading and thinking strategies
- Reading for understanding (sentence, paragraph and story)

pre-reading strategies

text preview

story impressions

retelling

literal

inferential

cloze

concept maps

5 Ws-who, where, why, when, what?

Reading comprehension can be thought of as a conversation as it involves the active interaction of the reader and the written material. The student needs to be using the metacognitive strategies of generating their own questions in response to the text and constantly monitoring their understanding.

It should be remembered that comprehension is a process rather than a product and that it should be taught, not just tested. Students need to be given the opportunity to talk about text and guided in their construction of meaning rather than simply expected to passively absorb information and reproduce it by answering a series of literal questions.

It should also be understood that the comprehension demands of reading narrative differ from those of reading factual information, and that generally, as the material being read becomes more sophisticated in its structure and content, the comprehension of it becomes more challenging.

Stewart Sykes and Amanda Russell

A range of additional activities is included in the **Learning Disability Section**.

READING: A MISCUE ANALYSIS

A student's error patterns should be identified through the analysis of miscues arising from:

- the reading of words in isolation
- the reading of prose
- the answering of comprehension questions

Following is a guide to assist in the interpretation of miscues, the identification of error patterns and an understanding of the student's instructional needs.

1. Oral Reading of Single Words

A student's oral reading of word lists provides information regarding his/her sight vocabulary and word analysis strategies.

In order to maximise this information, all the student's responses should be recorded, and errors analysed.

Error	Consider
The student can pronounce the word, but has little idea of its meaning.	• Visual sequential memory difficulties. • Delayed conceptual development. • Language delay (oral/written). • Lack of understanding of purpose of reading, i.e., for meaning. • Overemphasis of word-identification strategies.

The student substitutes words of similar visual configuration. e.g., presence for progress, should for shouted, snakes for skates.	• Guessing on basis of
	  o whole word configuration
	  o distinctive visual features
	  o initial letter
	• Overemphasis of "guessing" strategy.
	• Overemphasis of visual strategies.
	• Limited word attack strategies.
	• Difficulties with phonological strategies.

The student focuses on individual letters/ sounds within words, but: • does not have letter/sound correspondence • is unable to blend identified sounds • does not recognise digraphs, diphthongs • does not recognise other orthographic units e.g., syllables, consonant clusters, prefixes, suffixes	• Underdeveloped sight vocabulary. • Limited phonics and/or orthographic knowledge (letters, syllables, etc). • Phonological awareness (synthesis and/or analysis) difficulties. • Visual sequential memory difficulties.
The student gives an apparently bizarre response which bears little resemblance to the target word.	• Limited sight vocabulary. • Limited ability to use orthographic knowledge or word attack skills. • Impulsivity. • Confidence factors.

2. Oral Reading of Text

Error	Consider
Student reads dysfluently with little acknowledgment of punctuation.	• Underdeveloped sight vocabulary. • Not reading for meaning. • Not using all cueing systems available (semantic, syntactic and graphophonic). • Limited knowledge of punctuation.
The student mispronounces words.	• Unsuccessful application of word attack skills. • Limited phonics knowledge. • Difficulties synthesising sounds. • Cultural, language background. • Hearing or articulation difficulties.
The student omits word and • loses meaning	• Impulsivity. • Underdeveloped sight vocabulary and word attack skills. • Lacks comprehension, so unaware of error.

The student repeats words	• Lack of confidence. • Attempting to gain meaning.
Student inverts or reverses letter or groups of letters within words	• Underdeveloped sight vocabulary. • Sequencing difficulties (visual or auditory). • Inadequate graphophonic strategies.
Student inserts words and • retains meaning • loses meaning	• Impulsivity. • Using syntactic and semantic cuing systems. • Lacks comprehension, so unaware of error.
Student substitutes whole words, and • retains meaning	• Relying on visual strategies. • Using syntactic and semantic cuing systems. • Reluctance, inability to use word attack skills.
Student substitutes whole words, and • loses meaning	• Over reliance on underdeveloped visual strategies. • Limited word attack skills. • Unable to use any of the three cuing systems effectively.

3. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is frequently neglected as a skill requiring instruction.

The following aspects of reading and/or listening comprehension should be investigated.

- Is the student able to establish the main idea or argument?
- Does the student understand and recall the factual details?
- Does the student understand the meaning of words used?

- Is the student able to make relevant inferences using the information provided?

- Is the student able to explain the “who, what, when, where, why”, or the logical relationships, of events and characters?

- Is the student able to provide the important details of the passage in an appropriate sequence?

Difficulties in any of these skills may reflect an overall cognitive level and/or suggest the need for further general language development. Specific, explicit instruction at a particular level of comprehension may also be necessary.

Amanda Russell

READING RESEARCH FINDINGS SUMMARISED RECENTLY BY ACER

Teaching **PHONEMIC AWARENESS** is very effective in improving reading ability and is an essential element of a complete and integrated reading program.

Systematic **PHONICS INSTRUCTION** produces significant benefits for children throughout the primary years and for children having difficulty learning to read. Systematic phonics instruction is most effective when used as one element of a total reading program, integrated with instruction in phonemic awareness, fluency and comprehension strategies.

REPEATED ORAL READING or **PAIRED-READING** that includes guidance from teachers, other children or parents has a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency and comprehension across a range of grade levels. Guided oral reading is effective in developing fluency (the ability to read with speed, accuracy and proper expression) which itself is one of several critical factors in reading comprehension.

VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION leads to gains in comprehension.

Explicit teaching of **READING COMPREHENSION** strategies is effective in enhancing students' understanding of texts. Such strategies include the following-

- developing students' own awareness of their understandings
- having students co-operate when learning reading strategies
- making graphic representations of text content
- having students answer questions about texts
- encouraging students to generate their own questions
- teaching students to use story structure in obtaining meaning
- teaching students to integrate ideas and generalise from text

NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO THE TEACHING OF LITERACY

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Evidence-based research consistently indicates that direct, systematic instruction in phonics makes significantly greater contributions to children's initial and subsequent progress in reading, spelling, writing and comprehension, than do alternative approaches involving unsystematic instruction or instruction without the explicit teaching of phonics.

When basic phonic skills are taught early, the need for expensive and later intervention programs is minimised.

The prominent whole-language approach to the teaching of reading is considered problematic. Evidence shows that the exclusive use of a

whole-language approach is not best suited to children learning to read or to those experiencing learning difficulties. However, whereas the systematic, explicit teaching of phonics is necessary for the effective teaching of reading, it is not a sufficient condition.

The best opportunities for success in learning to read occurs when teachers integrate the following skills via explicit instruction in-

- phonemic awareness: the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in oral language;
- phonics: the relationships between letters and sounds;
- fluency: the ability to read quickly and naturally, recognise words automatically and group words quickly;
- vocabulary knowledge: new words and what they mean; and
- text comprehension: understanding what is being read and developing higher-order thinking skills.

Because these are essential skills for the development of competence in reading, spelling and writing, they must be taught early, systematically, explicitly and well. Parents and caregivers have a positive role to play by regularly reading aloud with their children, especially during the formative pre-school and early school years.

A summary by Dr. Ken Rowe (Committee Chair, National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy) published in ACER, *Research Developments,* No.15, Winter, pp., 11-13, 2006.

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