



Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction

Program Research Base



Wright Group

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Phonemic Awareness and Phonics in Wright Group LEAD21

Executive Summary

Phonemic awareness and phonics have been identified as two of the five essential elements of reading instruction (National Reading Panel 2000) and represent a critical component of instructional programs for emergent and beginning readers. **Wright Group LEAD21** provides systematic and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics to ensure that all students have the basic tools necessary to break the code and become independent and strategic readers.

Instruction related to phonemic awareness, the ability to distinguish and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken language, begins from the very start of the school year in kindergarten. Children are taught to hear and distinguish rhymes, blend and split syllables, and perform phonemic segmentation and manipulation tasks. The phonemic awareness lessons are 10-15 minutes in duration, resulting in 20 hours of instruction over the school year, as recommended by the National Reading Panel. Lessons are taught in a whole-group setting, with many opportunities for children to practice and apply skills in individual literacy station activities. A phonemic awareness component continues into the first grade program.

Instruction related to phonics, the relationship between the sounds of language and the alphabetic symbols (letters) used to represent those sounds, is introduced in kindergarten and further developed in first and second grades. Phonics is taught and reviewed in a whole-group setting in kindergarten through Grade 2. Students are also provided with the opportunity to practice phonics elements individually in centers.

LEAD21 teaches sound-symbol connection in the context of appealing, accessible texts at an appropriate interest level. Students are engaged in blending sounds and reading Decodable Readers. The elements taught in the phonics lessons drive the word list in the weekly spelling lessons for first grade and second grade.

LEAD21 draws upon the most current research findings and best practices in early literacy instruction to support students' acquisition of phonemic awareness and phonics skills. The concepts are carefully sequenced from the most accessible to the most complex, with multiple opportunities for review, reinforcement, and practice.

Phonics Instruction in Wright Group LEAD21 Reading Program

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

Reading has four cueing systems: semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphophonic. The semantic system focuses on the meaning of individual words. The syntactic system focuses on word order in sentences. The pragmatic system focuses on social and cultural context. And, the graphophonic system focuses on the alphabetic symbols (letters) used to represent the forty-four different sounds in the English language. Proficient readers are able to use all of the cueing systems simultaneously and effortlessly to construct meaning from written texts.

After five years of listening to the language and up to four years of speaking the language, students come to school with some facility for using the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic cueing systems. However, most students have the least amount of experience with the graphophonic cueing system. That is the reason that phonemic awareness and phonics justifiably receive the time and attention that they get in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade classrooms.

Phonemic awareness is the ability to distinguish and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken language. Instruction in phonemic awareness includes these skills:

- phoneme identity
- phonemic isolation
- separating the beginning sound in a word (onset) from the rest of the sounds in the word (rime)
- blending individual sounds into a spoken word
- separating (segmenting) a spoken word into individual sounds
- deleting and manipulating phonemes in a word

(Additional skills are covered in **LEAD21** in the broader category of phonological awareness: identifying rhyming words, sentence segmentation, and syllable segmentation.)

Stanovich (1994) emphasizes the importance of phonemic awareness, stating that it is a potent predictor of success in learning to read. His research found that phonemic awareness is more highly related to reading proficiency than tests of general intelligence, reading readiness, and listening comprehension. Adams (1990) found that lack of phonemic awareness is the most accurate predictor of the failure to learn how to read.

Phonics is the relationship between the sounds of language and the alphabetic symbols (letters) used to represent those sounds. Knowledge of phonics helps beginning and struggling readers learn how to read and spell. The English language is based on the alphabetic principle, and hence understanding this principle is absolutely essential for learning how to read English. When students understand the connection between phonemes and the alphabetic symbols, they can map these sounds and symbols together to break the code. Students who succeed in breaking the code do not need to devote energy and attention to print processing. Processing becomes automatic. Then students can focus on the important task of comprehending—the true purpose of reading.

Phonics has been one of the most polarizing issues in the history of reading instruction in American education. Educators have engaged in debates about how much phonics should be taught, when it should be taught, how it should be taught, and even whether it should be taught at all! However, four major research reviews over a period of two decades have yielded consistent findings on the importance of phonics in reading instruction (Anderson, et al. 1985; Adams 1990; Snow, et al. 1998; National Reading Panel 2000). One simply cannot any longer dispute the critical role of phonics in reading instruction.

One simply cannot any longer dispute the critical role of phonics in reading instruction.

LEAD21 draws upon the most current research findings and best practices in early literacy instruction to develop a program that supports students' complete acquisition of phonemic awareness and phonics skills. The concepts are carefully sequenced from the most accessible to the most complex, with multiple opportunities for review, reinforcement, and practice.

LEAD21 Model for Effective Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction

LEAD21 uses a framework based on sound research to teach phonemic awareness and phonics skills. The gradual release of responsibility begins with explicit instruction and moves students to independent use of a skill (Pearson and Gallagher 1983).

Level One: Introduce the Skill. In the first level of instruction, the teacher explains the phonemic awareness or phonics element. Then the teacher engages the students in reproducing the sound (or reading the rhyming pictures, and so on). This instructional process takes place in a whole-group setting. This level of explicit instruction has the highest level of teacher support.

Level Two: Model the Skill. In the next level of instruction, the teacher models the use of the phonemic awareness or phonics element. The teacher might blend sounds into words, or segment a word into sounds. The teacher modeling is done using the Theme Reader: Concepts Big Book, the board, or the picture or word cards. Teacher modeling takes place during whole-group instruction, which is followed up or reviewed in small groups, as needed. This level of instruction also has a high level of teacher support.

Level Three: Practice the Skill. The teacher invites students to participate in the activity. The students blend, segment, or spell with teacher support. The teacher points to the letters on the board and blends along with the students. The teacher might also engage students in shared writing to provide practice for the focused phonics element. When the students demonstrate a level of competence, the teacher withdraws his/her oral support but continues to point. The amount of teacher support is lower at this level of instruction; the level of student control increases.

Level Four: Guided Literacy. At this level, the teacher relinquishes the responsibility of blending, segmenting, reading, or writing for, to, or with the students. The teacher provides support as the students blend, segment, or spell words. The teacher monitors and evaluates the students' level of proficiency to determine when they seem ready to move on to doing the task on their own or learning a new phonics element. Guided practice is usually done in small groups. This level of instruction has a high level of student control; teacher support is much lower. The teacher's role is to observe, monitor, and coach, if needed.

Level Five: Independent Use. Unlike levels one through four, this level of instruction occurs in independent reading and writing settings rather than in a whole-group or a small-group setting. Students practice and solidify their knowledge of phonics elements via literacy stations, independent reading of Decodable Readers, and writing. The students use their knowledge of phonics elements in actual reading and writing. Teachers give students encouragement and support through questioning and reminders, which help them effectively apply the taught skills.

Phonemic Awareness Instruction in LEAD21

Phonemic awareness instruction begins in kindergarten and is reinforced in first grade in **LEAD21**. In accordance with the National Reading Panel recommendations, phonemic awareness is explicitly and systematically taught in a carefully developed scope and sequence of lessons and routines. The daily phonemic awareness lessons are ten to fifteen minutes in duration, totaling approximately twenty hours of instruction over the school year, per the National Reading Panel's recommendations, and are presented in a whole-group format. Additionally, there are opportunities for students to practice independently in literacy stations.

The phonemic awareness instruction in **LEAD 21** begins with the most basic and accessible lessons during the first weeks of kindergarten. Adams (1990) identified five levels of phonemic awareness activities from the simplest to the most complex:

- demonstrating an ear for the sounds of words, measured by knowledge of nursery rhymes
- performing oddity tasks—comparing and contrasting the sounds of words for initial, medial, and final sound matches
- splitting off and blending together phonemes of single-syllable words
- performing phonemic segmentation (such as counting out the number of phonemes in a word)
- performing phoneme manipulation tasks (such as adding or deleting a particular phoneme and regenerating a word from the remainder)

The phonemic awareness instruction in **LEAD 21** begins with the most basic and accessible lessons during the first weeks of kindergarten.

In **LEAD21**, phonemic awareness instruction in kindergarten was developed with the goal of introducing the simpler activities in the above list. The students are engaged in distinguishing individual phonemes in words, identifying matching phonemes, and phoneme manipulation tasks.

The National Reading Panel recommends teaching letters of the alphabet in conjunction with phonemic awareness lessons. This helps students apply their phonemic awareness skills to reading and writing. **LEAD21** used that recommendation in developing the phonemic awareness lessons for units three through eight in the kindergarten program. These lessons introduce, review, and reinforce the phonetic elements with phonemic awareness instruction.

Phonemic awareness lessons in the **LEAD 21** kindergarten program feature these skills:

- Orally segmenting words into syllables
- Orally blending words into onsets and rimes
- Blending phonemes to make one-syllable words
- Phoneme matching initial, final, and medial sounds

The National Reading Panel points out that while phonemic awareness instruction is a “key component that contributes significantly to the effectiveness of a beginning reading and spelling program, it does not constitute a complete reading program.” The **LEAD21** kindergarten program carefully balances the phonemic awareness lessons with other essential components of literacy acquisition, including oral language development, vocabulary development, story comprehension, and content area concepts. The phonemic awareness lessons are structured to provide a natural and logical bridge to phonics instruction.

Phonemic awareness instruction in kindergarten and first grade appears at the beginning of each day, and it is integrated into phonics instruction. A Phonemic Awareness Warm Up precedes the explicit instruction of specific phonics elements. For instance, in Unit 5 of first grade, the students work on reading and spelling words with the /ō/ sound spelled *o_e*. Before the students are shown any letters, the teacher reads a list of words and asks the students to raise their hands when they hear a word that contains the /ō/ sound. In follow-up activities, students can apply their experience in blending phonemes from their kindergarten phonemic lessons to decoding /ō/ words.

Phonics Instruction in the LEAD21 Kindergarten Program

When students begin to gain some facility with alphabetic knowledge in kindergarten, phonics is introduced. The first phonics lessons in kindergarten are focused on consonant sounds. Consonant sounds are easy for students to hear and identify because they are fairly regular, hence the name—consonant. Instruction begins with the consonants that are among the easiest for students to hear and distinguish: /m/, /d/, and /s/. After a week of practice, three new consonants are introduced: /p/, /t/, and /h/. A student who knows consonant sounds and has some facility in the other cueing systems has a very powerful tool in his/her arsenal to take on the task of reading. In the supportive setting of a lesson using the Differentiated Readers, students are offered the opportunity to try applying their fledgling reading skills.

After the first six consonants have been introduced, the first vowel, short *a*, is taught. With a repertoire of six consonants, short *a*, and extensive practice in phoneme blending, kindergarten students using **LEAD21** are ready to decode one syllable words such as *pat* and *map*. Students are now well on their way to successful experiences in breaking the code.

The instructional sequence in Kindergarten introduces a new phonics element on Day 1 and Day 3 of each week, and then reviews skills on Day 2 and Day 4 of each week. Then all of the phonics elements introduced during the week are again reviewed on the fifth day of instruction. The fourth week of the month is a review week; no new phonics elements are taught. This basic weekly sequence of instruction continues through the first grade program, described in the next section.

In the kindergarten program, the phonics elements introduced to students are the consonant sounds and the short vowels. To ensure continued success, the phonics lessons in Units 1 and 2 of the first grade program review virtually all the consonants and short vowel sounds before any new elements are introduced.

See the charts on pages 9 through 11 for an overview of the phonics instruction in Kindergarten through Grade 2.

Phonics in the LEAD21 Grade 1 and Grade 2 Program

Phonics instruction in the first and second grade program is carefully developed through a variety of proven experiences and routines. Reflecting research recommendations (Anderson et al., 1985; Adams 1990; Snow, et al. 1998; National Reading Panel 2000), the instruction is explicit and systematic. Students receive instruction in whole group, and they get independent practice in literacy stations. The spelling concepts taught in each lesson are derived from the phonics elements.

The basic sequence for Grade 1 phonics instruction is carefully laid out so that two new phonics elements are introduced each week:

- A new phonics element is introduced on Day 1, then reviewed and reinforced on Day 4.
- Another new phonics element is introduced on Day 3, then reviewed and reinforced on Day 2 of the following week.
- Day 5 offers time for pursuing an Inquiry project.
- Week 4 is designated as a review week—no new phonics elements are taught.

The sequence in Grade 2 phonics instruction is slightly different:

- A new phonics element is introduced on Day 1.
- The new element from the previous week is reviewed and reinforced on Day 3.
- Day 5 offers time for pursuing an Inquiry project.
- Week 4 of each unit is a review week—no new phonics elements are taught.

Whole-Group Instruction

In whole-group lessons, the teacher introduces words with the phonics element, models blending, and leads the students in practicing blending the sounds. The whole-group format is an efficient way to provide all students with key information on the phonics element that will be practiced throughout the week of instruction. The whole-group activities are interactive and scaffolded to allow all students to participate. The teacher follows up whole-group lessons with literacy stations to meet students' instructional needs. There is also opportunity for quick reviews in small groups.

Also covered in the whole-group setting is Spelling and Word Study instruction. Spelling lists change weekly, providing focused practice for the phonics skills. Word Study skills are introduced once per week to the whole class and are practiced once during that week. A *Phonics Companion* page is written for each Word Study skill and phonics element. Although the instruction for all these strands takes place in whole-group, the *Phonics Companion* is completed independently.

**Grade K Whole-Group Phonics Instruction
Units 3 through 8**

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Phonics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Skill • Phonemic Awareness Warm-Up • Practice Segmenting • Practice Skill • Use Alphabet/Sound Card • Connect Sound to Letter • Practice Connecting Sound to Letter 	Phonics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Skill • Phonemic Awareness Warm-Up • Practice Skill • Review Connect Sound to Letter 	Phonics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Skill • Phonemic Awareness Warm-Up • Practice Segmenting • Practice Skill • Use Alphabet/Sound Card • Connect Sound to Letter • Practice Connecting Sound to Letter 	Phonics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Skill • Phonemic Awareness Warm-Up • Practice Skill • Review Connect Sound to Letter 	Phonics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discriminate Skill • Phonemic Awareness Warm-Up • Segment Words • Review Skill • Review Skill • Practice Skill
Letter Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write Letter • Practice Writing Letter 	Letter Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Writing Letter • Practice Writing Letter 	Letter Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write Letter • Practice Writing Letter • High-Frequency Words 	Letter Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Writing Letter • Practice Writing Letter 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-Frequency Words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Decodable or Decodable Readers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-Frequency Words 	

Whole-Group Phonics Instruction, Grade 1			
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Phonics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Skill • Phonemic Awareness Warm-Up • Use Sound-Spelling Card <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show Example Words 2. Model Blending 3. Practice Blending 4. Practice Blending in Context • High-Frequency Words • Introduce Decodable Reader 	Phonics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Skill • Phonemic Awareness Warm-Up • Practice Blending • Practice Blending in Context • Build Words • Review Word Pattern • High-Frequency Words • Reread Decodable Reader 	Phonics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Skill • Phonemic Awareness Warm-Up • Use Sound-Spelling Card <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show Example Words 2. Model Blending 3. Practice Blending 4. Practice Blending in Context • High-Frequency Words • Introduce Decodable Reader 	Phonics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Skill • Phonemic Awareness Warm-Up • Practice Blending • Practice Blending in Context • Build Words • Review Word Pattern • High-Frequency Words • Reread Decodable Reader
Spelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce List • Administer Pretest 	Spelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice 	Spelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice 	Spelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice
	Word Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Skill 		Word Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Skill

The spelling posttest is administered on Day 5.

Whole-Group Phonics Instruction, Grade 2			
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Phonics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Skill • Use Sound-Spelling Card <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study Example Words 2. Model Blending 3. Practice Blending 4. Practice Blending in Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-Frequency Words • Introduce Decodable Reader 		Phonics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Skill • Practice Blending • Practice Blending in Context • Build Words • Review Word Pattern • High-Frequency Words • Reread Decodable Reader 	
Spelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce List • Administer Pretest 	Spelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice 	Spelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice 	Spelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice
	Word Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Skill 		Word Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Skill

The spelling posttest is administered on Day 5.

Small-Group Work

One of the unique aspects of **LEAD21** is the built-in differentiated instruction at four levels of achievement for small-group instruction:

- Intensive—students in need of the most support
- Strategic—students in need of extra support
- Benchmark—students working at the expected level of achievement
- Advanced—students exceeding the expected level of achievement

Students working at the Intensive and Strategic levels receive multiple and varied opportunities to practice the phonics elements in the lesson, including opportunity to reread the decodable.

Phonics review in small groups gives students the opportunity to apply the designated phonics skill under the watchful eye of the teacher. The teacher is ready to step in and provide a scaffold or a bit of coaching as needed. Small-group instruction consists of a variety of experiences to ensure success: reading decodables, practice in the *Phonics Companion*, as well as isolating the phonics element when it is encountered while the group is reading Differentiated Readers. Each of these experiences is now discussed in more detail below.

Students working at the Intensive and Strategic levels receive multiple and varied opportunities to practice the phonics elements in the lesson, including opportunity to reread the decodable.

1. Reading Decodable Readers

LEAD21 includes Decodable Readers to give students practice in applying the phonics elements that they have learned. Decodable Readers are books that are specially written to infuse a larger than normal number of words utilizing a specific phonics element. The balance of high-frequency words and words utilizing the focused phonics element gives students the unique opportunity to engage in practicing sound-symbol correspondence while actually reading. Juel and Roper-Schneider (1985) found that first-grade students' knowledge of phonics and their overall reading achievement were both positively correlated with their opportunities to read from decodable texts. Students' accuracy and word recognition skills have also been shown to be positively and significantly correlated with reading a greater number of highly decodable texts (Hoffman et al. 2001).

Teachers might follow up the review of the whole-group lesson by engaging the small group in reading a decodable book. Students will get multiple opportunities to apply the phonics element while reading the book. The same book can then be used for independent practice. In **LEAD21**, Decodable Readers are only one of the

types of books available in the program. There are also the following: Theme Reader: Literature Big Book (Grades K–2); Theme Reader: Concepts Big Book (Grades K–2); Differentiated Readers (Grades K–5); Theme Reader: Literature Little Book (Grades K–2). The decodable readers have a very specific purpose—to practice applying phonics elements while reading. All students have the Differentiated Reader as the main text and get to practice other aspects of reading by using the other books included in the program.

All students have the Differentiated Reader as the main text and get to practice all other aspects of reading by using the other books included in the program.

2. Practicing in the *Phonics Companion*

LEAD21 provides a *Phonics Companion* as another option for practicing phonics elements. Teachers can use the *Phonics Companion* to solidify instruction. Some students will benefit from additional instruction, especially instruction that involves an additional modality of learning. In the other phonics lessons, students have used listening, speaking, and reading. The *Phonics Companion* adds the modality of writing. Teachers can encourage students to pronounce the sounds while writing in the work text to involve the students in simultaneously seeing, hearing, reading, and writing, which engages them in a powerful learning experience.

3. Phonics Elements Within the Core Text

The ultimate goals of phonics instruction are for students to break the code to make print processing automatic, and for them to have access to effective use of the graphophonic cueing system when they need it (Stahl 1992). While students read the selection in the core reading text, they will encounter words using the focused phonics element. This offers students the opportunity to apply the skill that they have learned in a variety of phonics lessons (whole group, small group, decodable reader, *Phonics Companion*) to an in-context reading experience.

The experience of encountering a phonics element while reading a “regular text” (as opposed to a decodable text) supports students in using the cueing systems fluidly and simultaneously. Students are also explicitly taught to use context clues in **LEAD21**. Context clues refer to the use of syntactic and meaning clues to help identify an unknown or difficult word in a text that is being read. Knowledge of phonics elements provides extra confirmation to the students’ use of context clues. All of the selections in core reading texts include words that utilize the focused phonics element.

Independent Practice of Phonics Elements

The final level of the early literacy lesson framework is independent application of the skills taught. Students are provided numerous opportunities to apply phonics skills in **LEAD21**. They can independently read the variety of texts provided in the program. Students can practice applying phonics skills in tasks and games at the literacy stations. They can apply phonics skills in their writing. Most of all, students can apply their phonics skills in independent *Phonics Companion* work, as well as independent reading of Differentiated Readers, trade books, books in classroom and other libraries, and books that families purchase for children in bookstores and school book club programs.

The Phonics-Spelling Connection in LEAD21

The elements taught in the phonics lessons drive the word list in the weekly spelling lessons for first grade and second grade. The reciprocity among reading, phonics, and spelling has been clearly documented in numerous studies (Bear and Templeton 1998; Ehri 1997, 237–269; Juel 1991, 2:759–788). The National Reading Panel reports that phonics instruction contributes to students’ ability to apply their knowledge of the alphabetical system to spell words. Spelling engages students in encoding words—a higher application of sound-symbol relationships, thus deepening their knowledge of phonics. Since phonics and spelling are aligned in **LEAD21**, the spelling lessons follow the same scope and sequence of skills as the phonics elements taught—starting with the simplest and gradually increasing in difficulty to the most complex. All spelling lists are introduced by administering a spelling pretest to students early in the week. However, before the pretest is administered, the students have already participated in a variety of activities using the focused phonics elements. They have done a phonemic awareness warm-up led by the teacher, using the sounds featured in the week’s spelling list. They have read sentences featuring words using the spelling pattern. They may have read a decodable book with the same phonics/spelling elements in a small group or individually. Therefore, students come to the spelling pretest having already experienced the spelling pattern in a number of ways.

Students are given multiple opportunities to practice spelling the words throughout the week. They are engaged in activities such as spelling games, word sorts, literacy station tasks, and word hunts. The teacher continues to stress the spelling pattern used in the word list. Most of the spelling lessons are taught in the whole-group setting.

It is important that the spelling patterns become part of the students’ writing vocabulary. The goal of spelling in **LEAD21** is to teach students how to spell—not to teach them to spell the words on the weekly list.

Word Study and Vocabulary in LEAD21

Knowledge of phonics elements and spelling patterns significantly contribute to the goal of becoming a proficient reader. However, there are other features of language that children need to know. In the grades 1 and 2 Word Study sequence of instruction, students learn affixes, contractions, compound words, plural constructions, inflected endings, and multisyllabic words. In Grades K–5, the Vocabulary Strategies sequence of instruction covers such topics as homophones, synonyms, antonyms, word relationships, and dictionary use.

In all grades, the goal of **LEAD21** is to teach students word learning skills. For example, explicit instruction in prefixes and suffixes such as *non-*, *mis-*, and *-ion* supports students in deriving the meaning of unknown words.

Conclusion

LEAD21 provides teachers with a systematic and explicit phonics instructional plan as part of an integrated literacy program. Students are taught that their phonics work is a means to an end; that they can use phonics to break the code in engaging, age-appropriate texts. The program provides carefully leveled texts for students to begin applying phonics lessons, as well as texts with graduated difficulty for students who are immediately ready to work on broader comprehension tasks.

LEAD21 Phonics Pedagogy

Research Says	LEAD21 Delivers
Phonemic awareness is a “potent predictor of success” (Stanovich 1994).	Daily phonemic awareness routines
Phonics plays a critical role in reading instruction, (Anderson, et al. 1985; Adams 1990; Snow, et al. 1998; National Reading Panel 2000).	Daily phonics routine linked to Spelling strands in Grades 1 and 2
National Reading Panel recommends explicit and systematic phonics instruction, averaging twenty hours per academic year (National Reading Panel 2000).	Daily phonics instruction and practice, totaling over twenty hours of instruction annually, in Grades 1 and 2
National Reading Panel recommends teaching alphabetic knowledge, (National Reading Panel 2000; Barr, et al. 2004)	Units 1 through 2 in Kindergarten devoted to alphabetic knowledge, with follow-up letter production and supporting sound-spelling practice in Units 3 through 8
Research has identified four methods of differentiation: change in content, change in the amount of teaching, change in the level of instruction, change in the intensity of instruction (Gibson and Hasbrouck 2008; Norlund 2003; Tomlinson 2003).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-group work is not just devoted to Guided Reading, but incorporates opportunities for differentiation and allows the teacher to adjust the intensity of instruction. • Differentiated Readers at four different levels allow teachers to change level of instruction, while keeping all students in the same thematic content. • Intensive and Strategic groups get extra practice with Decodable Readers, with teacher support, to change the amount of instruction. • Intensive and Strategic groups apply the phonics skill in Differentiated Readers. • Benchmark and Advanced groups apply their phonics knowledge to texts written at their level, with reduced teacher support. • Scaffolded teaching opportunities in whole group instruction as well as small-group instruction target students who need more phonics support, or who need more phonics challenge.
Work texts are a reading instruction staple for almost 100 years (Stahl 1992).	Independent practice for all students in <i>Phonics Companion</i> .
Linked phonics and spelling instruction supports reading success (Bear and Templeton 1989; Ehri 1997; Juel 1991).	Systematic, weekly spelling instruction is linked to the phonics skills, appearing with the phonics sequence of instruction.

Author Biography

Dr. Shari Frost has had a varied professional life as an educator. She has served as a classroom teacher, a reading specialist, a staff developer, and an instructor at the university level. Shari taught grades kindergarten through fifth in the Chicago Public Schools for more than 25 years. Her classroom has been featured in instructional videos by the National Council of Teachers of English, Celebration Press, Scott Foresman, the State of Illinois, the CTELL Project, and the Annenberg Teaching Reading K–2 video series. Shari was awarded the Golden Apple Award for Exemplary Teaching in 2000.

Shari earned a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Northeastern Illinois University in 1973 and a master's degree in reading from the same institution in 1991. Her doctorate degree in Reading and Language was completed at National-Louis University in 1998. Currently, Dr. Frost is the director of the Literacy Partners Project, a collaboration between National-Louis University and the Chicago Public Schools. In this role, she works directly with teachers and children in classrooms to support the improvement of literacy instruction. She also supports and provides professional development for the literacy coaches in National-Louis University's Coaching Collaborative.

Dr. Frost is an active member in professional organizations including National Council of Teachers of English, where she has assumed a variety of leadership roles. For the past three years, she has been a member of the advisory board for the Literacy Coaching Online website, sponsored by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. She is a regular columnist on Choice Literacy, an online publication, where she frequently writes about literacy coaches. She has authored articles in professional journals and magazines as well as chapters in professional books.

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