DEVELOPING PHONICS KNOWLEDGE USING
A WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH:
A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the School of Education
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by

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April 1993
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks to Dr. Gordon Anderson for his guidance throughout this project, to Nancy and Robin for contributing their typing skills, to my parents for their support and encouragement, and to Jeff, Josh, and Amy for their patience and love.

Finally, my sincere appreciation to the teachers of Lancaster who shared with me their teaching methods and confirmed that the "Whole Language" approach to teaching not only helps to develop successful readers, but fosters children's natural love for reading.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Whole language classrooms are becoming increasingly evident in schools throughout the country. The whole language philosophy is based on the belief that to learn language it must be kept whole, real, and relevant, and that skills and strategies are developed in the context of authentic literacy events. According to current research, literacy development is a natural process much like our oral development. We learn by actively seeking to construct meaning from text, gradually forming concepts about print. This is attained by exposure to books and other forms of purposeful print.

In response to research in support of whole language, there has been a growing concern about the use of traditional basal reading systems, not only with the reading series itself but the transmissive model of teaching it reflects. The basal series are designed to teach isolated phonics skills in a sequential manner using workbooks, worksheets, and drills. The belief is that one must master specific skills before being able to read. This contradicts what current research has revealed about literacy learning and is why many teachers have abandoned the basals and are implementing whole language approaches to teach reading.

Because whole language teachers do not teach phonics in isolation, unfortunately, there are widespread myths that these teachers do not engage in direct instruction, and that phonics is not taught. On the contrary, phonics is taught but in a variety of ways
both directly and indirectly. Students' use of letter/sound knowledge is assessed continuously rather than tested in isolation. Whole language teachers are concerned with how well they use their phonics knowledge in conjunction with other cues as they read.

The researcher felt a handbook designed for teachers with ideas for developing phonics knowledge through reading and writing activities would not only help to offset these myths, but encourage and motivate teachers to develop successful literature-based programs.

Within the researcher's school district, several teachers have taken steps to challenge the traditional methods by implementing whole language programs. Although there are commercial literature-based alternatives available, limitations in funds and the need to expand beyond predeveloped programs motivated these teachers to combine their creativity and professional knowledge to develop their own programs. The researcher saw the need for a networking system between these teachers for sharing ideas. In attempts to address this problem, the researcher included in the handbook original ideas and activities shared by these whole language teachers that they had found to work effectively with their students in promoting literacy development.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The purpose of this project was to design a handbook for primary level teachers who are interested in ideas for developing phonics knowledge using a whole language approach.
PROCEDURE

Subjects and Setting

The handbook was primarily designed for teachers of primary level students. The activities range in appropriateness for use with emergent to early fluency readers. In order to develop an effective handbook of activities, primary level students from a number of whole language environments within the Lancaster City School District were studied.

Data Collection

Observation of whole language classrooms and feedback from interviews with whole language teachers provided a majority of the information compiled in the handbook. Also, information from professional articles, books, and manuals were used.

Design

The handbook was designed into two major sections: (1 Indirect teaching of phonics through reading and writing and (2 Direct teaching of phonics through literature and activities.

The indirect teaching ideas included using children’s literature, developing language experience charts, shared book experiences, and purposeful writing activities. Ideas for direct teaching of phonics included teaching initial consonants using alliteration, rhyming elements for teaching medial plus final sounds, materials with onomatopoeia words, phonics oriented activities as follow-ups to shared reading experiences, and Elkonin boxes for learning sounds in words.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Phonics - reading instruction involving decoding symbols to sound, making
spelling to sound correspondences.

**Context** - the setting, physical or linguistic, in which words occur and that places constraints on the range of alternatives that these words might be.

**Big Books** - large print books used for group viewing.

**Onomatopoeia** - words that "make" the sounds they designate.

**Alliteration** - repetition of initial consonant sounds and blends.

**Whole Language** - speaking, listening, reading, and writing real and meaningful words in purposeful context.

**RESULTS**

The result of this project was an available handbook for primary level teachers providing direct and indirect teaching ideas, activities, and teaching strategies for developing phonics knowledge using a whole language approach. It was the hope of the researcher that this handbook would not only motivate teachers to implement whole language methods, but be a helpful resource for improving existing whole language programs.
In the past decade, the whole language movement has gained great momentum. It has renewed attention to individualized reading and is redefining and refining the process of using "real" books to teach and foster literacy. (Tunnell and Jacobs, 1989) Research supports that children learning to read must learn to use letter/sound knowledge in conjunction with context and prior knowledge which is why whole language teachers engage their students in real books instead of isolated skills instruction. In fact, "too much phonics instruction in isolation can actually help to create poor readers, particularly readers who struggle to sound out words but do not succeed because they are not using meaning along with their letter/sound knowledge." (Weaver, 1990)

Teaching phonics in isolation is common practice for skills-based programs. Actual reading and writing for meaning do not begin until considerable skills in phonics have been developed. The belief is that children need to learn parts of language first starting with letters and sound symbols moving towards phrases and sentences and finally to whole stories. Proponents of phonics-first typically argue that children get off to a better start in reading if they first learn to "break the code" of our language so they can sound out unfamiliar words. (Routman, 1991)

In comparison, the whole language philosophy sees semantics (meaning) as most important but does not exclude or diminish the importance of phonics (letter/sound
correspondence) and syntax (grammar). In fact, the belief is that our language involves all three cueing systems and that effective readers use these cues simultaneously to make sense of print. (Routman, 1991) Therefore, in a whole language classroom children's literacy is developed in the context of authentic reading and writing events rather than presenting bits and pieces of language, or isolated language skills taken out of context.

Whole language classrooms require that students engage in real reading and writing not exercises in reading and writing. A literature-based program uses a variety of literature and print books and has students write for real purposes - journals, letters, notes, lists, stories, poems, etc. Whole language teachers avoid using workbooks and ditto sheets that teach a traditional skills-based program. Whole language teachers know that children learn to love reading through their experiences with rich literature and that they become writers through the process of meaningful writing.

COMPARISON OF WHOLE LANGUAGE AND SKILLS PROGRAMS

Several studies have concluded that literature-based whole language programs have had a greater positive effect on students' attitudes toward reading than skills-based programs using basals. One particular study that looked closely at students' conceptions about reading found that good readers define reading as being concerned with meaning while poor readers found reading to be a process of converting symbol to sound. (Rasinski and Deford, 1985) The findings in a study done by Cairney (1988) show that student's perception of literacy as a result of using basals were based on dysfunctional notions. They did not see meaning as important, but placed emphasis on decoding skills,
vocabulary, and accuracy. Kenneth Goodman, an advocate of whole language, supports the move away from basal materials. After the examination of the ways in which basal programs select and write stories, he concluded that "basals have tended to isolate sounds, letters, and words from the language system. And they have given little attention to the systems and how they relate in natural texts." (Goodman, 1988) By controlling vocabulary and syntax, style is lost which makes language less natural and predictable. Because basals often contain these contrived stories, many students may perceive reading as uninteresting and for educational purposes only. Unfortunately, they get the message that reading is not for pleasure. Natural texts, on the other hand, supports reading as a meaning-related activity.

A number of experimental studies cite a greater success from the use of literature-based programs on student's achievement in comparison to the use of skills-based instruction. One study by Cohen (1968) compared a control group of 130 2nd graders who were taught with basal readers with an experimental group of 155 2nd graders who were using a literature component along with regular instruction. The treatment of the experimental group consisted of reading aloud selected trade books to the children which were without fixed vocabulary or sentence length and then following up with meaning related activities. These children were encouraged to read these books anytime. Results from the Metropolitan Achievement tests and A Free Association Vocabulary Test administered in the beginning and at the end of the school year showed the experimental group to have a significant increase in word knowledge, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and quality of vocabulary over the control group.
Another experimental study concluded that "the use of children's literature to teach children to read had a positive effect upon student's achievement and attitudes toward reading-much greater than the traditional methods used." (Elredge and Butterfield, 1986) Their study involved 1,149 2nd grade children from fifty Utah classrooms. They compared a traditional basal approach to five other experimental methods, including two variations of a literature-based program. Using an instrument for evaluating phonics skills, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, and a Pictorial Self Concept Scale, the researchers discovered 14 of 20 significant differences among the methods favored the literature-based approach.

A study by Fader (1976) concluded notable success from use of literature-based programs with older children who had experienced years of failure with reading and writing. Students from the W. J. Maxey Boys Training School in Lake Whitmore, Michigan were provided with hundreds of paperback books without obligation to write book reports or summaries. Another midwestern boys training school was used as a control group. By the end of the year, the boys at W. J. Maxey showed significant gains over the control group on measures of self-esteem, literacy attitudes, anxiety, verbal proficiency, and reading comprehension.

In the Fiji Islands of the South Pacific, Elley and Mangubhai (1983) conducted a study using 380 non-English speaking children. To test the hypothesis that reading storybooks written in English would stimulate growth not only in reading but in oral language, the researchers divided the children into three treatment groups. The shared-book experience group read together from Big Books and did reading related activities.
The sustained silent reading group read storybooks silently and the control group used the traditional English-language course containing specific skills oriented tasks. The results on Standardized tests after eight months of differential instruction concluded that the experimental groups progressed at twice the normal rate in reading and listening comprehension. The students were also tested on the use of grammatical structures which were directly taught to the control group but not to the experimental group. Although the results were not statistically significant, the experimental group showed the greatest command in the use of grammatical structures.

The first quantitative study of a whole language approach in comparison with a code emphasis approach was by Ribowsky (1985). Holdaway’s Shared Book Experience program was used with the experimental group of kindergarteners while the Lipincott’s Beginning To Read, Write, and Listen program was used with the control group. The results indicate statistically significant differences in favor of the whole language group. Although the two classes scored similarly on the pretest measures, as a result of the post-test scores the whole language group scored higher in development of linguistic literacy. The whole language group even did better on the tests of letter recognition and knowledge of consonant letter/sound relationships.

Naturalistic studies have been done that have looked specifically at the growth within whole language classrooms employing literature-based programs. Gunderson and Shapiro (1987) collected and analyzed data from whole language classrooms including childrens log books, draft books, cooperative stories written by the whole class, and individual skill related assignments dealing with phonics. The researchers drew the
general conclusion that the childrens development of phonics skills and basic vocabulary did not suffer from the emphasis on authentic literacy instead of skills. In actuality, the researchers found that "the students used in their writing not only the high frequency words presented in the commonly used basal but also numerous words that would not have been encountered in the basal." (Weaver, 1990)

METHODS FOR DEVELOPING PHONICS KNOWLEDGE IN CONTEXT

In addition to research that supports the success of whole language programs over skills-based programs, is information pertaining to specific methods for developing phonics knowledge in context rather than as an isolated skill. According to Sherman (1979), reading aloud stories to children is an ideal way to familiarize students with sounds and patterns of language. Group readings of songs, poetry, and chants also helps them to work with language in its many forms and is a purposeful event. (Ferguson, 1990) Engaging students in shared book experiences is a fun and nonthreatening way to indirectly help students to acquire fundamental concepts about print and develop strategies. (Strickland, 1979) Teachers can directly teach phonics during shared reading by pointing out specific sound/symbol relationships and/or language patterns or involve students in specific follow-up activities such as developing language charts that stress initial consonants, blends, or vowels. The importance is keeping the phonics instruction in context by using words or language patterns from familiar stories, poems, or charts. Whole language teachers believe that phonics knowledge can be more effectively developed through these kinds of reading activities. Writing activities are also an integral
part of a whole language program and facilitates the development of phonics knowledge.

Through writing experiences children can develop their knowledge of letter/sound relationships and during the writing experience can draw from the students their phonics knowledge build on it and reinforce it.
CHAPTER III

A HANDBOOK FOR DEVELOPING PHONICS KNOWLEDGE USING A WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH
INDIRECT TEACHING METHODS

SHARED BOOK EXPERIENCE

An excellent teaching method for developing phonics knowledge and other language concepts in context is the shared book experience, developed in 1965 by Don Holdaway. The following concepts can be learned by participation in a shared book experience:

1. Conventions of Print
   - we read pages from top to bottom, left to right
   - we read words, not pictures
   - what a word is
   - what a letter is
   - what punctuation does

2. Strategies
   - using meaning as a clue to getting words
   - predicting
   - self correcting

3. Sight Vocabulary

4. Letter/Sound Relationships

Phonics knowledge is developed incidentally by exposing the children to literature from which they can absorb letter/sound knowledge and more directly by focusing the children’s attention on particular letter/sound associations. (Direct methods are outlined in Section 2 of the handbook beginning on page 40)
Procedure

For the shared book experience use a "Big Book": a commercially published big book, a child/teacher authored big book, or a chart written in large print.

1. Tune in by presenting a new or familiar verse, song, or chant - enlarged print and charts are always central.

2. Reread favorite stories - point to the words while reading. Before using selection, determine what aspects of print or reading strategies to emphasize. For example, using prior knowledge and context plus the initial consonant of a word to predict what the word might be.

3. Introduce a new story - the initial emphasis is simply on reading the story for enjoyment. Author, title, and cover illustration may be mentioned. Invite children to predict from this information what the story will be about.

4. Have children reread the story independently - small versions of the Big Book should be made available.

5. Follow up with arts related activity - engage children in arts, crafts, drama, music, writing or other related activity.

Repeated readings make big books a rich resource of language activities. The following suggestions for activities to be used with big books are strategies that may be used to help strengthen and extend understandings.

1. Tracking Print. Use your finger or a pointer to track the print as you read the story. Encourage the children to read along as they see and hear the words. This will help the students get a sense of the directionality and the match of speech to print.
2. Think Along. During the first reading of a story, demonstrate how readers think with text. Think aloud about your own understanding of certain aspects of the story. Model self inquiries such as: "I bet this story is about _____." "I wonder what will happen next?" "This reminds me of _____." "Now I understand why _____." The students are helped to see that readers are active thinkers who bring prior knowledge together with what they are reading to construct meaning.

3. Cloze Activities. As you read aloud, pause occasionally to let the children fill in the anticipated language. This involves the children in the meaningful prediction of words and phrases.

4. Examining Text Features. After several readings, focus children’s attention on distinctive features in the text; repeated words and word beginnings (letters, consonant clusters), punctuation marks, and so on. By taking a closer look at the text, children are helped to get a sense of the smaller units of language in relationship to the whole.

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE CHARTS

Engaging in a language experience means simply talking, writing and reading about an experience shared together by the class. An art project, a field trip, a science experiment, or baking bread are just a few examples of experiences that can be used.

Procedure

First, the teacher and children talk together about the experience, exploring ideas, impressions and feelings through language. Then the teacher records the experience in the children’s own words by writing on a chart in large print. When the text is complete,
the children and teacher read it together. It can then be placed on a wall in the classroom for the children to reread and to use to refer to when writing.

Phonics knowledge is taught indirectly during the writing process of the language experience. As the teacher prompts, clarifies and records, she has numerous opportunities to ask questions that draw attention to graphophonics, such as, "How do we spell pumpkin?" Questions can also focus on meaning. For example, "Where would I write that extra idea? Should we add that thought? Where should we add it?"

Throughout this process, the children can see writing modeled and there are many opportunities to demonstrate effective strategies for the children’s own writing. For example, when the teacher requests help in spelling, she might write a word in two or three different ways and let the children see which one looks correct. In some cases, she might circle a word that has been challenging for the children and help them to look it up later. When text needs to be added, arrows (\(\wedge\)) can be used. Text to be deleted can be crossed out, illustrating a part of the writing process that is often difficult for children who are used to "perfect" writing being expected.

Later, children also have an authentic purpose for practicing their best handwriting as they assist the teacher in rewriting the messy copy of the language experience chart. Because the charts come from the children they are likely to contain words that they will use in their own writing. The children feel a sense of achievement in being able to locate these words without assistance from the teacher and at the same time are strengthening their development of graphophononic cues.
The emergent reader is learning about conventions of print and beginning to learn simple reading strategies. The children's literature selected for use with emergent readers should reinforce left to right orientation by maintaining a left to right flow of illustrations and text. Beginning readers should start with books consisting of captions, gradually moving to short sentences and finally to paragraphs. The grammatical patterns need to be repetitive. Consistent grammatical patterns help children become aware of syntactic cues and provide patterns they can incorporate into their own writing.

Children in the early fluency stage of reading are also learning to use graphophonic, syntactic and semantic cue systems but have mastered many concepts of print such as directionality, one-to-one correspondence and the used of simple punctuation. Their books should feature more complex story lines, more fully developed characters, chapter breaks and other characteristics that foster deeper involvement in thought.

Emergent level books are excellent for use with guided reading, shared reading and independent reading. The Story Box, Sunshine, and Twig are among the leading emergent level books used in whole language classrooms.

**TWIG BOOKS** The Wright Group, Publishing Co.

The nonfiction stories in TWIG Books are about the natural world, living creatures, interesting cultures, delicate environments and the richness of human history. TWIG Books feature all the essential Whole Language structural elements that support the first
efforts of young readers, including rhyme, rhythm, repetition, natural language and consistent sentence patterns that aid prediction. Designed to enhance both THE STORY BOX and SUNSHINE programs. TWIG Books correlate to the emergent levels A-F in both programs with ease, supplementing and broadening the scope of your classroom library.

THE STORY BOX  The Wright Group, Publishing Co.

Grades K-1; Ages 5-6
These colorful emergent level books have rhyme, rhythm, repetition, illustrations that match the text, and story lines that are predictable but never boring. They are also written in a child's own natural language. Level 1 contains 56 fiction titles (24 available as big books with accompanying pupil-size book), 24 read together Big Books, and one rhyme Big Book. These books are designed to allow children to experience immediate success during their efforts at reading.

Grades 1-2; Ages 6-7
Here, books become more varied and a bit more complex. Text, vocabulary and plot grow more sophisticated as children become comfortable with their reading ability. At this level, children are prepared to appreciate such literary techniques as character development, engaging plots, dialogue and figurative language. By the time they have mastered books in level 7, students can move on to fluency level books found in their library.
THE SUNSHINE GROUP  The Wright Group, Publishing Co.

Sunshine Emergent Level
Grades K-1; Ages 5-6

Strong Support is critical to the success of emergent level readers, and Sunshine’s emergent level materials provide just that. Predictable sentence patterns, rhyme, rhythm, repetition, and illustrations matched to text are key features of emergent level books. Sets AA-DD and A-J of the Sunshine emergent level materials reinforce left to right flow reading orientation by maintaining left to right flow of illustrations and text. These stories, increasing gradually in difficulty, provide children with a gentle, natural progression to early fluency. For shared reading, many favorite titles from sets AA-DD and E-J and all titles in sets A-D are available as Big Books.

Sunshine Early Fluency Level
Grades 1-2; Ages 6-7

Literature at the early fluency level is more complex and varied; meant for children who can read. For those who still need support, these books continue to provide repetition and relevant story situations and to build on vocabulary already introduced. Sunshine’s range of literature at the early fluency level sustains interest in books of all types: fun-filled stories, informative Fact and Fantasy titles, and Big Rhyme Books full of poetry.
The following lists of predictable trade books are suggested reading material for emergent and early fluency readers. These books are easily readable because of their rhyme or rhythmic quality, repetition, natural language flow, meaningful story and quality illustrations that match with the text.


Alain. *One Two Three Going to Sea.* New York: Scholastic Book Service, 1964


Brand, Oscar. *When I First Came to this Land.* New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1974.


Rokoff, Sandra. *Here is a Cat.* Singapore: Hallmark Children’s Editions, undated.


**Predictable Books** Compiled by Charlotte S. Huck, The Ohio State University, Columbus.

**Wordless Books**


___________. *SUNSHINE.* Lothrop, 1981.

Spier, Peter. *PETER SPIER’S RAIN.* Doubleday, 1982

Environmental Print
Crews, Donald. TRUCK. Greenwillow, 1980.
Goor, Ron and Nancy. SIGNS. Crowell, 1983.
Hoban, Tana. I READ SIGNS. Greenwillow, 1983.

Questions and Refrains
Brown, Margaret Wise. GOODNIGHT MOON. Illustrated by Clement Hurd. Harper, 1947. (Scholastic)

Ginsburg, Mirra. GOOD MORNING CHICK. Illustrated by Byron Barton. Greenwillow, 1980. (Scholastic)
Kuskin, Karla. JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE. Harper, 1959, 1984 (Paper)
Slobodkina, Esphyr. CAPS FOR SALE. Scott, 1947. (Scholastic)
Watanabe, Shigeo. HOW DO I PUT IT ON? Illustrated by Tasuo Ohtomo. Philomel, 1979.


Language Patterns
Asch, Frank. JUST LIKE DADDY. Prentice-Hall, 1984. (Treehouse)
Campbell, Rod. DEAR ZOO. Four Winds, 1983. (Scholastic)
Kraus, Ruth. THE CARROT SEED. Illustrated by Crockett Johnson. Harper, 1945. (Scholastic)

Roffey, Maureen. HOME SWEET HOME. Coward-McCann, 1983.

CAT ON THE MAT.
THE ISLAND.
TOOT TOOT.


Story Patterns


Grimm Brothers. LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD. Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. Holiday, 1983.

Cumulative Tales


Kent, Jack. THE FAT CAT. Parents, 1971. (Penguin), Scholastic


Tolstoy, Alexi. THE GREAT BIG ENORMOUS TURNIP. Illustrated by Helen Oxenbury. Watts, 1968. (Paper)


Predictable Plots

Bumingham, John. MR. GRUMPY’S OUTING. Holt, 1971. (Scholastic)


----------. HAPPY BIRTHDAY SAM. Puffin/Penguin, 1981.


----------. TITCH. Macmillan, 1971. (Penguin)

----------. YOU'LL SOON GROW INTO THEM, TITCH. Greenwillow, 1983.


Rhymes


Alain. ONE, TWO, THREE, GOING TO SEA. Scholastic, 1964.

dePaola, Tomie. TOMMIE dePAOLA'S MOTHER GOOSE. Putnam's, 1985.


Wells, Rosemary. NOISY NORA. Dial, 1973. (Scholastic)

Songs


Bonne, Rose and Alan Mills. I KNOW AN OLD LADY. Rand McNally, 1961. (Scholastic)


Peek, Merle. ROLL OVER! A COUNTING BOOK. Clarion, 1981.


----------. SKIP TO MY LOU. Lippincott, 1975.

Familiar Sequence: Number, Days of Week, Months

Bang, Molly. TEN, NINE, EIGHT. Greenwillow, 1983.
Mack, Stan. 10 BEARS IN MY BED. Pantheon, 1974.
Sendak, Maurice. CHICKEN SOUP WITH RICE. Harper, 1962. (Scholastic)
WRITING

Engaging students in a variety of purposeful writing activities will help them to naturally develop phonics knowledge. Although there are no rigid stages in the development of writing, there are some general trends. Children’s earliest writing does not yet reflect an understanding of letter/sound associations. As children gain experience with reading books and other forms of print, they will begin to progress toward adult conventionality.

For the emergent writer, teachers can help to demonstrate relations between letters and sounds by modeling how to spell a word using only the sounds the children themselves can hear. Children will first focus on initial consonants gradually moving toward more sophisticated use of phonics knowledge.

The following example demonstrates how to actively help children develop letter/sound awareness through writing by drawing from the students rudimentary letter/sound knowledge and then reinforcing it. (Weaver, 1990 p.153)

Jenny: Mrs. Nicholas, how do you spell hospital?

Mrs. Nicholas: Spell it as best you can, Jenny.

Jenny: I don’t know how to spell it.

Mrs. Nicholas: I know you don’t know how to spell it, honey. I just want you to write as much of the word as you can.

Jenny: I don’t know any of it.

Mrs. Nicholas: Yes you do, Jenny. How do you think hospital starts? (Mrs. Nicholas pronounced hospital distinctly with a slight emphasis on
the first sound, but she deliberately avoided grossly distorting the pronunciation.)

Jenny: (very tentatively): h-s.

Mrs. Nicholas: Good! Write the hs. What do you hear next in hospital? (Again, Mrs. Nicholas pronounced the word hospital distinctly, this time with a slight emphasis on the second part.)

Jenny: (still tentatively): p-t.

Mrs. Nicholas: Yes! Write the pt. Now, what’s the last sound you hear in hospital? (While pronouncing the word hospital for the last time Mrs. Nicholas emphasized the last part without exaggerating it unduly.)

Jenny: (with some assurance): l.

Mrs. Nicholas: Excellent, Jenny, h-s-p-t-l is a fine way to spell hospital. There is another way to spell hospital but for now I want you to spell words you don’t know just as we did this one.
SYMBOL/SOUND CARDS

One teacher has found the chart below a helpful tool for her kindergarteners to use during their writing time. Laminated copies are made available to the children. Because the process of writing can be overwhelming, sometimes the child may not recall how to form a specific letter. The chart is handy for checking letter formation. If the child knows the beginning sound he wants to write but is unsure of what letter it is or just wants to double check, he can use the chart to match the sound he hears to the beginning sounds of the pictures and find the appropriate letter to write.
MODEL WRITING

Model writing provides an opportunity for teachers to model for children the thought processes that occur when we write. During the process, children collaborate with the teacher to bring sounds and symbols together and to make decisions regarding the use of print conventions.

The following examples were borrowed from The Story Box Teachers Manual, 1990, p.32-33.

Model 1

A Daily News Activity

First, children share their news verbally or by bringing in objects to show and share.

Then, using chart paper, the teacher begins the news report.

T: Who can tell me what today is?

Children: Monday.

T: Good. Who can show me where we begin writing? (Child comes up and points to upper left.)

T: Today is Monday. Who can tell me what the word today starts with?

Children: T.

T: Can you hear any other letters in today?

Children: D.

The teacher writes the d in the appropriate space, then fills in the rest of the word.

T: And what do we remember to leave before we start our next word?

Children: A space.
T: Good. The next word is is. Does anyone know how to spell is?

Children: S.

T: That’s right, and there’s a little i in front. (The teacher begins to write the word Monday.) What word am I writing now?

Children: Monday.

T: So, what do we want our news to be about today?

For this day, the children choose to write about a newspaper article that one of the children shared; the article is about a sick seal.

T: Would someone like to tell me what I’m going to write about?

Children: The sick seal.

The teacher begins writing, and the children read the words as they are written. The teacher writes The sick seal has, but notices that many of the children say was instead of has.

T: (Guiding the children to use graphophonic strategies) It could have been was, but is starts with an...

Children: H!

T: Good! And what does the sick seal have?

Children: A torn flipper.

T: (continuing to write the sentence) What letters can you hear in torn? What is a flipper?

The children respond with various answers. The teacher and children continue to write the story together in this manner. When the story is complete, they are ready to read it
together.

T: Everyone please look to the front so we can read. Who can tell us where to begin, which way we go, and where to go when we get to the end of the line?

A child comes up to the chart paper and points to the appropriate places, then all the children and the teacher read the news story together.

**Model 2**

Using an emergent level book (A Monster Sandwich) as its focus, the teacher begins by asking, "What could we put on our monster sandwich?" As the children make suggestions, the teacher writes them, focusing on sound/symbol knowledge by asking the following types of questions. The teacher thus models decisions that are made about print while writing:

- "What letters can you hear in ham? How does it start?"

  "What can you hear at the end of the word ham?"

- "Does anyone know how to spell cheese?"

- "Anyone want to take a guess at spelling tuna?"

- "What do we need if there is more than one pickle?"

- (Reading back through the list on the chart) "What is this one?"

**THE WRITING PROCESS**

Writing instruction focuses on what writers do before, during, and after writing, rather than just on the final written product. The stages a writer goes through includes
prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. Although most writing experiences for the emergent writer K-2 will only include the prewriting and drafting stages, children should be given the opportunity to select, revise, edit and publish some of their best pieces.

1. **Prewriting**

Prewriting is the time during which ideas are generated and clarified, thinking is stimulated and a desire to write is created. Prewriting strategies include:

- Choosing a topic
- Taking notes
- Talking
- Role playing
- Reflecting on a topic
- Interviewing
- Brainstorming
- Sketching
- Jot Lists
- Reading

Graphically organizing ideas in a web, outline or planning sheet.

2. **Drafting**

Drafting is the initial writing of ideas as thoughts are transferred from the writer’s mind to the paper. The emphasis should not be on mechanics but rather on content. Too much attention to mechanics at this stage may hinder the writer’s fluency.

3. **Revising**

Adding or deleting information, replacing inappropriate words, rearranging sentences and paragraphs.

4. **Editing**

During the editing phase, errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, subject-verb
agreement, verb-tense consistency and usage are corrected.

5. Publishing

Publishing is sharing children’s writing with others. Examples include reading a composition aloud to classmates, displaying pieces of writing on a bulletin board, making a book, sending a letter.

SPELLING DEVELOPMENT

To maximize the learning that occurs naturally through reading and writing, it is important to encourage children to employ strategies that involve a variety of cues. They should use both sight (How a word looks) and sound (What sounds do I hear?), in addition to meaning and syntax.

The following suggestions (Powell, 1990) are ways in which teachers can enhance children’s development of conventional spelling and the effective use of letter/sound association meaning and syntax.

1. Provide a variety of opportunities for children to write and discuss:

- Stories
- Recounts
- Diaries
- Letters
- Literature logs
- Recipes
- Shopping lists
- Things to remember list
- Things to do list
- Instructions for a game, dance or project
- Questions you have
- A poem
- Copying a favorite saying or song
When children read and write for a purpose and a real audience, they have the greatest possible incentive to "tune in" to graphophonic cues.

2. Demonstrate writing and spelling in group settings and with individual children by:
   - Taking dictation for groups and for individuals. When the child shows signs of spelling phonetically, stop taking individual dictation so that they do not become too dependent on you or reluctant to use approximations.
   - Asking "How do you spell that?" and then guiding the attempts to approximate the correct spelling.
   - Modeling spelling strategies that you find effective in your own writing. For example:

      Try to write the word in several different ways - say, "That doesn’t look right; I’ll circle it to look up later."

      Write the letters you know and leave dashes for the letters you don’t know.

      (din_s__r).

      Ask someone else nearby for assistance.

      During editing, look for the conventional spelling somewhere in the room; on charts, in a book, or in the dictionary.

   - In your written response to journals, repeat as many of the child’s misspelled words as possible, spelling the words correctly.
3. Respond to the children’s writing in ways that help them discover more about spelling.

   Always respond to meaning first. This will help children understand that writing is for communicating.

   Praise them for words spelled correctly. Sometimes ask, "How did you know how to spell that word?" to gain insight into children’s thinking and help reinforce effective spelling strategies.

   Point out a word that the writer has used and misspelled frequently. Ask questions that encourage the writer to take control of finding the correct spelling, such as, "What’s missing in this word?" Then ask, "How can you check to be certain you have the conventional spelling?"

4. Encourage children to "invent" spellings for words they may not have learned to spell. Mistakes are inevitable. Adjust your expectations of correctness to fit children’s level of development. Do not over-emphasize correctness when the children are working on drafts, but reward proofreading and the use of resources for containing and correcting spelling during the editing process.

- Use "Have a Go" cards (Parry and Hornsby, 1988) or encourage children during editing for spelling to try writing a word in two or three different ways to see which one "looks right."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have - A - Go Card</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dnosr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dineosor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Play with words.
- Play word games.
- Encourage the use of onomatopoeia.
- Involve the children in switching sounds to create "Spoonerisms" so that they focus on the initial letters of different words.

   For example:
   
   I eat my heas with poney.
   I've lone it all my dife.
   It makes the feas taste punny.
   But it kneeps them on my kife.

6. Make the study of vocabulary interesting by:
- Encouraging children to select new or interesting words from their reading. Have them explain these words to the class, talking about how they were used in the particular text. Have dictionaries available for the children to use as necessary as they discuss and clarify the new vocabulary.
- Building word lists for various categories: content words, compound words, same beginning sounds, homophones, root words, synonyms, phonograms.

7. Provide a variety of concrete aids for use in informal activities/learning centers. These might include:
   - letter blocks  - magnetic letters
   - letter cards   - printing sets

8. Be aware of the children's strengths as spellers and the information that their errors
reveal. Teachers can examine both children’s writing and reading to evaluate what they know about phonics and spelling. When children read aloud, the miscues they make provide clues to their use of graphophonic cues. Often, for example, ineffective readers attempt to rely on graphophonic cues at the expense of meaning.
The charts should be displayed at the children’s eye level so that they can continue to add alliterative words as they read or hear them. This same procedure can be used with consonant blends, digraphs and vowels.

Children’s Literature Containing Alliteration

Animalia, Base 1986.


"Fishes Evening Song" contains initial sounds and blends

"Song of the Train" emphasizes cl blend

"The Yak", Jack Prelutsky

"The Rabbit", Jack Prelutsky

Mother Goose Rhymes

Dr. Seuss Books

Jelly Belly, Dennis Lee 1983.


TEACHING MEDIAL PLUS FINAL SOUNDS USING RHYME

Present familiar songs, poems or stories with rhyming elements. In the context of the shared reading experience call attention to patterns that occur in the middles-plus-ends of words, particularly one syllable words. Point out or invite children to find words
DIRECT TEACHING METHODS

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

By Exposing children to literature that plays with the sounds in language, phonemic awareness can be developed.

TEACHING INITIAL CONSONANT SOUNDS USING ALLITERATION

Present story, song, poem or rhyme that contains alliteration. After children become familiar with the selection, call attention to key words that begin alike. Invite children to locate words that begin with the same consonant sound(s) as a certain word in the selection.

ALLITERATION CHARTS

Alliteration charts provide an enjoyable language game for all children, and are especially valuable for children who need additional attention drawn to initial consonant sounds.

Procedure

After reading a story or poem containing alliteration, the teacher writes a name or phrase at the top of a chart that uses alliteration. After reading the name or phrase and discussing it, the children find other words in the story or poem beginning with the same letter to add to the chart. Examples offered may include their own names or people they know, environmental print seen in the classroom, or words from other familiar poems or books.
that 'end the same'.

Children’s Literature Containing Rhyming Elements

Mother Goose Rhymes

Jelly on the Plate, June Factor 1987. (Book of Poems)


Who Said Red?, Serfozo 1988. (Contains Assonance)

Sheep on a Ship, Shaw 1989. (Contains Assonance)


TEACHING PREDICTING USING ONOMATOPOETIC WORDS

The use of onomatopoetic words in predicting encourages children to use prior knowledge and context in combination with letter/sound cues to make sense of what they are reading.

Example Lesson

Have children predict alternatives that will fit in the following poem to create onomatopoetic nonsense words.

(Weaver, p.159)

The Noisy Lunch

"I can’t stand it any longer,"
cried the weary cafeteria.
"On Mondays,
the spaghetti goes sl____, sl____,
into children's cavernous mouths.

"On Tuesdays,
the ketchup goes gl____, gl____,
lurching onto children's hamburgers.

"On Wednesdays,
the tacos go cr____, cr____,
teasing the children's mouths with hot sauce.

"On Thursdays,
the apples go ch____, ch____,
tearing out loose teeth for the tooth fairy.

"On Fridays,
the children's feet go st____, st____,
protesting the eternal fish.

"I can't stand it any longer,"
cried the weary cafeteria.
"I quit."

MANIPULATION OF PHONEMES

Don't Forget the Bacon! (Hutchins, 1976)

In this story a child is sent to the store with a shopping list which includes "six farm eggs, a cake for tea, and a pound of pears." As he walks to town he rehearses the list, but he inadvertently switches phonemes in some of the words, changing the shopping list. For example, "a cake for tea" goes through several permutations, evolving by way of "a cape for me" to become "a rake for leaves."

Have children role-play the child in the story rehearsing his shopping list. As they do this, they can explore how the sounds in words can be switched. Sound play books
such as this, heightens a child’s sensitivity to the phonological structure of language.

DEVELOPING A SIGHT VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The Magic Fish (Littledale, 1969) is an ideal book to use for developing sight word knowledge naturally and easily in context. Repeated readings will help them to master the high frequency sight words that have been traditionally taught through drills and flashcards. Almost 40% of the total list of Dolch basic sight vocabulary is included in this short and easily readable book. Many words occur repeatedly.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES TO SHARED BOOK EXPERIENCE

Before introducing strategies designed to focus on graphophonic connections, it is vital that children have many experiences of reading a text as a meaningful whole. This involves an initial reading to the children, repeated shared readings with the children, and reading by the children during guided reading. At each stage the teacher is able to observe the reading strategies that each child is developing and when additional attention needs to be drawn to particular letter sound relationships. This constant monitoring will help teachers to select strategies that are most appropriate to children’s demonstrated needs.
The following strategies for follow-up to shared reading were borrowed from Powell (1990):

**Substitutions**

Use word cards to display a whole poem, rhyme, or text in the pocket chart. When children have become very familiar with a poem, word cards can be switched and children can locate the substitutions, placing them in the correct positions. This is used like a game in which the children can become responsible for making the substitutions and directing the shared reading to locate the misplaced words.

For a variation of this activity, ask the children to read the text in its "whole" form. Then remove some nouns, verbs, adverbs or adjectives, asking for possible substitutions. Write children's suggestions on the blank cards (discussing the spelling as you do so) and substitute these for the word in the original version. Reread the newly created version.

Note: To prepare for both the Modified Cloze and Substitution teaching routines, ask two children to work together to match the word cards with the original text to build the poem, rhyme or story in the pocket chart. This will save you time and provide additional matching opportunities for several students.
Modified Cloze

This is another activity which makes use of the pocket chart. Using individual word cards, place a familiar poem, nursery rhyme, or part of a story in the pocket chart. Cover several of the most predictable words in each sentence with blank cards. Ask the children to read the poem or story with you, predicting the words that are missing. Uncover the words so that they can check and discuss their predictions. Encourage discussion that reinforces the importance of meaning as well as word identification.

Children will also enjoy and benefit from a number of variations of this routine. For example:

* Cover all but the initial sounds of some of the words.
* Give children word cards for the missing words. As the group reads the text, ask the child holding the missing word card to place it in the pocket chart. Reread the text as replacements are made.

* Place missing word cards near the chart. Ask volunteers to come up and put the cards in place as the text is read.

As the children gain confidence, remove more and more words from the original text. Children will become all the more alert to the graphophonic cues provided by the remaining words as they predict the words that are missing. They will also have to focus closely on print cues as they sort through the word cards to find the one that matches their prediction.
Framing
When children have become familiar with a poem, the teacher can use a frame cut from poster board or tagboard to help children concentrate on particular aspects of the text. Begin by highlighting a full line of text or a sentence. After the routine is established and children are moving toward independence, the features to frame might be any word, letter, root, or affix that you note readers are having difficulty decoding or writers encoding. A slide can be used to frame only the text feature you wish to highlight.

As the children are already familiar with the language through repeated readings, the aim of the framing is to help them to focus visually on the print. The teacher can reinforce this with comments such as, “This says Little Wind,” and by discussing how you know what the framed text says. You might mention features such as the sounds of the initial letters, or remind the children of other poems in which they have seen the same words.

A frame with a slide can also be used when some children have predicted a synonym (using semantic knowledge) instead of the actual word used in the text. For example, if children have said flapped when the words used in the text are “he opened his wings,” the teacher frames the whole line, then the word, and then the initial letter. The children now reread the page with the teacher.

In this way, children are encouraged to use the information provided by graphophonic cues to confirm their predictions.

The framing technique can also be used with questions to encourage more independent text-searching, such as, “Where does it say Look at it squirm?” Help children to use the frame you have made to identify the text, or have them frame the words with their hands. Ask them to tell how they knew which words to frame.
Matching and Sequencing

Matching is a technique that can be used with sentences, phrases or words. You will need a pocket chart, which can either be purchased or made from tagboard or cloth with clear plastic pockets sewn in strips.

1. **Sentence Matching:** Copy a poem or short text from one of the children’s favorite Big Books on a laminated chart or on sentence strips. If a sentence continues onto a second or third line, copy it exactly as in the original. You may want to write each sentence on a different colored strip to highlight the concept of "sentence." Display the Big Book version of the text and place the sentence strips in a random order on a table. Invite the class to read the first line or sentence from the book in unison. Then ask a child to find the matching sentence strip. Hold this card under the line of text and ask the children to read it again, encouraging them to check that each word on the card matches the original. If an error is made, use this as a positive teaching point to focus on why the two sentences are different. When the children have confirmed that there is a correct match, place the sentence strip at the top of the pocket chart and then repeat the process for the remaining lines.

2. **Phrase Matching:** For this procedure, cut the text into phrases. Have the children match the phrase strips with the phrases in the original. Children will need to be more discriminating in matching phrases than in matching sentences. This provides additional incentive to focus on sight vocabulary (high frequency words) and letter/sound associations, as well as helping children to recognize common word combinations.

3. **Word Matching:** Letter-sound correspondences can be emphasized by asking children to find words that have the same initial or vowel sounds (a sound that you have noted needs reinforcement). For example, when the children are reading *Wee Willie Winkie* you might have them find the words beginning with a long -ow- sound, like the sound in "town."

At first they will be able to find these by rereading the poem and making a one to one match with the words they have memorized and the words in print. Then they can take turns searching for a word card in a jumbled pile, checking the match against the original, and placing the word in the pocket chart. Reinforce the letter-sound correspondences by asking how the words they found are alike.
4. **Sequencing:** As a learning center activity, allow pairs of children to sequence the sentences, phrases or words from a random pile to build a poem or story. Make the original available in case they need some assistance. Children will need to focus on the graphophonetic cues as well as the semantic cues in order to sequence correctly.

```
How I wonder what you are,
Like a diamond up above the world
Twinkle, twinkle what you are,
So high, little star,
```

```
Little star;
```

```
How I wonder
```

A variation of this activity is to have individual children hold sentence strips in front of the room. Ask the remaining children to help put them in sequence.
Innovations on Text

Teacher directed innovations help children to use existing texts as models for their own writing. Innovations usually begin as simple substitutions, as described in the section above. Don’t be concerned if the substitutions don’t match the original patterns of rhyme or rhythm; the objective is to encourage children to create new ideas from the existing ideas. In the process they will need to reread the poem many times, and will concentrate on graphophonic cues not only in the original text but as they discuss the words chosen for the innovation.

Here is one example of a class innovation, based on the poem shown at left. It began, after the children had read and enjoyed the poem many times, with the teacher asking, “What else could this poem be about?” The class discussed various possibilities and decided on “Children.” And when they were asked, “What could it be time for besides bed?” they decided on “School.”

"Come, my children,  
it's time for school."  
That's what the young mother said.  
"But first I'll count you  
just to see  
If you are all here  
with me.  
Marcie 1, Jose 2,  
Yolanda 3  
You're all ready for school  
My children three."

As the teacher wrote this innovation on a chart, she encouraged the children to take responsibility for the spelling. They referred to the original for some words, and discussed new words as they arose; for example, “How do we spell school?”

As the above example indicates, innovations can vary freely from the original. However, with considerable experience, children will often aim to retain the sounds of poetry and begin to form rhyming and rhythmic patterns in their own creations.
Word Sorts

Word Sorts involve grouping words into categories and help children to form generalizations about semantic and graphophonic cues. For younger children, it is best to provide a pocket chart and have the words written on cards. Older children can sort words from a list on a chart. Select the words for sorting from familiar texts so that the children already recognize them.

There are two types of sorts: “closed” and “open.”

In a closed sort the teacher provides the category or categories and the children then sort the available words accordingly. For example, after reading Jack Prelutsky’s “Baloney Belly Billy,” you might select words containing the letter “e”.

![Chart with words]

Ask the children to sort the words into long “e” and short “e” categories. Say, “Find the words that have the long e, or the words that have the same e sound as in bee. Now find the words that have short e or the same sound as you hear in fence.”

Now the children can think of other words they know that have the same sounds. Charts with these categories can be displayed for future reference and for children to add to as new words are found.

![Chart with sorted words]

Closed sorts can also be used to develop categories of meaning. For example, children will better understand the meaning of movement words in Evelyn Beyer’s poem “Jump or Jiggle” if they can sort the words into “quick movements” and “slow movements.” Throughout the activity they will be attending to graphophonic cues, as they read the words in isolation.
In an open sort, the children have a group of words and create their own categories and category labels. The above words, for example, could be divided into words that end in “p,” rhyming pairs, words that begin with a blend, words with short vowels and so on.

How Valuable Are Phonic Generalizations?
Research has shown that most phonic generalizations or patterns in English are not consistent enough, or do not relate to enough words, to make them worth teaching to children. The most reliable are the consonants, especially in the initial and final positions.

However, effective readers and writers do form some phonic generalizations as they discover recurring spelling patterns and come to associate particular sounds with certain letters and letter combinations. It is worth helping children to discover the most reliable patterns, even though the “rules” or generalizations are not always entirely consistent.

Phonic generalizations worth teaching include:

1. “C” and “g” when followed by “e,” “i,” and “y” usually have a “soft” sound, as in “city” and “gym.” When “c” and “g” are followed by “a, o, or u,” they usually have the “hard” sound, as in “cake” and “goat.”

2. A single vowel letter followed by a consonant (or consonant blend or digraph) usually has the short vowel sound; for example, “man,” “math,” “candle,” “on,” “spin.”

3. When a one-syllable word has two vowels and one of them is a final e, the first vowel usually has the long vowel sound, and the final e is silent. For example: “ate,” “like,” “nine,” “tune,” “bathe,” “waste.”

4. In many words with a vowel digraph, such as “beach,” “deep,” “wait,” and “boat,” the first vowel usually makes the long vowel sound, and the second vowel is usually silent.

5. A vowel usually makes the long vowel sound when it is the only vowel in a syllable, and is at the end of the syllable; for example, “he,” “by,” “reply,” “go,” “notice.”

6. The letter “r” usually changes the sound of the vowel that comes before it. For example, compare “fat” and “far,” “her” and “hem,” or “chair” and “chain.”
By second or third grade, when most children are using more conventional spellings than approximations, the teacher can assist them in making phonetic generalizations such as those listed above more explicit. Many of the strategies already described, such as alliteration charts and word sorts, can be used to help children explore and clarify useful phonetic generalizations. The important thing is to match any activities to the developmental level of the children, and to build on the children’s reading and writing experiences rather than looking at letter-sound patterns in isolation.

A routine to help children to articulate generalizations involves the teacher in locating suitable examples in books or poems already in use for shared or guided reading. (Note: these poems or books should be selected for their literary quality first, not simply in order to demonstrate a sound as in “Dan can fan Nan.”) She then involves the children in demonstration, categorization and discussion.

For example, using the poem at left, ask the children to locate the words in which they hear a “long e” sound, or the “e” that makes the sound of its own name. As children locate words, write these on chart paper in three columns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>eat</th>
<th>keeps</th>
<th>honey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>peas</td>
<td>keeps</td>
<td>honey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eat</td>
<td>keeps</td>
<td>honey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ask the children how “eat” and “peas” are alike in their spelling pattern. If the children don’t notice the vowel diagraph (“ea”) then you may want to underline the “ea.”

Then ask, “What is different about the spelling pattern for the same sound (long e) in the word keeps? What vowel combination makes the sound of long e in Honey? I’ll underline the letters that make the long e sound. The first two spelling patterns are very common in English.”

If you have not already underlined “ea,” “ee,” and “ey,” do so now. Then share and discuss another familiar poem with the children. For example, say “In the poem Kookaburra, can you find more long e words that fit any of our spelling patterns?” Add these to the list above under “keeps.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>eat</th>
<th>keeps</th>
<th>honey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eat peas</td>
<td>tree</td>
<td>honey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monkey</td>
<td>see</td>
<td>monkeys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53
Cover up the “honey” column and ask “What do all of these spelling patterns for 'long e' have in common?” Try to draw out the generalization that they all have two vowels together and we pronounce the long sound of the first vowel letter. Also, assist the children with noting that all of the words in the first two columns are one syllable words. Therefore, in a syllable where we find the pattern CVVC, VVC, or CVV, the first vowel is long. If you prefer to use the old favorite, “When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking,” that is perfectly acceptable after you have drawn as much of the generalization as possible from the children.

Now uncover the “honey” column. Discuss the fact that this is a two syllable word with a different spelling pattern for “long e.” However, it still follows the generalization relating to two vowels together in a syllable (“y” being a vowel when not in the initial position).

This same routine can be used to develop other patterns; for example, Miss Mary Mac could be used to explore the generalization that when a single vowel in a syllable is followed by a consonant, then the vowel has the short sound.

Mac black back

When we examine the complexities of our English language, it seems extraordinary that we could expect young children to grasp these generalizations as abstract rules, without first having considerable experience with reading and writing.
ELKONIN BOXES (Individual Phonics Instruction)

Listening to text that plays with language and writing with invented spellings are indirect ways to enhance phonemic awareness. With some children it may be necessary to provide more explicit instruction in hearing sounds in words.

The use of Elkonin boxes is a procedure prescribed by Clay (1985) as a Reading Recovery strategy to help children think about the order of sounds in spoken words. Words chosen for this exercise should be from text with which the children have become thoroughly familiar through multiple oral readings. The use of a whole to part sequence of instruction will ensure that children have a context to which they can relate the abstract sounds (Bridge, 1989).

Procedure

1. Early Learning

   Establishing the task

   In the first few trials the child will be learning what it is the teacher wants him to do. This applies to slow articulation, to clapping or to pushing counters (pennies). Take time to get clear what it is you want him to do.

   Hearing the sounds

   - Make a few picture cards for simple words such as cat, bus, boy, ship, or house to use to introduce the task.

   - Prepare some cards on which you draw a square for each sound segment in words of two, three and four sounds, for example:
- Have a selection of counters ready.

In the first lessons, after the 'roaming around the unknown' stage, only attempt two or three of the activities in the next two lists.

To introduce the slow articulation of words, use a picture card and:

- Slowly and deliberately articulate the word for the child. Let him hear the sounds separated but in a natural way.

- Ask the child to articulate the word aloud. Ask him to say it slowly. This transfers the initiative for the activity to the child.

- Ask the child to watch your lips while you say it, and then to copy you.

- Use a mirror if it helps the child to be more aware of what his lips and tongue are doing.

Use the sound segment cards to make a visual model of the sounds that have been articulated. (Choose a card which has a square for each sound in your demonstration word (i.e. a three square card for c-a-t). You need a square for every sound in the aural task and not for every letter. The transfer to an emphasis on letters comes much later.
Model the task for the child. Articulate the word slowly and push the counters into the boxes, sound by sound.

Now get the child to try this. As long as the child finds the co-ordination of saying slowly and pushing counters too difficult, share the task with him. Articulate the word slowly for him while he moves the counters. Or, get the child to articulate slowly while you push the counters. Change roles to enable the child to practice both parts.

You may guide the child’s hand or work alongside him with another card.

As soon as possible have the child complete the whole task himself. Accept his approximations. Co-ordination will come with practice.

2. Intermediate Steps

Hearing sounds and writing letters

This is an aural task also. The focus is on hearing sounds and clusters of sounds, and finding some way to record them in letters. It helps the child to write words he has not yet learned to write.

When a child can push counters into the boxes as he says the sounds and when
he has a good grasp of letter identification, he is ready to make another kind of model of the sound segments in words, using letters.

Use words the child wants to write in his stories but limit the words for this activity to up to four sounds at first. More than four sounds can be a problem to the beginner. Select activities like those in the following list according to a particular child’s needs.

- Articulate the word slowly, emphasizing the sounds.
- Draw a box for each sound segment on the practice page of the child’s writing book.
- Encourage the child to say the word slowly and push counters into the boxes you have drawn. Later he will only need to point to each box as he says the word slowly.
- Ask ‘What can you hear? How would you write it? Now where will we put it?’ If the child gives the sound but hesitates over writing the letter(s), say "How would you write it?"
- Accept any sound that the child can hear clearly but cannot write and write it in for him as he watches.
- Let the child record any sound for which he knows the letter but ensure that it goes in the correct box.
- Help the child, if necessary, to make links with what he knows somewhere else-in his alphabet book, or his name, or a word he can already write.
- Provide a magnetic letter or some other model of the letter that the child has
forgotten how to write. Let the child who thinks he knows, but is unsure, do a trial letter on a scrap of paper or write the letter in the air or with his finger on the desk.

- Encourage the child to write the letters he knows.

Use questions like these to locate other letters:

- What else can you hear?
- What do you hear at the beginning?
- What do you hear at the end?
- What do you hear in the middle?

Accept what the child can hear in any order. Do not insist on a beginning to end approach. This will come later, as the child gains control of the task.

The child can record only those letters he knows how to form and the one or two he is currently learning. The teacher can act as his scribe to produce words like these,

```
B i l l
```
```
b o a t
```

with the child writing only those letters he knows.

```
t r ck
```
```
m s t
```

Alternatively, the teacher may get the child to fill in what he can by himself and then complete the word for him, perhaps teaching one new point but not explaining everything.

Gradually shift from the question 'What can you hear?' to the question 'What
letters would you expect to see?’

*A Note on Consonants and Vowels*

Be satisfied if he can separate out some of the consonants. Give the child the vowels as these seem to be much more difficult to hear and require more experience with reading and writing.

For the teacher who is not used to a linguist’s analysis of the sounds of spoken English there are traps in this activity. For example, one child responding well to her own phonemic analysis of cousins wrote: **Kusns**

Except for the S’s which should have been Z’s, this is an accurate rendering of the sounds in the word but not one which helped the child to reach the written form of the word. It was not an appropriate word for training sound to letter analysis.

The teacher must be alert to detect the difference between what is good analysis of sounds and what is confusion or error. Here are some examples of accurate ‘hearing’ by children which should not be undervalued:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>plac</th>
<th>aftr</th>
<th>childrn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(place)</td>
<td>(after)</td>
<td>(children)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Advanced Learning**

**Hearing sounds in words - further transitions**

After the early learning and intermediate steps the child is usually able to hear and record the consonants well, has control over writing letters, and is able to select some
vowels correctly. He is then ready for an important transition.

At this stage we introduce the child to the mismatch between the sounds of the language to which he has been attending and the way we spell the words. Now we want to provide the child with a box for each letter, even though two letters may not represent two sounds.

One of our teachers found an easy way to introduce the transition. She drew enough boxes for the sounds only but she put in a dotted line to divide any box that needed two letters like this:

```
  h   a   m   m   e   r
```

and then gradually transferred to solid lines.

Explain the shift to the child - a box for every letter he needs.

- Articulate the word clearly for the child. Let him hear the segments in sequence several times.

- Make a squared diagram in his booklet with spaces equal to the number of letters required.

- Help the child to fill in the letters of the word using stress or pausing on a sound in an exaggerated way to emphasize the sound you want him to focus on.

- As soon as the child can attend to the sound, return to a natural rate and mode of articulation.

- Find similar sound segments in known words.

- Help the child if the word has unusual elements or those that he is not yet ready
for (especially vowels).

Sometimes our teachers have provided children with some of the letters for vowels and asked them to select the letter they think could be right. It is not clear how helpful this is.

II Make another special transition as soon as possible. Have the child fill in the letters in sequence. This requires him to use new ways of analysing the word he is trying to write.

III As the child becomes a better reader, he will still continue to encounter new words and the following activities would still be needed from time to time.

- The child hears the teacher slowly articulating the sounds in sequence, perhaps several times.
- The teacher may ask the child to watch her lips and say it with her.
- The teacher may use a mirror to show the child how she makes the sounds.
- Encourage the child to 'say it slowly'.
- Use stress to emphasize a sound you want him to focus on.
- Use pausing on that sound or draw it out in an exaggerated way to call attention to it.

The writing of the word in boxes will not be needed very often at this stage.
Summary

Traditionally, phonics has been taught as an isolated skill. Using this approach, students develop their knowledge of letter/sound relationships by completing worksheets and drills about sound/symbol concepts. Only after phonics skills are mastered do they engage in purposeful reading and writing activities. More and more teachers are moving away from teaching phonics as an isolated skill and are implementing a holistic approach to teaching phonics. Students are participating in real reading and writing activities in order to learn to read. These teachers understand that children need to use semantics, phonics and syntax together to become effective readers. Therefore, phonics knowledge is developed in context, not as an isolated skill.

The researcher felt the need to develop a handbook for primary level teachers which outlines various teaching methods, both direct and indirect, for developing phonics knowledge in context. Exposure to letter/sound relationships through literature is a natural and indirect approach to developing phonics knowledge. Teachers need to provide literature for their students and engage them in daily independent, shared and guided reading experiences. The handbook not only explains the importance of providing literature but includes a list of predictable books suggested for emergent and early fluency readers. Procedures for conducting shared reading and language experiences are also
included as indirect teaching methods. Another natural process which will help students develop their letter/sound associations is through writing. The handbook provides suggestions for writing experiences, how teachers can assist their students during writing to help develop their phonemic awareness, and the importance of modeling writing to develop their phonics knowledge.

For students who need more direct attention to letter/sound relationships, a variety of strategies are provided in the handbook. Teachers can use books and poems that play with sounds in language to point out specific letter/sound relationships. Follow-up activities to the shared book experience including framing, matching, substitutions, word games, cloze activities, and innovations to text are excellent ways to direct student’s attention to particular letter/sound associations. For students who have trouble hearing sounds in words, individual instruction may be necessary. Included in the handbook is the procedure for using Elkonin boxes which is a strategy used in the Reading Recovery Program for helping students hear sounds in words.

It was the hope of the researcher that this handbook would not only motivate teachers to implement whole language methods, but be a helpful resource for improving existing programs.

Recommendations

This handbook for developing phonics knowledge is recommended for primary level teachers working with emergent and early fluency readers. All methods included in this handbook require phonics instruction to remain in context following a whole
language approach to teaching. The indirect methods for developing phonics knowledge are recommended for teachers to incorporate in their daily activities. After monitoring student’s knowledge of phonics through reading and writing activities, the direct methods are recommended for students who are in need of further attention to letter/sound relationships.
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