

Learning About Phonology and Orthography



Module Focus

Learning about the relationships between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language (often referred to as letter-sound associations, graphophonics, sound-symbol relationships)

Definitions

phonology: study of speech sounds in a language

orthography: study of the system of written language (spelling)

continuous text: a complete text or substantive part of a complete text

What Children Have to Learn

(Clay, 2002, 2006, p. 112)

Children need to learn to work out how their spoken language relates to messages in print. They need to learn

- to hear sounds buried in words
- to visually discriminate the symbols we use in print
- to link single symbols and clusters of symbols with the sounds they represent
- that there are many exceptions and alternatives in our English system of putting sounds into print

Children also begin to work on relationships among things they already know, often long before the teacher attends to those relationships.

For example, children discover that

- it is more efficient to work with larger chunks
- sometimes it is more efficient to work with relationships (like some word or word part I know)
- often it is more efficient to use a vague sense of a rule

How Children Learn About Phonology and Orthography

Writing

- Building a known writing vocabulary
- Analyzing words by hearing and recording sounds in words
- Using known words and word parts to solve new unknown words
- Noticing and learning about exceptions in English orthography

Reading

- Building a known reading vocabulary
- Using known words and word parts to get to unknown words
- Taking words apart while reading

Manipulating Words and Word Parts

- Using magnetic letters to manipulate and explore words and word parts

Key Points for Teachers

Through reading and writing continuous text, children learn about sound-symbol relationships, they take on known reading and writing vocabularies, and they can use what they know about words to generate new learning.

There is no sequence for this learning—rather the child’s skills determine the sequence. Teacher guidance supports this learning, but the goal is for children to take the initiative to continue to learn on their own—and to enjoy discovering new things about their language.

Resources

Related Effective Practices Video Modules

Making It Easy to Learn — *using what the child knows about words and word parts to get to new learning*

Assessing Through Close Observation — *observing what the child knows about how words work and how that knowledge is used when reading and writing continuous text*

Clay, M. M. (2005). *Literacy lessons designed for individuals part two: Teaching procedures*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. (see Sections 11 and 12, pages 118–138)

Clay, M. M. (2002, 2006). *An observation survey of early literacy achievement* (2nd ed., rev. 2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (Eds.) (1999). *Voices on word matters*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Kaye, E. L. (2008). Taking words a-part, ap-art, apar-t while reading. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 8(1), 5–15.

Early Literacy Intervention: Expanding Expertise and Impact

a Reading Recovery initiative in partnership with the USDE



Professional development resources produced by the Reading Recovery Council of North America

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