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# Literacyhow

*Empower teaching excellence.*

## December Newsletter



At Literacy How we believe that literacy is the language of opportunity and that **every** child has the right to read. We also believe that teachers, not programs or products, teach students to read, write and spell, and we are committed to supporting teachers as they learn to translate the science of reading in their classrooms.

Our monthly newsletters provide an opportunity to share some of the research and tools we believe will be helpful to teachers in their classrooms

throughout the school year. Last month's newsletter focused on Phonemic Awareness and this month we will dive more deeply into **Phonics**.

Phonics is the study and use of sound/spelling correspondences and syllable patterns to help students read (decode) and spell (encode). The ultimate goal of phonics instruction is to ensure that students can read each and every word accurately and automatically—that is, as a *sight* word. Phonics is the ability to link **spoken sounds to the letter or letter combinations** that represent them. For example

/ h / is represented by the letter h

/ ch / is represented by the graphemes ch or tch

## What is the difference between decoding and encoding?

“Decoding requires turning written symbols into speech; encoding is the process of turning speech into print... A speech-to-print approach is based on the premise that the learning-to-read process begins with children saying a word that they know the meaning of....One important instructional implication is that we must alter how we approach phonics instruction. This change requires teachers to shift attention from a decoding-focused approach to one that not only places an emphasis on encoding, but that begins there” (Herron & Gillis, 2020).

## What is the difference between explicit and embedded Phonics?

Explicit phonics instruction requires direct instruction that follows a specific sequence and is cumulative in nature. Embedded phonics instruction occurs more randomly during reading of connected text. As such, it is less explicit and not as carefully sequenced. As a result, some students will learn how to decode and encode but many will not.

## What is the importance of Phonics for English

## Language Learners (ELLs)?

Systematic phonics instruction can be very effective in helping ELLs learn to decode words. The most effective reading programs for ELLs combine systematic phonics instruction with a content-rich learning environment that provides exposure to appealing reading materials and rich text in varied genres.

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### Videos

#### Sound Letter Maps

This video shows a teacher demonstrating phoneme-grapheme mapping--that is, matching letters to sounds. Students use "Say It and Move It" to map letters onto the sounds they hear in each word.



#### Vowel Gesture

A Literacy How Mentor models gestures for the short vowel sounds-- /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/ --while students follow along.



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## Tips and ideas

### **Teacher Tip: Put Phonics in context**

Once sound-symbol correspondences and blending skills are mastered, teach phonics in context. Be sure that students know the meaning of the words they are reading and provide plenty of practice with games and connected text such as decodable books or poems.

### **Teacher Tip: The Vowel song**

Sing the [vowel song](#) with students to reinforce the short and long sounds of the five vowels.

### **Principal Tip: Get decodable text**

Students who are learning various phonetic features benefit from practice with decodable text. If teachers don't have access to this type of text in their 'toolbox' as

part of a core reading resource, consider purchasing a set for your K-1 teachers.

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## Something to read

### Read more to learn more!

Kilpatrick, D.A. (Summer 2020). [How phonology of speech is foundational for word recognition](#). *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*, 46 (3), 11-15. Herron, J. & Gillis, M. B. (Summer 2020).

[Encoding as a Route to Phoneme Awareness and Phonics: A Shift In Literacy Instruction](#). *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*, 46 (3), 11-15.

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## Resources

For further research and activities, you can purchase our **Phonemic Awareness & Phonics** professional series book. Phonemic awareness and phonics—the two domains of literacy development essential for automatic word reading—are covered in *Phonemic Awareness and Phonics: Knowledge to Practice*. Related, but different, both domains are required for children to successfully learn to decode. Phonemic awareness, the realization that spoken words are made up of individual speech sounds (phonemes), provides the foundation for students to learn phonics. Phonics, the knowledge that these speech sounds are represented by letters (graphemes), provides the content and skill to access 85% of the words they need to read and spell. Empowered with this content and skills, beginning readers can acquire the code-breaking ability they need to unlock the printed word to become skilled readers.

**Purchase Phonemic Awareness & Phonics on Amazon**

Last month, Literacy How president Margie Gillis, and Mentor Wendy North,

hosted a webinar where they explained why every administrator needs to have a working knowledge of the Science of Reading and a basic understanding of Structured Literacy. Check out the video on our YouTube channel.

### Watch SOR for Administrators



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