



## Phonics Overview

Phonics instruction stresses letter-sound correspondences and their uses in reading and writing. Keep in mind that phonics instruction is a means to an end. The goal is to provide children with the knowledge and skills needed to apply in their reading and writing. There are several different types of phonics instructional practices. However, it is necessary that phonics instruction have elements that are explicit and systematic. According to the National Reading Panel, systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for students in kindergarten through sixth grade. The findings included improvement in decoding, spelling and comprehension. Systematic phonics instruction is still only one component of a total reading program. These teaching of phonic skills must be integrated with other instruction (phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension strategies) in order to complete the reading program.

Systematic, explicit phonics instruction should include the following components:

- **Sound/Spelling Sequence:** Picture cards and key words can be used to exemplify each sound/spelling.
- **Blending:** Strategies should include sound-by-sound, vowel-first, and whole-word blending.
- **Decodable Text:** Practice should include decodable texts to promote fluency and automaticity.
- **Dictation and Spelling:** Children must understand that they use sound/spelling knowledge in spelling, writing, and reading.
- **Word Work:** Children need to build, manipulate, and sort words to increase their understanding of sound/spelling patterns and meaning.

Phonics instruction should be built on a foundation of phonemic awareness and completed by the end of second grade. This is not to say that children in grades three and up may not need phonics instruction. If students are not reading fluently by the end of this time, an intervention including explicit, systematic phonics will be necessary.