



Phonics

First Grade

Assignment for Observation

- Take an accuracy check of one child during Familiar Reading.
- Record student and teacher behavior during the Explicit Phonics/Spelling portion of the block.
- Observe the assigned group of students in the entire block, carefully watching for evidence of independent student processing and application of phonemic awareness and phonics skills.
- Watch for evidence of students either working ahead or behind class instruction. Does teacher provide interventions on the student's phonics level?
- Collect a sample of student writing to analyze.

Participant Materials

Reading First Notebook

- Arkansas K-12 English Language Arts Curriculum Framework, Revised 2003
- Arkansas Reading First Comprehensive Literacy Instruction Map
- Arkansas Reading First Classroom Observation Protocol
- *A Closer Look at the Five Essential Components of Effective Reading Instruction*
- *Put Reading First*

Texts

I've DIBEL'd, Now What?
Word Journeys. Ganske

Presenter Materials

All Participant Materials
Words Their Way. Bear, et.al.
Overhead projector
Magnetic Letters

What is it?

Phonics is the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the sounds (phonemes) of spoken language.

Put Reading First, p.12

What is Phonics?

Refer participants to ***Put Reading First (PRF)*, p. 12**, and have them highlight the definition of phonics.

Phonics teaches children the relationship between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the sounds (phonemes) of spoken language.

Turn to ***PRF*, pp. 13-15**, and read the research found in the yellow boxes.

Note: Throughout ***PRF***, the main points from the National Reading Panel research are highlighted in the yellow boxes. The paragraphs that follow the highlighted sections explain or expand on the research.

Each Reading First school must have a systematic and explicit phonics program.

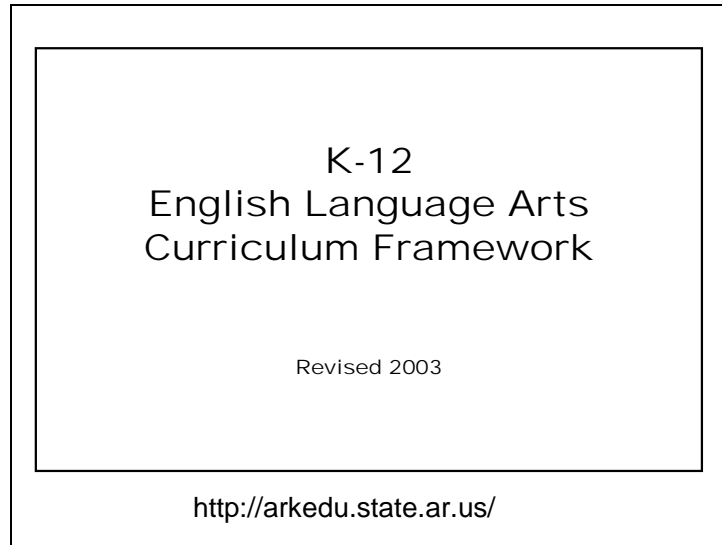
Systematic instruction reflects several important characteristics both within the lesson and across time. Skills and concepts are taught in a planned, logically progressive sequence. Lessons focus on clearly defined objectives that are stated in terms of what students will do. Practice aligns with the objective taught.

Explicit instruction means the teacher states clearly what is being taught and **models** effectively how a skilled reader uses it. Explicit instruction ensures students' attention is drawn to important features of an example or demonstration.

A systematic and explicit program will contain decodable text that contains only the features that have been taught up to that point in time so that students can practice the skills they are learning in continuous text.

Decodable Text

Refer participants to **PRF, p. 17**, section titled “What kinds of reading practice materials should I look for?” This refers to decodable text. Decodable text is print that contains only the features that have been taught. Text is not decodable if there are words that the child cannot decode independently. Decodable text plays an important part in beginning readers’ development by giving them independent practice in the phonics skills learned in classroom instruction. All K-1 students need to have decodable texts in their familiar reading boxes to practice the feature that is taught that week. The texts are a good resource to use during interventions. Keep in mind that they have a different purpose than guided reading texts and are not to be used to replace guided reading materials.



Arkansas K-12 English Language Arts Curriculum Framework

Refer participants to **Arkansas K-12 English Language Arts Curriculum Framework, pp. 33-36**, to locate and read the Student Learner Expectations (SLEs) for phonics instruction. Mark these SLEs with a **P**.

Strand: Reading

Standard 11: Vocabulary, Word Study, and Fluency

Students shall acquire and apply skills in vocabulary development and word analysis to be able to read fluently.

Student Learner Expectations

R.11.1.4 Know the order of the letters of the alphabet

R.11.1.5 Decode single syllable words using initial and final consonants, short vowel patterns, *onsets* and *rimes*, blends and *digraphs* in continuous text

R.11.1.6 Read fluently approximately 150 words encountered during reading

R.11.1.10 Read grade level text with accuracy of 90% or above

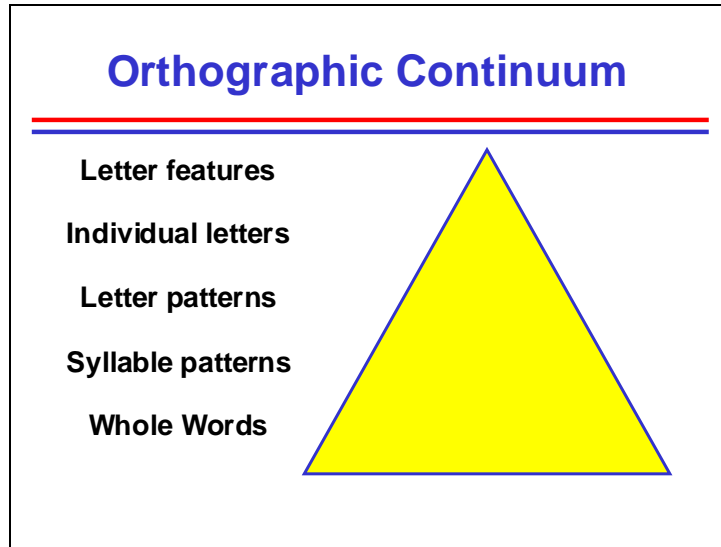
R.11.1.11 Demonstrate automaticity of letter sounds and phonic patterns during reading

R.11.1.13 Read grade level text fluently at a minimum of 40 words per minute.

Refer participants to the **Arkansas Reading First Comprehensive Literacy Instruction Map**, Vocabulary, Word Study, and Fluency standards, **pp. 14-15**.

Remind participants that this is a pacing guide for instruction and they must keep their students' development in mind when planning instruction.

Refer to **Arkansas Reading First Classroom Observation Protocol – First Grade** phonics/explicit spelling section, and discuss its relationship to the Student Learner Expectations. The protocol describes an explicit phonics/spelling lesson.



Orthographic Continuum

Just as the phonological processor develops in a logical continuum, so does the orthographic processor. This visual represents the continuum in which perception of print is developed. The visual for the orthographic processor is a right side up triangle because children perceive the smallest units of print first.

Before children are able to identify letters, they notice the **features of letters**, such as sticks, curves, circles, and dots. As evidence of this, you may notice that young children have confusions among similar letters such as **b, d, p, q** which are all made of circles and sticks. The same happens with **w, v, y, x**. These are all made with slanted lines. Rarely do children confuse **a** and **s**. These letters don't share the same features.

Once children are able to discriminate the features, they identify the **individual letters**. Accurate and rapid identification of the letters of the alphabet is critical. Children cannot perceive groups of letters until they can automatically identify each individual letter. In other words if children are not automatic with the letters **c** and **h**, they cannot perceive **ch** as a unit.

Once children are able to identify individual letters automatically, they will begin to perceive **letter patterns** that recur. For instance, we see *s* followed by *t* so many times, that we begin to process it as ***st*** instead of ***s/ t***. We still look at every letter, but our recognition is so fast and automatic that we don't realize it. This is essential for vowel patterns, consonant digraphs and diphthongs. Children must perceive these letters almost instantly if they are going to connect the correct sound to the groups of letters.

Activity: Model the Development of Orthographic Knowledge

Model the development of orthographic knowledge as described on the following page.

Model the Development of Orthographic Knowledge

Explain: *Before children are able to identify letters, they notice the **features of letters**, such as sticks, curves, circles, and dots.*

Using an overhead projector and alphabet letters, model a sort to teach letter features, for example, sort letters with sticks, letters with curves, letters with both.

Explain: *Once children are able to discriminate the features, they identify the **individual letters**. Accurate and rapid identification of the letters of the alphabet is critical. Children cannot perceive groups of letters until they can automatically identify each individual letter. In other words if children cannot automatically identify the letters **c** and **h**, they cannot perceive **ch** as a unit.*

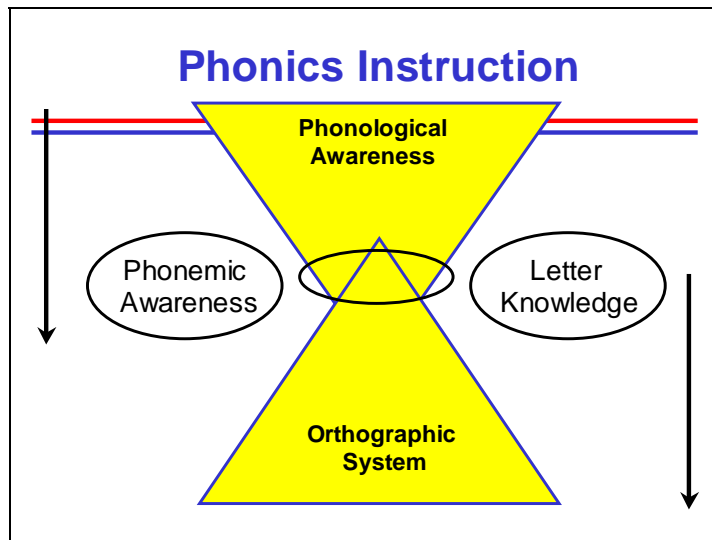
Continue using the overhead and letters to model pushing and pulling letters quickly for automaticity with letter name (not sound).

Explain: *Once children are able to automatically identify individual letters, they will begin to perceive **letter patterns** that recur. For instance, we see **s** followed by **t** so many times, that we begin to process it as **st** instead of **s** **t**. We still look at every letter, but our recognition is so fast and automatic that we realize it. This is essential for vowel patterns, consonant digraphs and diphthongs. Children must perceive these letters almost immediately in order to connect the correct sound to the groups of letters that represent them. This is sometimes called “chunking”.*

Using the overhead and letters, model segmenting and blending the word **sled**.

The orthographic processor matures as the child does a lot of reading and has read many words with common syllables. It is this automaticity with **syllable patterns** that enables the child to process multi-syllabic words, the goal for children in second grade.

Orthographic processing begins with letter-by-letter analysis, blending the sounds together, but the goal of word study is to help children process **words as whole units**, moving rapidly away from sounding words out. Proficient readers can read many, if not most, words by sight. Automaticity with words leaves the mind free to think about the meaning of the text.



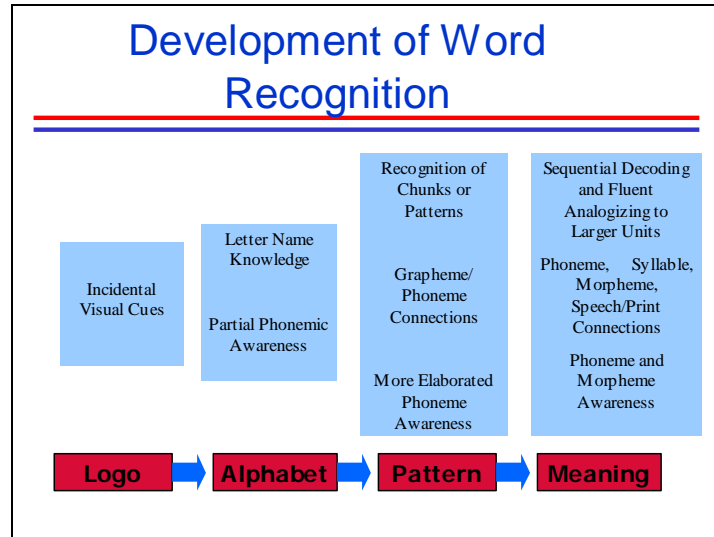
Phonics Instruction

It is the teacher's task to help the student understand how the phonological system relates to the orthographic system. Kindergarten teachers begin the year teaching the basic phonological awareness skills, but must move very quickly to the more discreet phonemic awareness instruction. First Grade teachers will reinforce the broader phonological skills, but focus on phonemic awareness. Refer to **Arkansas Reading First Comprehensive Literacy Instruction Map, pp. 3 and 9**. At the same time, the teacher provides letter identification lessons and helps students to develop automaticity with letter naming. Once children develop an understanding of the alphabetic principle, for example, the understanding that there is a relationship between letters and sounds, the teacher will begin to instruct students in attaching letters to their corresponding sounds. Initial phonics instruction is teaching letter-sound relationships.

Looking at each letter of a word and blending the sounds together is an essential skill to develop; it is the very basic decoding skill. If children are to become fluent and fast readers, it is essential that children move through the orthographic continuum and process multiple letters at one time. In reading, they will need to look at clusters of letters and connect these clusters to the larger units of sound. This is a much faster way to process print than letter-by-letter and is essential for fluency to develop. Eventually children must be able to automatically process whole words.

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Development of Word Recognition

The Developmental Spelling Analysis (DSA) follows Linnea Ehri's (1994) research on the sequence of reading and spelling development. Although Kathy Ganske (2000) and other researchers do not always use the exact same terminology, it is imperative that teachers have an understanding of the research behind word recognition.

Logo (logographic) – incidental visual cues (approximately 2-4 years old)

This stage involves rote memory of visual patterns. Even very young children might recognize *McDonald's* in the context of the restaurant sign, but would not necessarily recognize the word if it were written in black on a white card. They are **context dependent**. They need a **logo** to help "read" words. Children at this stage would need Shared Reading of Big Books and poems, environmental print, phonemic awareness and print tasks.

Alphabet – letter name knowledge, partial phonemic awareness (approximately pre-K-1st)

The alphabetic stage focuses on letter-sound correspondences, the individual sounds in spoken words and the letters in written words that correspond to them. Children recognize initial letters and salient consonants in the beginning alphabet stage. They are beginning to map sounds into symbols. In *PRF*, p. 13 (bottom of page), synthetic phonics is defined as a part-to-whole phonics approach in which students learn how to convert letters or letter combinations into sounds, and then how to blend the sounds together to form recognizable words. A strategy for teaching at the alphabet level would be a combination of synthetic phonics instruction plus phonemic awareness tasks.

Pattern (mature alphabetic)–recognition of chunks or patterns, grapheme/phoneme connections, more elaborated phoneme awareness becomes more evident in later first and second grades when children begin to recognize hard-to-hear sounds such as preconsantal nasals (/w/ /e/ /n/ /t/). Learning to read and spell requires students to remember exact letter patterns and sequences that represent speech sounds.

Meaning – sequential decoding and fluent analogizing to larger units, phoneme, syllable morpheme, speech/print connections, phoneme and morpheme awareness is evident in second and third grades. Students progress from understanding letter-sound correspondences and patterns to understanding meaningful units of print (morphemes).

What do students need to learn during phonics instruction?

- Accurate and rapid identification of the letters of the alphabet.
- The alphabetic principle.
- Phonics elements (e.g. letter-sound correspondences, spelling patterns, syllables, and meaningful word parts.
- How to apply phonics elements as they read and write.

What do students need to learn during phonics instruction?

As stated earlier, accurate and rapid identification of the letters of the alphabet is essential. As soon as possible, children must develop the alphabetic principle, the concept that letters have a relationship to sounds.

Systematic phonics instruction moves to individual letter sound correspondences, then to decoding letter by letter in regular **cvc** words such as *cat* and *dog*, then to the phonograms in which children know the individual letter sound correspondences first, and then to blends, digraphs, common long vowel patterns, etc. *Word Journeys* contains a research-based continuum of spelling development.

Refer participants to “Letter Naming Features” in ***Word Journeys*, pp. 12-13**, read and discuss:

- Initial and Final Consonants
- Initial Consonant Blends and Digraphs
- Short Vowels
- Affricates
- Final Consonant Blends and Digraphs

Planning and Discussion

Using the current phonemic awareness/phonics lesson, look at the instruction for the week. Walk through Monday through Friday's lessons. How does each lesson build on the previous one? Have participants focus on how the lesson meets expectations for systematic and explicit instruction.

1. Have participants reflect on their instruction in the past year and determine if it has met the requirements of **scientifically based reading research (SBRR)** by being systematic and explicit.
2. Ask the **Master Teacher** to share her thinking as she planned today's phonics instruction.

Sample Language

All the students were given the DSA.

I analyzed the feature performance and found the students controlled features ____, ____, ____.

The lesson today dealt with feature ____ as a result of needs identified by student assessments.

3. Process the observed lesson.
4. Analyze student data before planning interventions that meet student needs and support classroom instruction. Each group will use their targeted students' accuracy checks, writing samples DIBELS (NWF, ORF) and Developmental Spelling Analysis (DSA) to determine concepts the student controls and which concepts are needed to move the student to the next stage.
5. Using the writing sample(s), code words that the student uses that are in Letter Name and Within Word stages of development. Compare to the student's accuracy checks. Look for patterns that indicate the stage of orthographic development.

Reflect on the behaviors of the target group during the Literacy Block. Plan interventions for the next session.

NOTE: If students aren't meeting the benchmark for NWF or ORF, then assess using DIBELS LNF and PSF and analyze these assessments along with DSA and writing samples.

**Arkansas Reading First Classroom Observation Protocol – First Grade
Protocol Notes - Selected Strategies**

Instructional Strategies	Research and Comments
Instruction promotes letter knowledge (identify, articulate, reproduce)	Laboratory research indicates that the most critical factor beneath fluent word reading is the ability to recognize letters, spelling patterns and whole words effortlessly, automatically, and visually. The central goal of all reading instruction, comprehension, depends critically on this ability. <i>Beginning to Read, p.54</i>
Instruction promotes automaticity.	
Teacher clearly and correctly articulates the sounds.	Sounds are articulated correctly. Consonants are pronounced without “uh” attached.
Specific strategy for solving words in reading and writing is included. For example: segmenting/blending - individual sounds - onset/rime - syllables	The objective is stated in explicit language. Example: “We are going to learn a new sound and the letter we use to spell this sound. This will help read words with this sound in them.” <i>A Closer Look, p.14.</i>
Instruction is explicit about the connection between the concept taught and reading and writing.	The teacher explains and models for students how to apply what they have just learned about a letter-sound correspondence to decode a new word or write an unknown word.
Lesson provides initial practice in controlled, connected text in which students can practice their newly learned skills successfully.	Decodable text provides the initial practice in controlled, connected text.
Instruction progresses from teacher modeling, to guided practice, to independent practice.	The lesson incorporates: 1. Direct Explanation 2. Modeling 3. Guided Practice 4. Application
Lesson is clear and explicit with a specific focus.	The lesson clearly teaches one skill or strategy.

Interventions

For most students, intervention is not different instruction. Rather, it is more explicit and intense instruction that is targeted to their special needs.

- Refer to **Resource A4 Use of Assessment Data**.
- Reteach past phonics lessons.
- Refer to **I've DIBEL'd, Now What?** pp. 221-243.