

Let's Go Learn DORA Report

(Diagnostic Online Reading Assessment)

(Classroom Teacher Version)

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Student: John Smith
Assessment Date: 08/08/2002
Date of Birth: 12/12/1992
Age: 9 years 8 months
Grade: 4

The logo for 'Let's Go Learn' features the word 'Let's' in black with a red vertical bar to its left, 'Go' in black with a yellow triangle above the 'o', and 'Learn' in black with a blue vertical bar to its left.

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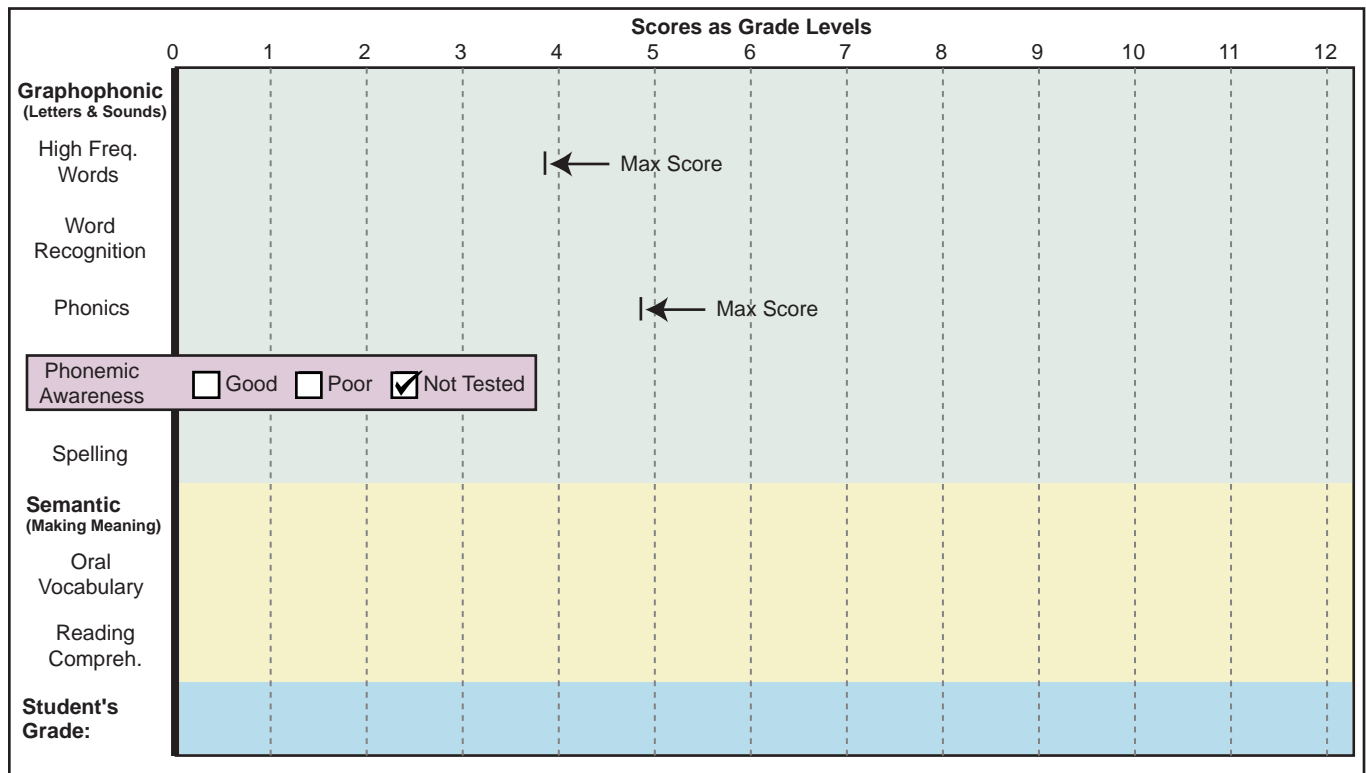
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Graphophonic (Letters and Sounds)

- ✔ **High-Frequency Word Subtest (Range K-3rd)**..... Grade: **mid 3rd**
 This subtest examines the learner’s knowledge of basic sight-word vocabulary.
- ➔ PRIORITY **Word Recognition Subtest (Range K-12th)**..... Grade: **high 2nd**
 This subtest looks at the learner’s ability to read a variety of phonetically regular and phonetically irregular words.
- ➔ PRIORITY **Phonics Subtest (Range PreK-4th)** Grade: **high 2nd**
 This subtest is made up of questions testing the learner’s ability to sound out a word.
- Phonemic Awareness Subtest (Good/Poor/Not Tested)** Ability: **not tested**
 This subtest is usually only given to early readers. If tested it assesses the student’s ability to manipulate and use individual sounds (phonemes) within words.
- ➔ PRIORITY **Spelling Subtest (Range K-12th)**..... Grade: **high 1st**
 This subtest will assess the learner’s spelling skills.

Semantic (Meaning Making)

- ✔ **Oral Vocabulary Subtest (Range K-12th)**..... Grade: **high 5th**
 This subtest is designed to test the learner’s receptive oral vocabulary skills.
- ➔ PRIORITY **Reading Comprehension Subtest (Range K-12th)**..... Grade: **high 2nd**
 This subtest will evaluate the learner’s ability to answer questions about a silently read story.



Graphophonic (Letters and Sounds) Strategies

John has a strong set of sight words committed to memory, but he/she seems to struggle with recognizing words and identifying fundamental phonetic units appropriate for his/her grade level. John scored at-grade-level on the High-Frequency Words subtest but below-grade-level on both the Word Recognition and Word Analysis subtests. His/Her at-grade-level score on the High-Frequency Words Subtest and below-grade-level scores on the Word Recognition and Word Analysis subtests indicate that he/she may primarily recognize words by memorizing them and attending heavily to how words look as a whole as opposed to identifying unfamiliar words by attending to their basic phonetic patterns. John was able to master 8 out of nine sets of sight words. He/She scored 1.17 year(s) below-grade-level on the word recognition subtest and 1.17 year(s) below-grade-level on the word analysis subtest. This may indicate a weakness in applying phonetic principles to the identification of words. Some of his/her errors on these subtests included choosing the word "essential" for the word "special" on a level 3 list of words in the Word Recognition subtest and choosing "and" for "an" on the High-Frequency Word subtest. John's spelling skills appear to fall below grade level as he/she was only able to master spelling words on lists up to a high 1st level. This may be indicative of John's struggle to remember conventional spelling patterns which often require a good visual memory or his/her struggle to associate sounds in words with their appropriate letter symbols.

Semantic (Making Meaning) Strategies

John's performance on the Word Meaning subtest appears to show that he/she has an extensive vocabulary for his/her grade level. John was able to master vocabulary lists up to a high 5th level. However, John seems to struggle with overall reading comprehension. This is evidenced by his/her below-grade-level score on the Reading Comprehension subtest. John was only able to master up to a high 2nd level on the Reading Comprehension subtest. These scores indicate that John's current vocabulary level does not seem to aid his/her understanding of what he/she reads. This may indicate that John struggles with picking out the important details or synthesizing information in the texts he/she reads. Furthermore, he/she may struggle with certain types of comprehension questions, such as inferential questions, which ask students to use the text and background knowledge to respond to questions whose answers cannot be found directly in the text. Some of John's miscues on these subtests include choosing the picture 'two people' for the word 'trio' on the Word Meaning subtest. On the Reading Comprehension subtest, his/her correct answers were 34 percent based on inferential questions and 67 percent based on factual questions.

Combined Strategies Summary

John's performance on this assessment indicates that he/she has some beginning skills in reading, which can be built upon to further his/her growth in reading. John's below-grade-level scores on the High-Frequency Words and Word Recognition subtests of the assessment indicate that he/she should work to solidify his/her graphophonic knowledge. Work in this area will provide access to reading skills at the word level in particular. John's below-grade-level performance on the semantic portion of the assessment also indicates a need to focus on comprehension strategies. Students with John's profile are best served by a comprehensive approach to reading instruction that builds upon their existing knowledge and helps them gain confidence as readers. For example, work on John's word analysis skills by first establishing the word parts that he/she already knows and then building from there. For example, if he/she already knows his/her short vowel sounds, begin by acknowledging that strength and then introduce long vowel sounds with the silent e rule. Furthermore, help John find books that are both interesting and at or below his/her independent reading level. These two approaches will increase John's skills, confidence, and fluency, which may help him/her become more receptive to the suggestions that follow:

Individual Graphophonic Recommendations

- Initiate a conversation with John about what he/she does when an unknown word is encountered in a text. If John is aware that he/she substitutes a similar "known" word for the unknown word on the page, have John make a guess at what the word might be, given the clues provided by the letters in the word and the content of the sentence. Point out to John that even the most advanced reader encounters unknown words and must use different strategies to analyze and decode these words. This will begin to draw the student's attention to the effectiveness of word analysis strategies.
- Find tricky and potentially tricky words before John begins to read a story. Encourage him/her to deconstruct these unknown words by looking for known phonetically regular parts in the words, or to "chunk" or break up the words into more manageable units that can then be reconstructed or blended into a whole word. Then, as John reads the story, guide him/her in applying these same strategies for decoding. This will give John the opportunity to experience success with his/her burgeoning word analysis strategies.
- Create a bank of tricky, phonetically regular words that John has trouble reading or writing. Then, have him/her categorize these words into "families" or words that contain similar "chunks." This will prepare John to analyze and decode more sophisticated multisyllabic words that he/she will encounter in advanced texts.
- Develop John's spelling skills by asking him/her to identify and study words that are hard to spell in his/her personal writing. Also, encourage John to question why these words in particular are "tricky" and challenge him/her to build a word bank of words that will be practiced and eventually mastered over a period of time. John may work with you or a partner to practice reading specific word bank words, visualizing how they "look" on the page, and then making various attempts to write the words accurately.

Individual Semantic Recommendations

- Have John work on reading comprehension strategies. Take smaller sections of text and give him/her opportunities to retell the events in sequence. If necessary, provide prompts for John to retell, using more details. Model for him/her an example of a strong retelling - events in sequence and providing details. Introduce such connecting words as "first, then, next, last" to include in a sequential retelling. Increase the sections of text to retell as John becomes confident in doing so independently.
- Encourage John to monitor his/her understanding of what and how he/she reads as he/she is reading. Do this by having John do a Think Aloud or Talking to the Text while he/she reads. A Think Aloud is when you ask students to verbalize the thoughts and ideas that go through their minds as they read. Encourage John to focus on his/her thoughts about what he/she does or does not understand as he/she is reading. Ask him/her to try to "identify problems as well as fix them up." A Talking to the Text is very similar to a Think Aloud, except that students write their thoughts about the text as opposed to saying them aloud. Encouraging students to do Think Alouds in pairs or groups can help them discover and adopt the successful habits of their peers.
- Have John create a list of typical comprehension problems and fix-up strategies that he/she can use to fix these problems up. This chart can be created by John and yourself, his/her peers, or even the whole class. It can be very beneficial to have students share their fix-up strategy lists, as it allows them to see how others make sense of text and possibly adopt new successful reading strategies.
- It is important also to work on John's ability to go beyond literal understandings of text. One way to encourage interpretive meaning-making is through schema work. When John reads independent-level texts, encourage him/her to stop periodically and make connections between the text and his/her life, other texts (both written and non-written, such as movies and video games), and the world.
- Another way to work on John's ability to comprehend text beyond a literal level is to ask him/her to begin creating higher-level questions about the texts he/she reads. Model for John how to ask appropriate, challenging questions. Invite John to think of his/her own questions for you (or peers), as if he/she were the "teacher." Encourage him/her to go beyond asking literal or factual questions that may begin with who, what, when, and where to asking higher-level interpretive questions, which often begin with why and how. Also, ask John to analyze what must be done in order to answer his/her questions. This will help him/her begin to become consciously aware of the kinds of schema and thinking involved in answering higher-level questions.

Graphophonics

Begin. Sounds	Tested Correctly	Phonetic Principle	Mastery	Phonemic Awareness Task	Tested Correctly
<i>Continuants</i>	f	<i>Some Beginning Sounds</i> fish, <u>moon</u> , <u>cat</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Phoneme isolation</i> What is the first sound in van ?	N/T
	l	<i>Most/All Beginning Sounds</i> <u>king</u> , <u>toy</u> , <u>world</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Phoneme identity</i> What sound is the same in fix , fall , and fun ?	N/T
	m	<i>Short Vowel Sounds</i> <u>den</u> , <u>nap</u> , <u>fun</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Phoneme categorization</i> Which word doesn't belong? bus , bun , rug .	N/T
	r	<i>Consonant Blends</i> <u>snap</u> , <u>crisp</u> , <u>splat</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Phoneme blending</i> Which word is /b/ /l/ /g/?	N/T
	s	<i>Long Vowel Sounds</i> <u>kite</u> , <u>cake</u> , <u>mile</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Phoneme segmentation</i> How many sounds are in grab ?	N/T
	n	<i>Consonant Digraphs</i> <u>chips</u> , <u>cloth</u> , <u>shed</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Phoneme deletion</i> What is smile without the /s/?	N/T
	v	<i>Vowel Digraphs</i> <u>coat</u> , <u>team</u> , <u>train</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Phoneme addition</i> What word do you have if you add /s/ to the beginning of park ?	N/T
	z	<i>r-Controlled Vowels</i> <u>dark</u> , <u>form</u> , <u>pert</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Phoneme substitution</i> The word is bug . Change /g/ to /n/. What's the new word?	N/T
<i>Stops</i>	b	<i>Diphthongs</i> <u>joy</u> , <u>cloud</u> , <u>pause</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Phoneme rhyming</i> What word rhymes with cat ?	N/T
	c	<i>Multi-Syllable</i> <u>jumping</u> , <u>structure</u> , <u>station</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Total Score:	
	d				
	h				
	g				
	j				
	k				
	p				
	w				
	t				
	q				
	y				

Phonological Domain (Sounds): Every reader needs to put sounds together with letters in order to sound out words. This is an essential skill to possess when you are presented with an unfamiliar word. Around 70% of English words are phonetic: words that can be sounded out. In order to develop this skill, the reader must have the ability to recognize distinct sounds and memorize the letters that correspond to the sounds. In addition, the reader must possess the ability to synthesize the sounds: consonants with vowels and consonants will consonants, etc. Single sounds must be blended together to make a word. This skill is important to phonics (sometimes called “word analysis” or “word attack”): the ability to sound out words. If you are presented with a word that you have never seen before, for example “phroist,” you must use your phonics skills to sound out this unfamiliar word.

- John can spell words like "coin".
- John spelled "chang" for "change".

Graphic Domain (Visual): In addition to sounding out words, good readers have the ability to memorize whole words. The frequency of exposure to words leads to memorization of the way words look. The reader will not have to sound out these words when he or she sees them; he or she will be able to recognize the word instantly. This also goes for words that cannot be sounded out.

- John can read words like "fame" and "pilot".
- John read "essential" for "special" and "bee-live" for "believe".

Real vs. Non-words: Written language is made up of symbols (letters) that correspond to sounds. Early reading skills include the ability to “decode” or sound out words that may be unfamiliar. Non-words are used as a way of creating a scenario in which decodable words can be presented while still ensuring their unfamiliarity. Using non-words when assessing a student’s ability to decode is very helpful in isolating his or her abilities. This assessment uses a combination of both real and non-words in the Phonics subtest. You will find it advantageous to compare the pattern of errors in real and non-words.

44 % of errors were “real-word” questions. 55 % of errors were “non-word” questions.

Semantics

Language and Meaning: The reason we read is to gather information and make meaning from text. Letters and words make up sentences to form written language. This means that readers need to use contextual cues, as well as the ability to sound out and recognize memorized words, to get meaning from text. It is important to understand the meaning of the individual words as well as of the sentences and passages. For example, a second-grade reader may be presented with the sentence “The wind was in my face.” Then that same reader might be presented with the sentence “I need to wind my watch.” Even though this reader might be able to sound out the letters W-I-N-D, he or she must understand the sentence in order to recognize the correct meaning and pronunciation of the word. In addition, even if he or she knows what the word “wind” means, he or she may not understand the sentence “Let’s wind this meeting up.” Understanding what you read as you read it is just as important a reading skill as the ability to sound out or memorize words. Comprehension is the purpose of reading.

- John was able to identify the meaning of words like "isolation" and "bouquet".
- John had trouble distinguishing the meaning of words like "trio" and "absorbing".

Reading Comprehension, Factual vs. Inferential: Reading is an act of communication; therefore, the purpose of reading is to gather information from a written source. Some of this information is factual. For example, you could read a story about a red fire truck. You would be able to answer a factual question: “What color is the fire truck?” However, some information is more complex and requires inferential thinking. You could be asked, “Why do you think fire trucks are red?” This question prompts the reader to think above and beyond the sentences in the story and consider things that are not straightforwardly stated. When examining a student with reading comprehension issues, it is always pertinent to determine the pattern of comprehension. Analyzing errors is a helpful way to understand a reading comprehension profile. Below is the analysis from this student’s errors in the reading comprehension subtest:

- 33 %** of errors were in response to “factual” questions.
- 66 %** of errors were in response to “inferential” questions.

Reading Level Score Equivalencies			
DRA1*: 28	Reading Recovery: 20	Fountas & Pinell (GR): M	Lexile: 300
DRA2*: 40			

* DRA1 is based on a straight reading text level conversion. DRA2 uses sight word mastery and reading text level to compute a conversion.

Instructional Activities Overview

These suggestions are intended to get you started on the road to reading improvement. Instructional hints for all six subtests have been included. Priority attention, if needed in one of the skill areas, is indicated with an arrow.

Reading improvement requires dedication and commitment. If a reader falls behind grade level in a skill area, he or she has not been able to make sufficient progress in a specific period of time. For example, a third-grade girl spells at a second-grade level at the beginning of third grade. At the end of third grade, she may still spell at a second-grade level. If she goes on to fourth grade, she may not make much spelling progress because she is starting out with a one-year deficit. At the end of fourth grade, she will probably be almost two years behind her fellow classmates in spelling. The only way for her to catch up is accelerated learning; in other words, she must make more than one year of spelling progress in a single year. For this reason, daily intervention is recommended for any areas of weakness in the student's reading. Frequency is more important than quantity.



High-Frequency Words

High-frequency words are what they sound like: words that are frequently encountered, both orally and in text. These are often small words, such as the, a or my. Sometimes high-frequency words do not sound the way they look, so they aren't easy for young readers to sound out. Take, for example, the common and seemingly simple word "was." A child who is encountering this word for the first time won't think it is so simple, and will probably try to sound it out. In doing so, he or she will probably come up with "wass" (sounds like "mass"). Since we actually pronounce this word "wuz," the child won't recognize the nonsense word that he/she pronounced ("wass").

If children had to rely on sounding out every word they encountered, many of their attempts at pronunciation would be inaccurate. Needless to say, the "sounding out" approach to reading by itself would be both time-consuming and frustrating for a beginning reader. In order to avoid these problems and become more efficient, beginning readers need to turn as many words as they can into sight words. Sight words are words children recognize instantly in print, without having to sound them out. The first sight word for many children is their own name. This is an appropriate first sight word, because it is so meaningful for the child. Aside from the child's own name, it is particularly helpful to turn high-frequency words into sight words, since the child is sure to encounter these words often while reading.

Try these exercises to improve the number of High-Frequency words your students know:

1. When reading to young students or beginning readers, hold them accountable for 1-2 words at each reading session. When you come to these words (for example "and" or "to"), stop and point to one of the words and have students take turns reading. Encourage them by saying prompts like, "I know you know this word; it is one we've been working on!" If the word is encountered too often, don't stop to ask it every time. Do the same with older children, but hold them accountable for more words. It is fine to leave cards or a paper out with their words written on them for the students to refer to the first few time you do this exercise.
2. Encourage your students to find sight words in many contexts – on signs, packages, magazines, etc. You can cut examples of the words out of magazines, if you'd like. You can have your students move through the classroom and have a "word hunt," looking for certain sight words together.
3. Write sight words on large cards or sheets of paper. Spread these all over the floor. Have one student at a time jump quickly from word to word. As the child lands on a word, he/she must say it. If the word the child says is correct, he/she can pick up the card; if it is incorrect, it cannot be retrieved. Keep going until all words are retrieved. A variation occurs when the teacher shouts out the word to be jumped to, and the student must jump to that particular word. Another variation can be done outside, by having the words written in chalk.
4. Copy a sheet of complex writing (an adult-level novel, for example). You could also use a sheet of newspaper. The object is to find a page of text in which the words are too difficult to read, except for the common sight words you are working on with your student(s). Have the students scan it and circle all the sight words they see; then have the students read them to you. If your students enjoy it, you can time them and see how many words each child can find in a minute or more. Only do this if it is enjoyable, however.
5. Some children enjoy working on sight words with flashcards. This is certainly the easiest method for parents or teachers to work with, but it is important to show your children these words in several contexts, too. If you use flashcards, try to make it into a game. Be enthusiastic and encouraging, and try not to make it drudgery. These can be sent home for homework, as well.



Word Recognition

Improving a reader's word recognition ability can be accomplished in several ways. The most important thing to remember is that it takes time. Effective readers have been building a catalog of easily recognized words over a long period of time, through the reading of thousands of words. Exposure affects the number of words a reader recognizes. The more learners read, and the more words they become exposed to, the more words they are able to recognize instantly.

Word recognition is slightly different from word analysis (sounding out words). You can think of it like this: words in English are made up of about 70% phonetic words (words that can be sounded out) and 30% phonetically irregular words (words that cannot be sounded out). Phonetically irregular words must be memorized so that they can be recognized when they are encountered in texts. However, the phonetic words, even though they can be sounded out when encountered, will eventually be memorized too. Effective readers certainly don't sound out 7 out of every 10 words they read. Even if 7 out of 10 of those words could be sounded out, fluency of reading requires the reader to quickly recognize words. Think about a word that you know, like spaghetti. You might need to sound out the word when you encounter it, but it is likely that you will instantly recognize it when you see it on a jar of sauce in the supermarket. You probably wouldn't have to sound out the word like you did when you saw it for the very first time because you have seen it so many times.

For beginning readers, the concept of Word Recognition overlaps with High-Frequency Words (see the previous Instructional Suggestions page for this topic). High-Frequency Words are words that are quite common and should be recognized instantly by students because of the high frequency with which these words appear in text. Word Recognition words may include High-Frequency Words, especially for beginning readers, but encompass other, less frequently encountered words as the reader becomes more sophisticated. Word Recognition also overlaps with vocabulary when students try to match the way a word looks and/or sounds with a word they know the meaning of already.

The goal for Word Recognition is similar to the goal for High-Frequency Words: automaticity in reading as many words as possible. These automatically identified words are often called Sight Words. In a classroom, the number and type of sight words mastered by individual students can vary widely. For beginning readers in your class, you may want to start with an assessment which will isolate frequently used sight words that are unknown to your students. You may also collect them while conducting individual running records.

Words that are stumbled over may become words you'd like your students to learn – especially if they are fairly common words, or words that are important to their lives. The words they stumble over also provide clues about which phonetic patterns your students may need more work on – if they consistently mispronounce the /oa/ sound in words like boat, float and moan, for example. Each student can have his/her own list of sight words to work on, derived from various sources. Concentrating on 5-8 words at a time works best. A classroom practice can be built around these words, where students are paired, each having his/her own words written on 3x5 cards. Students can 'test' each other, then put a check mark on the back of each card when their partner says the word correctly. The goal is automaticity, so you should stress the fact that a check mark can only be given when they can say a word immediately upon seeing it. This can be modeled and practiced for a couple weeks before handing the responsibility over to the students. When each student can identify all 5-8 words automatically (i.e. – 8-10 check marks on each card), the partners can come to the teacher for a Final Check. The teacher can then decide if all words are permanently off the student's list and choose 5-8 new words, or send the student back with a mix of new words and old ones that need more work.

If a particular subject is being addressed in your class, such as volcanoes, you may want to collect sight words for the entire class, such as volcano, molten, lava, etc. These can also become vocabulary words, of course. In this case, entire class activities can be built around learning these words for both instant recognition and meaning.

Many activities can become extensions of the partner word-recognition activities: word searches; writing the words they are learning (thereby reinforcing spelling); or word searches in books (each student looks for examples of his/her own sight words in any book and sees how many of each word he/she can find).



Phonics (Word Analysis)

Phonics refers to the complex set of actions and background knowledge readers must call upon when reading unknown words. The English language is tremendously complex. We have single letters that make more than one sound ('C' in cat and city), as well as letter combinations that make several sounds ('Ch' in chocolate, school and machine). We ask young children to learn all possible letters and letter combinations and match them with the sounds they make, while still trying to understand what is being read! It really is amazing that children successfully tackle such an endeavor at very young ages.

There are many specific activities that have been developed around particular word-analysis goals. These range from activities dealing with relatively simple, three-letter words to multi-syllabic words with several affixes. This page will offer general guidelines and helpful places to begin. It is best to make instruction as individualized as possible, so that it is most efficient and effective. However, this isn't always possible in a classroom situation. It is helpful to analyze student writing for specific errors; the more common errors found in the classroom work can be used as teaching points for the entire class. This is quite reasonable in the primary grades in which all students are beginners, albeit at varying levels of ability. In this case, every word-study activity will be of some use to all students (each activity will either teach a new concept to a less competent reader, or reinforce concepts some students are already familiar with, and offer more practice). As students become older, however, their patterns of error become more individualized, and it is more important to choose individual teaching points from each student's own writing, so that students work on patterns that are particularly troublesome for them.

Once you've identified whole-class or individual teaching points in the area of Phonics, you can offer support and intervention. For example, you may notice that while reading and writing, many of your students have trouble pronouncing and spelling words that begin with th. Many of them pronounce each letter separately, so that the word 'then' is pronounced 't-hen'. You can now focus on the th letter combination and create spelling and reading activities that use th words.

Here are some possible Phonics activities:

1. As a class, make a list of words with the same characteristics as the one your students are having trouble with. In the "th" example from above, you can use words like then, that, this, etc. Have your students create the list with you. Study the words together: read them, discuss them, notice the th sound in all of them, and contrast them with other words that use just a "t" or just an "h" to make the sounds (words like tap or hen). Do this over a period of several days or weeks if necessary. While studying a pattern, you will help your students become familiar with that pattern and others like it. Repeated exposure is an important component of mastery. As you read together, or as students read on their own, have them note other th words. Each day, reserve class time after you collect the th words your students found. In this way, you will call attention to the pattern again in other contexts and will encourage students to become aware of the pattern.
2. Keep track of all letter patterns you are working on and even those you've worked on in the past. Keeping them in individual notebooks is a nice way to review patterns. It is also a great way for your students to see how far they have come!
3. Use letter tiles or refrigerator magnetic letters, or cut out letters to form words with the pattern you are working on at the time. You will have to collect the letters and sounds ahead of time. If you want to work on the th sound, for example, collect these two letters, as well as enough vowels and extra consonants to form words like "them," "then," and "this." These can be set up in envelopes at a particular classroom center.
4. It is a great idea to follow up any word-analysis activity that focuses on reading with a writing/spelling activity. This can reinforce what they've learned and allow them an opportunity to transfer this knowledge to the writing/spelling domain. You can dictate words you have just worked with and have your students write them down.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is an important skill for students to possess because it allows them to make connections between how sounds work in words orally and how they correspond to letter patterns in words. Children who have good phonemic awareness are generally better at decoding words and spelling words. Good phonemic awareness helps relieve some cognitive burden in sounding out and identifying words as they make sense of text.

There are many types of instructional activities a teacher can employ in teaching phonemic awareness. However, phonemic awareness instruction gives students higher utility if instruction is ultimately implemented using letters. Because some phonemic awareness exercises (i.e., sound manipulation) are more complex than other phonemic awareness exercises (i.e., beginning sound identification), it is important to tailor phonemic awareness exercises to the student's needs and development level or age.

Here are some example activities for phonemic awareness:

1. **Phoneme Segmentation and Blending:** Have a book of one-syllable words with lines or boxes underneath them that represent the phonemes in the word. Make sure the lines or boxes are big enough for the child to point to. Have the child say the word the picture corresponds to. Say the word with the child. Have the child say and slowly stretch the sounds within the word. Then have the child slide his or her finger into the lines or boxes as he or she says each individual sound in the word. You can have the child slide pennies or other plastic manipulatives into these lines or boxes as he or she sounds out the word. After the child slowly breaks up the word into sounds take the individual sounds and blend them together quickly to form the original word. As the child becomes proficient in segmenting and blending the sounds, have the child identify the letters that correspond to the sounds. You can replace the manipulatives with letters as the child repeats the segmenting and blending exercises.



2. **Phoneme Manipulation:** Tell your student that you're going to play a game with him or her. In this game, your student is going to make new words by deleting sounds from words, adding them to words, or substituting new sounds from previous ones. Here is an example dialogue:

Teacher: "Listen to the word I say. Slime. Now repeat the word."

Child: "Slime."

Teacher: "Now say the word again without the /s/."

Child: "Lime."

Teacher: "Good. Say that again."

Child: "Lime."

Teacher: "Now take that new word and replace /l/ with /t/."

Child: "Time."

You can continue the activity with different directions or starting words. To start introducing letters into the activity, have the child write down each new word that is created and the letters of the sounds that are being deleted, added, or substituted.



Spelling

There are many strategies that children employ when they “encode” or spell words. Spelling is an auditory and a visual process. Children need to be able to hear discrete sounds in words and make letter associations with these sounds. The more children encounter a word by reading it or writing it, the less they need to rely on “sound-ing-out” strategies to spell it. Instead, they memorize how the word looks and appropriate letter sequences associated with it.

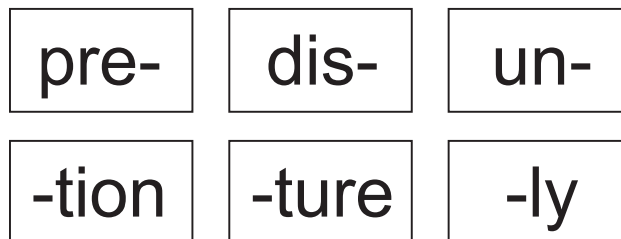
Instructional strategies in phonics and visual memory will help develop a child’s spelling skills. For example, when teaching how to spell single-syllable words, have students orally stretch the sounds in the word before they write the letters. (For example, they could stretch out the sounds in a word like “scrap,” “SSS-CCCCRRRAAAPPP.”) Then have them say the sounds again as they actually write the letters.

For multi-syllabic words, have the learner tap out or clap out the syllables. Ask your student to stretch out the sounds of each syllable, one syllable at a time, before writing the word. Another useful strategy is pronouncing each syllable before saying the letters in each syllable. If you are working on a word like hospital, encourage the student to say “hos, H-O-S, pi, P-I, tal, T-A-L.” Then have the student write out the word, saying the syllables and letters again: “hos, H-O-S, pi, P-I, tal, T-A-L.”

Build a list of words to practice spelling from memory. Remember to include phonetically irregular words (words that cannot be sounded out) that your students might misspell frequently. Words like “who,” “though” and “sign” are good examples. You can also obtain words that are commonly misspelled by individual students by examining their writing. Keep a running list of these words and practice them any time. Practicing daily is recommended. Frequency is more important than quantity. Practicing spelling words for two hours once a week is not as effective as practicing fifteen minutes a day.

Collecting words with similar spellings is also helpful. If your students are studying a word like “glorious,” you can also have them spell “curious,” “studious” and “copious.” Even if your students are working on much smaller words, like “ship,” they can also practice words like “hip,” “snip” and “chip.” Studies show that learning words in families is much more efficient. This way of approaching spelling also encourages students to employ strategies, such as applying the ‘ious’ sound to various words, as opposed to listening to each sound (i-o-u-s), then trying to replicate each sound anew each time it is spelled in a new context.

Capturing a list of familiar word beginnings and endings is a good way to improve spelling. Reading specialists frequently have their students memorize prefixes and suffixes as a precursor to multi-syllable spelling. You can do this too. Begin making a list of familiar word “chunks,” and practice them with your students. When they encounter these word chunks in a new word, learning to read and spell that word will be easier.



For extra fun, take the letters of a big word you have been practicing and scramble them. Have individual students try to put the letters back in the correct order. Or for a change of pace, switch roles. You pretend to be the student. Have a student test you on the spelling words. Make intentional mistakes and encourage the student to check your spelling. Students can also do this in pairs. Finally, many teachers have great success when they keep individual dictionaries in which students can write words they frequently use but have trouble remembering how to spell. The students can then refer to these dictionaries when they write, and the teacher can use the dictionaries as sources for obtaining more words for practice spelling tests. These are some engaging ways for you to make spelling a part of your students’ daily learning.



Oral Vocabulary

Developing vocabulary can have a positive impact on your students' reading comprehension. There are many ways you can help your students master new words.

One of the most helpful ways to help the students in your class develop a robust vocabulary is to purposefully “boost” your vocabulary when you speak with them. Be conscious of the words you use, and try to introduce new words in your everyday conversations. For example, if you are discussing a book about trucks with the entire class, offer them some other words that are related – like “flatbed” or “semi” or “eighteen-wheeler.” Be sure to ask the students for suggestions as well. Also, be sure to discuss the similarities and differences among the words you come up with.

Studies indicate that children learn about ten percent of their vocabulary through vocabulary building exercises in school. The rest they learn from exposure to speech and – most significantly – from reading. Regularly reading books that are a level above what your students can read independently is probably the single most important thing you do to help them learn new words. It is also a good idea to spend some time doing pre-reading activities that deal with vocabulary your students will encounter when reading a particular book. You can read ahead and choose a few words that may be troublesome for your students to understand. Before each reading session, introduce these new words and discuss what they mean. You will be aiding them in comprehension, since they will recognize and understand these words when they come upon them in context.

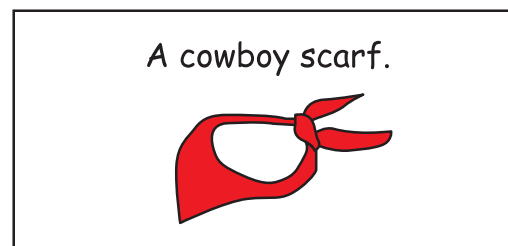
The Word Bank

One effective (and fun!) way to work with vocabulary in the classroom is to create and use a “word bank.” A “Word Bank” is a collection of unfamiliar words that you and your students assemble while reading together. You can work to master these words through a variety of games and activities. You’ll need index cards (to write the words on) and a recipe card box (for the “bank”). You may also wish to buy some index card dividers to put inside the box to separate the newest words from the ones you have been working on and the mastered words, etc. You can also use large manila envelopes, or journals with each word on a separate page.

To collect words, keep an eye out for words your students have difficulty with. Encourage your students to be on the lookout for words that are interesting and unknown to them in any context: home, school, reading, television, etc. As you read with your students, you will encounter words that many of them may not know. You may wish to question your students about difficult words that you come across just to make sure they know the meaning. A reader may partially understand a word in context but not fully understand the meaning. Or a reader may never have heard of the word and may need your support in order to understand what it means.

When you and your student(s) run across such a word while reading, take a moment to add it to the Word Bank. Write the word out on the front of the index card and drop it into the Word Bank. Limit the number of “deposits” you make to three or four words per reading session. Help your students understand the meaning of the new word either by explaining it or by referencing it in a dictionary. Have your students write a definition on the back of the card in their own words. If your students are too young to write, you can write it. It is also helpful to have each student draw a small picture on the back of the card displaying the meaning of the word. Once you’ve assembled ten or so cards, you can begin working on mastering new words! Encourage your students to create sentences with these new words. Choose four or five of the words and take turns making up stories that use them. You should practice these new words every day and, most importantly, make it fun!

Here is an example of a word bank card submitted by a teacher in San Rafael, California. Her students were reading a story about cowboys, and some weren't sure about the word “bandana.” Each child made a card, drew a picture and wrote his/her own definition.





Reading Comprehension

Assigning books to be read by your students takes careful consideration. In the lower grades, many districts provide books that are leveled for teachers, so choosing books that are appropriate for each child’s abilities is made easier. For older students, for teachers who don’t have access to leveled books, or for those who want to move away from leveled books, choosing books is a bit more difficult. Teachers need to consider the difficulty of the words to be decoded (length, familiarity, etc.), as well as the complexity of the syntax and vocabulary. In addition, background knowledge greatly affects comprehension. Finally, student interest in a particular subject or genre is a factor which affects whether or not they will work hard to read a book that is difficult for them.

One place to start in your decision-making about book choice is to determine the focus of a particular reading activity. Try reading books at different levels to give your students different levels of reading practice. Reading books that are slightly below grade level can be easy and fun and will boost rate and independence in reading. At or slightly above grade level reading material will give you a chance to challenge them. Consider the chart below:

Independent Reading Activities	Instructional Reading Activities
At or slightly below grade level. No assistance required, 1 or no word recognition errors per 20 words.	At or slightly above grade level. Assistance required for full comprehension.
Reading rate is quick and on pace, confidence is high, enjoyment of reading	Teacher will get the chance to work on word identification skills, vocabulary and comprehension

Teachers want to encourage independent reading, so students can work on feeling comfortable reading and on developing fluency. At other times, it is important for students to work at an Instructional level, to challenge them and encourage learning. In the classroom, you may want to group students who are at approximately the same level to work on books at the instructional level. This way, you can work with a group and provide support in a more efficient way. If possible, teachers should also make time to work with individuals in order to observe their particular needs. The following are some suggestions for preparing students to work on books that are slightly above their independent level:

When it’s time to read the new book together, have your students look at the cover and read the title (or read the title yourself). Ask, “What do you think this book will be about?” If it’s a picture book, have your students then “walk” through the pictures and construct a story. Gently steer them to details in the pictures that will help them construct a more accurate and robust prediction. Remember, the idea here is not so much to “get it right,” but to pick up information in advance that will reinforce your students’ actual reading of the book later. Be sure to be positive about your students’ predictions!

If there are no illustrations, preview any other features that might prepare your students for the book: chapter headings, for example, or the other various graphic features noted above. You may even direct your students’ attention to the dust-jacket or back-cover “blurb.” Introduce the concepts you selected during your own initial review and introduce the vocabulary you selected as well. Keep in mind that you want to prepare your students to 1) recognize the word when they re-encounter it; 2) be able to say the word; and 3) understand the meaning of the word.

For children who are still working on their letter-sound relationship skills, you might want to provide even more support with sounding words out. Bear in mind that your purpose here is to provide enough support so that each student experiences success when he or she reads with you. You neither want to do all the “work” for each child, nor have him or her struggle and grow frustrated.

High-Frequency Word Subtest: This subtest examines the learner's recognition of basic sight-word vocabulary. Sight words are everyday words that a reader sees when reading, often called words of "most-frequent-occurrence." Many of these words are phonetically irregular (words that cannot be sounded out) and must be memorized. High-frequency words like *the*, *who*, *what* and *those* make up an enormous percentage of the material for beginning readers. In this subtest, a learner will hear a word and then see four words of similar spelling. The learner will click on the correct word. This test extends through third-grade difficulty, allowing a measurement of fundamental high-frequency word recognition skills.

Word Recognition Subtest: This subtest measures the learner's ability to recognize a variety of phonetically regular words (words that can be sounded out) and phonetically irregular words (words that cannot be sounded out). This test consists of words from first-grade to twelfth-grade difficulty. These are the words that readers become familiar with as they progress through school. This test is made up of words that may not occur as frequently as high-frequency words but do appear on a regular basis. Words like *tree* and *dog* appear on lower-level lists and words like *different* and *special* appear on higher-level lists.

Phonics Subtest: This subtest is made up of questions that measure the learner's ability to recognize parts of words and sound out words. The skills range from the most rudimentary—consonant sounds—to the most complex—pattern recognition of multi-syllabic words. This test examines strategies that align with first- through fourth-grade level skills. Unlike the previous two tests, it focuses on the details of sounding out a word. Often nonsense words are used to reduce the possibility that the learner may already have committed certain words to memory. This will create a measure of the learner's ability to sound out phonetically regular words.

Phonemic Awareness Subtest: This subtest will measure a learner's attention to discrete sounds within words, or phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness only refers to the student's attention to sounds and not textual features of a word. In the phonemic awareness subtest, learners are tested on their ability to 1) segment words into sounds, 2) blend sounds together to make words, 3) rhyme, 4) recognize the same sound in different words, 5) delete, add, and substitute sounds to produce new words, 7) isolate sounds, and 8) recognize which sound in a series of words is different.

Oral Vocabulary Subtest: This subtest is designed to test the learner's receptive oral vocabulary skills. Unlike expressive oral vocabulary (the ability to use words when speaking or writing), receptive oral vocabulary is the ability to understand words that are presented orally. In this test of receptive oral vocabulary, learners will be presented with four pictures, hear a word spoken, and then click on the picture that matches the word they heard. For example, they may see a picture of *an elephant*, *a deer*, *a unicorn* and *a ram*. At the same time, the learner will hear the word *tusk* and should click on the picture of the elephant. All of the animals have some kind of horn, but the picture of the elephant best matches the target word. This test extends to a twelfth-grade level. This skill is indispensable to the learner's ability to comprehend and read contextually, as successful contextual reading requires an adequate vocabulary.

Spelling Subtest: This subtest assesses the learner's spelling skills. Unlike some traditional spelling assessments, this subtest will not be multiple-choice. It consists of words graded from levels one through twelve. The learner will type the letters on the web page and his or her mistakes will be tracked. This will give a measure of correct spellings as well as phonetic or non-phonetic errors.

Reading Comprehension Subtest: This subtest evaluates the learner's ability to answer questions about a silently read story. Twelve graded passages with comprehension questions make up the body of this test. The comprehension questions will include a variety of factual and conceptual questions. For example, one question may ask, "Where did the boy sail the boat?" and the next question may ask "Why do you think the boy wanted to paint the boat red?"

Assessment Analysis Explanation

Awareness of the complexities and components of reading is vital to the full understanding of the results of any literacy evaluation. Comprehensive knowledge of your student's reading profile is the first step to constructing accurate and informed instruction.

Reading is made up of several skill sets. Understanding all there is to know about reading can seem like an impossible task. Linguists, reading specialists, and speech pathologists spend their entire careers studying the details of language-based activities like reading, writing, and speaking. Some reading tests boil a student's performance down to one number, often a grade level. "Your student reads at a — grade level." One number cannot possibly cover all the skills involved in reading. It is our goal to give you a general but succinct overview of the components of reading in order to fully appreciate this learner's reading profile.

Although reading is a multifaceted process, it can be broken down into three basic parts. (See page six for examples from your student's participation in each of these three areas.) Keep in mind that all of these parts work together, overlapping and entwining to create a balanced reader.

1) In the beginning, before reading instruction has begun, most students begin to learn about sounds. As they begin to speak, they begin to develop *phonemic awareness*, the ability to distinguish sounds within words. This ability to discriminate between one sound and the next leads to proper pronunciation. Later on it allows them to sound out words, a crucial skill for beginning readers. All readers are presented with words that are unfamiliar and must be sounded out. When a student is first beginning to read, this is happening frequently. As a student progresses through the years, fewer and fewer words are unfamiliar. An average adult reader may encounter an unfamiliar word that needs to be sounded out less than one percent of the time.

2) English is made up of many words called "sight words" or "non-decodable words." These are words that cannot be sounded out and must be memorized. A reader must learn them by memorization and will become more familiar with them with more exposure. The longer a student is exposed to reading, the larger his or her compilation of memorized words becomes. However, even words that can be sounded-out, sometimes called "decodable" words, become memorized words over time.

3) Our purpose for reading may be entertainment, information, or communication. However, the process to realize any possible purpose for reading is always the same: the absorption of language. Therefore, not only do readers need to sound out words and recognize known words, they must understand the meaning of the individual words they read and the overall concept of the passage. All these things must be done in concert as a person reads. Understanding what you read as you read it is also an essential check to sounding out and recognizing known words. A good reader will use the meaning of the story to make sure he or she is sounding out words correctly. If a reader is struggling to sound out or recognize words, comprehension will suffer.

A measurement of the strengths and weaknesses in these areas creates a reading profile. Effective reading improvement must address the student's reading weaknesses. A gap between these strengths and weaknesses can also create struggle for a reader. Even students with skills that are all within or above grade range may have a large gap between their skills. A large gap will create a struggle for any student. Determining a comprehensive reading profile for your student is the best way to begin his or her journey to reading success.