

Today, there is an extensive body of knowledge and research upon which to base early literacy instruction. Teaching students to read is crucial, as it affects all other academic achievement. According to Moats (2020), “By the year 2000, after decades of multidisciplinary research, the scientific community achieved broad consensus regarding the essential components of effective reading instruction. Two decades later, hundreds of additional studies have refined and consolidated what is known to bolster reading achievement.” *Discover Phonics* capitalizes on research to create an engaging literacy environment for all students. This program prepares students with the knowledge and skills grounded in the Science of Reading, so they become successful readers. Students gain an evidence-based knowledge of the core components of reading (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension). The primary focus of this curriculum is on two essential building blocks of reading: phonemic awareness and phonics.

As students develop necessary core knowledge and skills, they are simultaneously set up to develop the joy of reading! Through proven strategies that incorporate poetry, music, art, and movement, children can enjoy learning to read in exciting ways!

Phonemic Awareness

It is important for students to notice and work with individual sounds in spoken words before moving to written forms. This is called phonemic awareness. It involves being able to isolate, identify, and segment sounds. Students begin blending sounds to form words. This is done at the listening and speaking level first. That is what distinguishes it from phonics. Research indicates those who develop phonemic awareness learn to read and spell more efficiently (National Reading Panel, 2000; Kame’enui et al 2002; Foorman et al, 2016). Research specifically supports activities that focus on the following areas as effective—all of which are explicitly included in this curriculum:

Phoneme manipulation

Students engage in ways to work with phonemes in words by manipulating the phonemes. The manipulation includes: blending phonemes to make words, segmenting words into phonemes, deleting phonemes from words, adding phonemes to words, or substituting one phoneme for another to make a new word.

Blending

Students combine individual phonemes to form words by blending the phonemes. They also are blending when they combine onsets and rimes to make syllables and combine syllables to make words.

Segmenting

Students break words into their individual phonemes to segment the words. They also segment words into syllables and syllables into onsets and rimes. (National Institute for Literacy, 2003).

Phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when children are taught to manipulate phonemes by using the letters of the alphabet.

Phonics

Students must develop knowledge of the sound-system relationship. Phonics instruction teaches children the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language. Students then learn to use these relationships to read and write words. Research has consistently proven that explicit instruction in phonics is an essential. This curriculum helps teachers to explicitly and systematically:

- instruct students in how to relate letters and sounds, how to break spoken words into sounds, and how to blend sounds to form words;
- help students understand why they are learning the relationships between letters and sounds;

- help students apply their knowledge of phonics as they read words, sentences, and text;
- help students apply what they learn about sounds and letters to their own writing;
- adapt to the needs of individual students, including English Learners, Students with Disabilities, and others, based on assessment;
- include alphabetic knowledge (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Language Interaction in the Classroom

The work of Vygotsky (1978) has long served as a foundation for much of the research and theory on language development in the classroom. He believed strongly in the role of social interaction in the development of cognition and language. Notably, the importance of multiple exposures and meaningful interactions with language is key. Humans cannot learn a language through rote memorization and have it be preserved or applied in any meaningful way. Instead, repeated exposure through multiple opportunities is crucial. Today, many researchers build on this information. For example, Blevins (2016) discusses the ways a systematic approach can move teachers away from isolated skills work and toward a meaningful application of phonics skills.

In essence, *Discover Phonics* incorporates the foundational research and progressive models designed to meet the needs of today's diverse learners. The research is translated into strategies that function in a cohesive manner, focusing on the desired result of raising readers.

References

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