



Phonological and phonemic awareness



This resource has been created to support Kindergarten teachers by providing practical and engaging literacy learning experiences that explicitly address the Early Years Learning Framework and the Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines. It also aligns with The National Quality Standard.

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Introduction

This resource provides a suggested sequence for teaching and learning words, letters and sounds in Kindergarten. It explains what this learning involves, why it is important and how it might be taught enjoyably and effectively within a rich and stimulating language environment. The content of the document is part of a larger sequence of learning for Kindergarten, Pre-primary and Year 1, that addresses a part of a balanced early years English curriculum, which builds on a strong oral language foundation.

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Teaching and learning about words, sounds and letters in **Kindergarten**

The content of this document is informed by key initiatives that include: [The Early Years Learning Framework \(EYLF, 2009\)](#); the [Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines](#), available on the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (The Authority) website, [The National Quality Standard \(NQS, 2013\)](#), and [The Early Years of Schooling \(DETTWA, 2011\)](#), in which the Director General explains the need to raise our expectations of students in their first years of school. For Kindergarten, content will be based on the general capabilities of the Western Australian Curriculum, focusing on personal and social capability, and preparatory literacy and numeracy capabilities (p.1) Kindergarten provides ‘an environment that engages students in a wealth of literature and enjoyable language and literacy experiences’ (p.6). Oral language, phonological awareness, vocabulary and concepts of print have strong links to learning to read and write successfully.

THE EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK (EYLF, 2009)

Teachers specifically addresses the *Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF, 2009)* outcome: **Children are effective communicators**.

This outcome is divided into five key components:

- ☒ Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes
- ☒ Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts
- ☒ Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media
- ☒ Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work
- ☒ Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking.

The main emphasis is on the key component: **Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work**. The suggested activities support the teaching and learning of the sound patterns of spoken English and the written symbols of the English writing system. This learning takes place within environments that are vibrant and flexible spaces and respond to the interests and abilities of each student.

KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

The Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines are highly related to *the Early Years Learning Framework* and *Western Australian Curriculum* in terms of establishing ‘the foundations for effective learning from birth to age five and beyond’ (The Authority, p.1). The specific *Learning Development Area* that relates to learning about words, letters and sounds is: **Communicating**, in which the following focus areas are outlined.

Interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes

- ☞ build aural and oral language
- ☞ listen to others
- ☞ develop auditory discrimination, for example able to identify environmental sounds
- ☞ increase use of vocabulary by exploring meanings of new words and talk about language (metalinguage)

Develop phonological awareness skills

- ☞ know that spoken and written language can be broken into smaller parts
- ☞ hear and clap syllables in simple words
- ☞ investigate and explore onset and rime in simple consonant, vowel, consonant (CVC) words
- ☞ discriminate rhyme in words
- ☞ investigate and explore individual sounds and sounds in spoken words
- ☞ hear and begin to identify first and last sounds in simple words
- ☞ explore letter-sound relationships

Develop understanding of purpose and meanings of a range of texts

- ☞ join in with chorus from narrative and rhymes in narratives/nursery rhymes/songs/chants

Engage in reading, writing and viewing behaviours

- ☞ use images, marks and approximations of letters and words to convey meaning
- ☞ recognise familiar written symbols in context, such as road signs and their name
- ☞ display reading/writing/viewing like behaviours in play and experiences
- ☞ use, engage with and share the enjoyment of language and texts in a range of ways

Develop concepts of print

- ☞ become aware that words are separated by spaces
- ☞ become aware that sentences are made up of words, that words are made of sounds and sounds are represented by letters or groups of letters

Investigate symbols and pattern systems

- ☞ recognise simple patterns and relationships
- ☞ recognise some letter names, for example the letters in their own name
- ☞ become aware that numbers are different from letters
- ☞ copy simple patterns

THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS, 2013)

The content of this Kindergarten document also relates to **NQS Standard 1.2** in that it addresses ‘critical reflection on teaching and learning, intentional teaching and assessment-based teaching for all students’.

Element 1.2.1

- Each student’s learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation.

Element 1.2.2

- Educators respond to student’s ideas and play and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each student’s learning.

Element 1.2.3

- Critical reflection on student’s learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program.

Definition of terms

Terms are defined as in the Western Australian Curriculum: English Glossary, except for those marked with an asterisk, which are not addressed in that glossary.

▢ ***Alphabetic principle**

The notion that there are systematic correspondences between the sounds of language and the letters of the alphabet.

▢ **Blending**

A process of saying the individual sounds in a word then running them together to make the word. The sounds must be said quickly so the word is clear (for example, sounding out /b/-/i/-/g/ to make 'big').

▢ **CVC words**

words containing a consonant, followed by a vowel followed by a consonant, for example cat; **VC** words – words containing a vowel, followed by a consonant, for example at. More complex combinations in words include **CVCC**, **CCVC**, **CCVC** etc.

▢ **Graphemes**

A letter or group of letters that spell a phoneme in a word (for example, /f/ in the word 'fog'; /ph/ in the word 'photo').

▢ **High-frequency words**

The most common words used in written English text. They are sometimes called 'irregular words' or 'sight words'. Many common or high-frequency words in English cannot be decoded using sound-letter correspondence because they do not use regular or common letter patterns.

▢ ***Metalinguistic awareness**

The ability to reflect on language as an object of thought.

▢ **Onset**

Separate phonemes in a syllable can normally be broken into two parts. An onset is the initial consonant (for example, in 'cat' the onset is /c/); or consonant blend (for example, in 'shop' the onset is /sh/). Word families can be constructed using common onsets such as /t/ in 'top', 'town'.

▢ **Phoneme**

The smallest unit of sound in a word (for example, the word 'is' has two phonemes: /i/ and /s/; the word 'ship' has three phonemes: /sh/, /i/, /p/).

Phonemic awareness

An ability to hear, identify and manipulate separate, individual phonemes in words.

Phonics

The term used to refer to the ability to identify the relationships between letters and sounds when reading and spelling.

***Phonics instruction¹**

This term refers to 'explicit instruction and practice with reading words in and out of text' (Rowe, 2005, p. 88).

Phonological awareness

A broad concept that relates to the sounds of spoken language. It includes understandings about words, rhyme, syllables and onset and rhyme. NOTE: the term 'sound' relates to a sound we make when we say a letter or word, not to a letter in print. A letter may have more than one sound, such as the letter 'a' in 'was', 'can' or 'father', and a sound can be represented by more than one letter such as the sound /k/ in 'cat' and 'walk'. The word 'ship' has three sounds /sh/, /i/, /p/, but has four letters 's', 'h', 'i', 'p'. Teachers should use the terms 'sound' and 'letter' accurately to help students clearly distinguish between the two items.

Rime

Separate phonemes in a syllable can normally be broken into two parts. The rime is a vowel and any subsequent consonants (for example, in the word 'cat' the rhyme is /at/). Word families can be constructed using common rime such as /at/ in 'cat', 'pat'.

Segmenting

Recognising and separating out phonemes in a word. Students may say each sound as they tap it out. Stretching (for example, mmmmaannn) is an example of segmenting. When segmenting words, there is a pause between each phoneme (for example, /m/-/a/-/n/ is an example of segmenting).

Syllables

Elements of speech that can be heard as a complete sound unit. They may be individual words, such as man, dog, spring, or may be parts of a word such as *mon-key* or *an-i-mal*.

¹ Note. Some methods of *Phonics instruction* are outlined in Appendix 1.

A systematic teaching sequence

Learning about words, sounds and letters in Kindergarten should be seen as the beginning of a systematic sequence of teaching and learning for the early years of school. This sequence progresses from listening to sounds in the environment, to awareness of words, sounds and letters, to detailed knowledge about systematic relationships between sounds and letter groupings within words. Learning about the structure of words is one part of the broad language, literature and literacy curriculum. It is a particularly useful part of early literacy learning since, when it is developed, it enables students to unlock the code of the English writing system in which the sounds of the language are represented by alphabet letters. An advantage of a clearly defined sequence is that it allows teachers to plan for student's learning needs across the early school years, helping students connect knowledge and skills across the transitions from Kindergarten to Year 1. Further, if taught explicitly, a systematic sequence has the potential to help prevent learning difficulties. The whole sequence that is suggested in this and the Pre-primary/Year 1 document is outlined on the following page.

This Kindergarten document includes the first three parts of the sequence. **Preparation** focuses on developing a strong oral language foundation for literacy, **Section 1** moves on to a specific focus on words, syllables, rhymes and alphabet letters and **Section 2** addresses phonemic awareness, blending and segmenting. The content and skills presented in these three sections closely follow those outlined in the Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines. For those students who are ready to move on, working with medial sounds and blending and segmenting have been included.

A teaching sequence for phonological awareness and phonics in Kindergarten, Pre-primary and Year 1

ONGOING LEARNING		TEACHING FOCUS	UNDERSTANDING ABOUT WORDS, SOUNDS AND LETTERS
Teaching of high frequency words as needed will be ongoing	Teaching of alphabet letters (upper and lower case), letter names and alphabetic order will be ongoing	Preparation: Focusing on language, literacy and sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Language and literacy provides a context for learning about words, sounds and letters. ☑ Listening is important for identifying and talking about language and other sounds in the environment.
		1 Phonological awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Language is made up of words. ☑ Spoken words are made up of smaller units of sound: Syllables. ☑ Spoken words are made up of smaller units of sound: Onset and rime. ☑ Written words are made up of alphabet letters - graphemes.
		2 Phonemic awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Spoken words are made up of smaller units of sound: Phonemes. ☑ Phonemes can be blended in reading and segmented in spelling.
		3 Phoneme-grapheme correspondences: Single letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ In written language, phonemes may be represented by single letter graphemes and the systematic relationships between them.
		4 Phoneme-grapheme correspondences: Digraphs, blends, rimes and syllables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ In written language, phonemes may be represented by multi-letter graphemes, groups of letters that represent blends and rimes, and the systematic relationships between them.
		5 High-frequency words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Being able to read and write high-frequency words automatically supports students to become independent readers and writers.

Note: Learning about high-frequency words and alphabet letters is ongoing throughout most of the sequence.

Alphabet letters - graphemes are introduced in Section 1 and are learnt alongside their most common sound. This builds phonological awareness. This learning is consolidated in Pre-primary and Year 1.

Learning about **high-frequency words** in Kindergarten is mostly focused on words that are personally significant, such as student's own names, names of their friends and other words in their immediate environment. Students who are ready to focus on a wider written vocabulary should be encouraged.

Effective planning for a diverse range of learners in **Kindergarten**

Planning for language and literacy learning in Kindergarten needs to take into account student's prior knowledge and experiences. Students entering Kindergarten will have had extremely varied experiences of language and literacy at home, in the community, and in various out of home care settings. Some will have engaged in language practices that have many similarities to those of Kindergarten. These students will be used to singing rhymes and songs, interacting with books, listening to books being read aloud and taking part in related discussions around books and other texts and may also be able to consciously attend to specific aspects of language, including sounds and words.

A common practice in child-care centres is to encourage even the youngest students to 'use your words', instead of pointing, crying or engaging in conflict. This practice focuses attention on words and helps students become aware of language as something that has a purpose, can be talked about, and can be thought about (*metalinguistic awareness*). Other students will not have had access to these experiences, and talking and thinking about language may be difficult for them.

Some of these students may speak English as a Second Language/Dialect (ESL/D) and some will be aware of the sounds in their home languages; some will have difficulty with the sounds of Australian English. This means that the phonological awareness of students when they begin Kindergarten will vary from little or no awareness, to quite sophisticated awareness of syllables and rhymes and, possibly, some knowledge of phonemes. For those students who have had few opportunities for this type of reflection on language, their differences should not be considered deficits, but rather differences in previous experience.

With the provision of appropriate language experiences and teaching, most of these students learn to talk and think about language and become aware of words and word parts. Some students will, however, need additional teaching that is specifically targeted at their individual needs.

When planning for language and literacy learning in Kindergarten, teachers take into account the wide range of knowledge and experiences that students bring with them and find out what students know and can do, in order to help them move beyond the known to new learning. This will involve planning for whole group, small group and individual learning. Teaching small groups of students who are at similar levels of development is particularly effective at this stage.

(NQS Element 1.2.1 Each student's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation.)

Most students beginning Kindergarten will benefit from practising general listening skills; some will be developing the ability to identify words, syllables, rimes, and possibly to identify phonemes. It is important that this learning takes place in an environment that is characterised by rich enjoyable language and literacy experiences that involve *student-directed play, guided play* and *intentionally planned teaching* and learning activities (WAPPA, 2011).

Intentional teaching is deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful. Educators who engage in intentional teaching recognise that learning occurs in social contexts and that interactions and conversations are vitally important for learning. They actively promote student's learning through worthwhile and challenging experiences and interactions that foster high level thinking skills. They use strategies such as modelling and demonstrating, open questioning, speculating, explaining, engaging in shared thinking and problem solving to extend student's thinking and learning... They plan opportunities for intentional teaching and knowledge-building. They document and monitor student's learning.

(EYLF, 2009)

How do students learn to read and write words?

Students² generally learn to recognise their first words holistically by sight, for example when they recognise *McDonald's* by the arches in the logo. Their first spellings bear little or no resemblance to the words they represent, ranging from scribbles to random placement of letters or letter-like forms. At this early stage of literacy development students do not know about the *alphabetic principle* of systematic relationships between sounds and letters, as they have not yet made the connection between letters and sounds.

As they begin to learn about these connections students may focus on the first letter of a word, later extending their focus to the last letter as well. In reading, they may recognise the word *mummy* by the first, or by the first and last letters, so that they may read *monkey* as *mummy*. In spelling, many students focus on letter names rather than sounds and may write *B* for *beak*, *JL* for *jail* or *JRF* for *giraffe*. These invented spellings, which do not often include vowels, indicate that students are beginning to learn about and use the alphabetic principle as they choose individual letters to represent letter names in a left to right sequence.

With appropriate teaching, students extend their knowledge of the alphabetic principle as they use their emerging knowledge of sound-symbol relationships to recode written words into their pronunciations. They may sound out every letter in a word, such as *s-a-n-d*, or recognise familiar words by sight and keep a sounding out strategy for words they don't know. As their knowledge of sound-letter relationships expands students begin to use letter combinations such as *ch* and *oo* without sounding out every letter. In spelling, students use sound symbol correspondences to spell most words exactly as they sound, such as *bak* for *back* or *jiraf* for *giraffe*. As they develop a spelling bank of commonly used words they may experiment with various letter combinations, spelling *seat* as *sete* or *seet*, and *kite* as *kight*.

During the primary school years typically developing readers and spellers learn to use sophisticated knowledge of letter-sound correspondences to read and spell words. They become able to use a wide range of strategies to recognise and produce words automatically, are able to process new words with minimal effort, and their spellings become more and more conventional.

² It is acknowledged that the order of acquisition of this general phonological sequence may be influenced by methods of teaching (see Johnston & Watson, 2014).

What students need to know in order to develop their knowledge and skills in reading and writing words

In order to read and spell words fluently students need to know about the sound system of English (*phonological awareness*, which includes *phonemic awareness*), about *alphabet letters*, and about systematic relationships between sounds and letters (*phonics*). This Kindergarten sequence of learning mostly focuses on phonological awareness and phonemic awareness, along with general listening skills and learning to focus on literacy events in the classroom. Detailed information about teaching and learning phonics, which depends on knowledge of both phonemic awareness and alphabet letters, is provided in the [Phonemic awareness and phonics for reading and spelling](#) Pre-primary / Year 1 document.

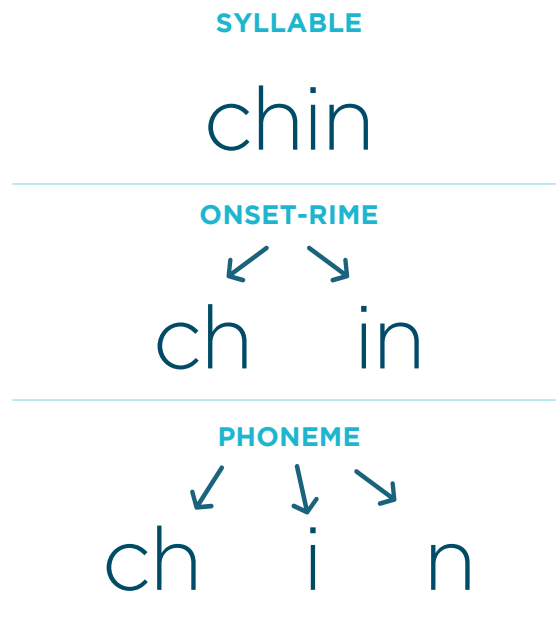
PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognise and work with the sound units of language. Some of the first ways in which students may show that they are becoming phonologically aware include recognising that there are two syllables in the word *monkey* and that the words *cat* and *hat* rhyme.

Phonological awareness also includes the later developing knowledge and skills of recognition and manipulation of individual phonemes, the smallest units of spoken language that can change the meaning of words. The ability to recognise and manipulate individual phonemes is called *phonemic awareness* and involves, for example, knowing that the word *cat* is made up of three phonemes and that if the middle phoneme is replaced by /u/ then the word becomes *cut*; and that the word *pat* can be re-arranged to make the word *tap*.

It is important to recognise that when we discuss phonological awareness we are referring to the *sounds* of the language, rather than letters. (Of course learning about letters is also a very important part of early literacy learning). Phonological awareness involves word level knowledge and skills, in that words can be divided by sound into the progressively smaller units of syllable, onset and rime, and phoneme. The ways in which the syllable can be broken down into the units of onset and rime, and then to phonemes is illustrated below, using the example of the single syllable word *slip*. Where words contain more than one syllable (as in *slipper*), each syllable can be broken down in this way.

Levels of phonological awareness in the one-syllable word *chin*



Why is phonological awareness important?

In order to decode words in reading and write them in spelling, students have to become able to break words up into sounds so that they can take advantage of the *alphabetic principle*, in which the 44 phonemes of the English language are represented by the 26 letters of the alphabet. Without this understanding, students would have to learn each word individually as a logograph or picture. Some research shows that awareness of phonemes and letter name knowledge are the two best predictors of how well students will learn to read and write (Adams, 1990). Phonological awareness is a necessary but not sufficient condition for learning to read and write. This means that, while learning to read requires phonological awareness, phonological awareness alone will not guarantee that students will learn to read and write effectively, but it will give them a very good start. Students also need to develop concepts and skills of phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and other aspects of literacy.

There is much research evidence showing a positive relationship between young student's phonological awareness and later success in reading and spelling (Lonigan, 2006). Teaching knowledge of words, syllables and rimes along with related skills, is important in the early years of school as it helps students attend to and work successfully with words and larger parts of words, before they need to deal with phonemes, the smallest parts. Knowledge of syllables and rimes will also be important later on for developing reading, spelling and word study skills.

Why can phonological awareness be difficult for some students?

As the sound units of words become smaller, they become more difficult to discriminate. Syllables seem to be fairly easy for young students with relatively normal hearing to hear and segment. However, sound segments smaller than the syllable are more difficult to hear and process. Most students need lots of experiences with rhymes and songs before they become consciously aware of rime. It is important to note that middle ear infections are relatively common amongst Kindergarten students and may lead to intermittent hearing loss; some students may have more long-term hearing difficulties. Students with hearing difficulties need to be identified early and referred to specialists, as hearing loss may lead to difficulties in many areas, particularly in reading and writing.

Becoming phonologically aware

Whilst some teaching methodologies may affect the developmental sequence (see Johnston & Watson, 2014), phonological awareness generally develops progressively in students, initially from the larger units of the syllable and onset-rime, to the smaller unit of the phoneme.

Although the syllable is usually a larger unit than the rime, awareness of these units may be learnt at a similar time. Early demonstrations of phonological awareness by students might include being able to clap out the four syllables of *caterpillar* and recognising that *cat* and *hat* rhyme. They can normally do this well before they are able to deal with the phonemes /c/ /a/ /t/ in the word *cat*.

There is wide variation in very young student's awareness of syllables and onset and rime. However, this becomes more stable around the age of four years when most students become involved in pre-compulsory education. Depending on the teaching method used, awareness of phonemes generally emerges after awareness of syllables and rime, often about the time when students begin to learn to read and write words. There is a two-way relationship between awareness of phonemes and reading and spelling development. This means that awareness of phonemes helps students benefit from reading and writing instruction, and, at the same time reading and writing instruction, and reading and writing themselves, help students become more aware of phonemes.

KNOWLEDGE OF ALPHABET LETTERS - GRAPHEMES

Even if they are not exposed to books, young students are regularly exposed to letters in environmental print and on television. The Letters and Sounds resource (DfES, 2007) has defined what students need to learn about letters as being able to:

- ▢ Distinguish the shape of the letter from other letter shapes
- ▢ Name the letter: Recall and recognise the shape of a letter from its name
- ▢ Recognise and articulate the most common sound (phoneme) associated with the letter shape
- ▢ Recall and recognise the shape of the letter when the associated phoneme is pronounced
- ▢ Write the shape of the letter with the correct movement, orientation and relationship to other letters.

Research evidence shows that alphabet letters need to be taught. However, the research evidence on how to teach alphabet letters effectively is not clear (Piasta & Wagner, 2010). In particular, the issues of whether letter names or sounds should be taught first, or whether they should be taught together from the beginning are controversial. Names are important for talking about letters in reading and writing as the names are constant; sounds are necessary for blending and segmenting in reading and writing. In this Kindergarten document the emphasis is on letter names in the very beginning stages. Nevertheless, both letter names and sounds need to be learnt and some teachers find that teaching them together from the very beginning is effective, particularly as students may arrive at Kindergarten knowing some letter names and sounds.

It is important that teachers use the correct terminology so that when they are talking about an alphabet letter (in the written visual form), they use the term 'letter' and that when they are talking about a letter sound they use the term 'sound' or 'phoneme' consistently, for example, "The name of this letter is 'bee' and the sound it usually makes is /b/."

As many Kindergarten students at the beginning of the year, particularly the youngest, have not yet developed the fine motor control required for writing small alphabet letters, it is important that they are given many opportunities to use larger movements for experimenting with letter-like shapes with finger paint and large markers, and outside in sand-play and water painting, with brushes of various sizes. Young students should not be pressured to write letters correctly with pencils before they have developed appropriate fine motor control. However, those students who have more mature motor control and are ready to begin forming letters correctly with smaller movements should be encouraged to do so.

Some of the students who are learning to write letters will have learnt to write capital letters, or a mixture of capital and lower-case. Teachers will use their knowledge of individual students to make judgments of when they are ready to begin writing both cases. This may not be during the Kindergarten year as capital letters are easier to form than lower case. However, teachers should normally write student's names beginning with a capital, with following letters in lower-case, and modelled writing in the classroom should be in appropriate sentence case.

What students need to know about words, sounds and letters in **Kindergarten**

For most students the teaching and learning of sounds and letters in Kindergarten focuses on:

- ☞ Enjoyment of language and literacy
- ☞ Developing listening and speaking skills
- ☞ Learning about words as units of spoken (and written) language
- ☞ Learning about syllables as units of spoken language
- ☞ Learning about rimes as units of spoken language
- ☞ Learning about phonemes as units of language at the beginnings and ends of words
- ☞ Learning about the names of alphabet letters and their shapes (including approximations in writing)
- ☞ Learning about written words that are personally significant.

Many students, during the year, will be ready to move on to more advanced concepts and skills:

- ☞ Learning about phonemes in different places in words (beginning, middle and end)
- ☞ Learning to blend phonemes
- ☞ Learning to segment phonemes
- ☞ Learning phonemes associated with some alphabet letters
- ☞ Learning to write some alphabet letters correctly
- ☞ Learning to decode some simple words (cvc).

It is most important that teachers regularly find out what students know, can do and understand, so that teaching and learning activities are at appropriate levels. Some students will need lots of practice with the simplest concepts and skills; others will be ready to move on to more advanced learning.

(NQS Element 1.2.3: Critical reflection on student's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program.)

Planning for effective learning

THE LITERACY ENVIRONMENT

A rich environment that provides many opportunities for speaking and listening is most important for language and literacy learning in Kindergarten. Students need many opportunities to engage in extended conversations in which they hear and use appropriate vocabulary that helps them build concepts about words and the world (Roskos, Tabors & Lenhart, 2009). They need meaningful engagement with various forms of print, including many interactions around books. And there is very strong evidence that students also benefit from some explicit, intentionally planned, developmentally appropriate teaching about print that includes words, sounds and letters (Vukelich & Christie, 2009).

There is much research showing that early years classrooms, with rich literacy environments that are regularly used by teachers and students to focus on literacy, facilitate students' literacy development (for example Burns, Griffin & Snow, 1999; McGee & Morrow, 2005; Loudon, Rohl & Hopkins, 2008). Literacy rich environments include many resources for students to interact with print in a classroom literacy centre, such as the book corner/library, writing and word study centres and mat area, where adults can model and demonstrate reading and writing and interact with students around texts and where students can choose to experiment with reading and writing for themselves.

Literacy rich environments also include functional environmental print such as the alphabet, the daily calendar, instructions, labels, statements of what has been learnt, and other texts constructed and regularly read by the teacher and students together. Literacy enriched play areas, such as a café with menus and writing pads for taking orders, provide many opportunities for using literacy tools and for extended conversations, particularly if there is an adult available to take part in the play.

All areas of the Kindergarten have the potential to become part of the literate environment: oral language and literacy may be introduced and practised in art and craft, music, drama, movement, construction, numeracy activities and outdoor play, in addition to the more obvious literacy focused areas. What is important about the literacy environment is that teachers use it for intentional teaching by frequently focusing student's attention on oral language and print, particularly words, sounds and letters. **(NQS Element 1.2.2:** Educators respond to student's ideas and play and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each student's learning.)

EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF WORDS, SOUNDS AND LETTERS IN KINDERGARTEN

Whilst the environment is important, it is the teacher and what the teacher does in the environment that makes a real difference in student's learning. Recent findings from research in Australian early years classrooms identified some features of early years classrooms in which students made more than expected literacy growth (see [Teaching for Growth](#) and Louden et al., 2005). The following guidelines for teaching are based on this and related research.

Effective early learning about words, sounds and letters is:

- ☞ Pleasurable, highly motivating and often multi-sensory
- ☞ Systematic, in that the teacher identifies and follows a sequence of what needs to be learnt
- ☞ Intentionally taught in short teacher directed sessions and then practised in different contexts
- ☞ Purposeful, in that the teacher directs student's attention to what is to be learnt
- ☞ Based on carefully focused observation of what students know, understand and can do.

Effective teachers:

- ☞ Provide clear explanations and demonstrations of what is to be learnt and what the students are expected to do
- ☞ Use consistent and precise language, for talking about words, sounds, letters and letter names
- ☞ Use very clear articulation that draws student's attention to particular words, sounds and letters
- ☞ Make sure that students are able to see and focus on the teacher's face in experiences that involve talking about words, sounds and letters
- ☞ Make sure that teaching and talk about sounds takes place in relatively quiet areas of the room so that students can clearly hear the focus words and sounds;
- ☞ Use actions, games, puppets, toys and other highly enjoyable experiences
- ☞ Extend the learning of concepts and skills into a wider context, such as a shared book, art or movement
- ☞ Provide careful scaffolding, including guided practice in a variety of contexts, to ensure that concepts and skills are learnt
- ☞ Provide many opportunities for practice in different contexts to consolidate and extend concepts and skills
- ☞ Maintain a focus also on broader text level features. Whilst phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge are crucial elements of a balanced early literacy program they are only one part and need to be integrated into the wider language and literacy curriculum.

Preparing to teach language, literacy and sounds

In this preparation phase of a teaching and learning sequence the focus is on words, sounds and letters from Kindergarten to Year 1, students focus on language and literacy as they engage in some activities that are central to literacy learning in early years educational settings.

TEACHING FOCUS	UNDERSTANDING ABOUT WORDS, SOUNDS AND LETTERS
<p>Focus on language, literacy and sounds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Focus on language and literacy provides a context for learning about words, sounds and letters ▶ Listening is important for identifying and talking about language and other sounds in the environment

KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

Interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes

- ▶ build aural and oral language
- ▶ listen to others
- ▶ develop auditory discrimination, for example able to identify environmental sounds
- ▶ increase use of vocabulary by exploring meanings of new words and talk about language (metalanguage)

Engage in reading, writing and viewing behaviours

- ▶ use images, marks and approximations of letters and words to convey meaning
- ▶ recognise familiar written symbols in context, such as road signs and their name
- ▶ display reading/writing/viewing like behaviours in play and experiences
- ▶ use, engage with and share the enjoyment of language and texts in a range of ways

Develop understanding of purpose and meanings of a range of texts

- ▶ join in with chorus from narrative and rhymes in narratives/nursery rhymes/songs/chants

Students also focus specifically on sounds as they engage in activities designed to develop and/or extend their listening skills and their ability to talk about sounds in their environment. These activities are important in themselves, and also as prior knowledge for later parts of the teaching and learning sequence. It is important to have a balance between spontaneous student initiated activities and intentionally planned teaching that helps students go beyond what they already know, can do and understand, to new learning.

For students in the Kindergarten age group Vukelich and Christie (2009) have outlined some research-based principles for effective early literacy learning in a rich environment:

- ④ Early language and literacy education teaching focuses on core content, particularly oral language, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge and print awareness
- ④ Oral language is the foundation for early literacy development
- ④ Storybook reading is the cornerstone of early literacy instruction
- ④ There are many opportunities to engage in reading and writing activities
- ④ Core literacy concepts and skills are taught through developmentally appropriate instruction
- ④ Teachers work with parents/carers to support student's language and literacy learning
- ④ Teaching and assessment of oral language and early literacy learning are aligned with the curriculum and standards.

These principles are emphasised in a variety of language and literacy experiences that may not be familiar to some students at the beginning of Kindergarten. The first part of this section focuses on introducing students to some of these experiences. Teachers should plan these experiences to be 'purposeful' in that they set clear learning goals, by intentionally engaging students in interactions that help them develop the language skills they need. The experiences also need to be 'playful', in that they appeal to students and encourage them to use new learning in different situations (Roskos, Tabors & Lenhart, 2009). Activities in these introductory sections are adapted from a variety of sources that include [Letters and Sounds](#) and [Phonological awareness is student's play](#).

The activities are traditional Kindergarten experiences that are part of the repertoire of early years teachers. They are valuable in facilitating student's development in a variety of domains. What is important about them in the context of beginning to learn about words, sounds and letters is that they can be used to put a specific focus on listening, speaking and literacy, and the specific focus can be made clear to students. The [First Steps Speaking and Listening Developmental Map](#) and Resource Book provide many suggestions for focusing on spoken language; another very useful resource is *Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education* (Fellowes & Oakley, 2010).

Modeling speaking and listening

Speaking and listening is modelled by teachers and education assistants as they interact with students. These are crucial in the early years of learning. Some speaking and listening behaviours, which are described in *Letters and Sounds* and identified in [Teaching for Growth](#) are:

- ④ *Listening to encourage talking.* Teachers actively listen to students in their play, as it allows them to demonstrate interest and value in this talk and to model the extension of conversations in appropriate ways. Active listening also allows teachers to assess student's levels of language development and plan for future extension. Teachers demonstrate active listening when they praise students for using appropriate words and language forms, particularly those that have been modelled for them.
- ④ *Modelling good listening.* Teachers model making eye contact with the speaker, making comments and asking questions that are appropriate to what has been said.

- ☞ *Providing good models of spoken English.* This will include teachers using particular vocabulary and sentence forms that reinforce and extend the student's language, in addition to careful pronunciations of words, which will be necessary for focusing on words, and sounds in words. It will also involve speaking confidently and sustaining dialogue.

Focus on language and literacy

SHARED BOOK EXPERIENCE

Sharing a book with a group of students is one of the most important literacy strategies in early years education (Morrow, Freitag & Gambrell, 2009). In a shared book session the teacher can create a highly enjoyable and stimulating experience, model many aspects of literacy, and can encourage oral language development. For students who do not have much experience with books, it is best to begin with a small group and choose very short interactive flap books that have highly repetitive sentences and phrases, such as the *Spot* and *Maisy* series or *Dear Zoo*. Students with little experience of books will need to come to understand the pleasure and excitement that can be in such experiences, something that those who have many experiences will

have learnt very early in life. In a small group, all students can see the pictures, take turns in turning the pages and opening flaps, in addition to talking about the book and what is happening on each page.

It is important that teachers provide students with lots of opportunities to enjoy hearing books read aloud and to discuss the pictures and the meaning before they begin to focus student's attention on print features. Once students are familiar with the routine of group book sharing sessions (and many will have experienced these in childcare, playgroup and library sessions for babies and young students), they can be introduced to features of books and concepts about print, such as:

- ☞ Knowing that books are for reading
- ☞ Identifying the front, back, top, and bottom of the book
- ☞ Turning the pages in the right direction
- ☞ Identifying the difference between print and pictures
- ☞ Knowing that print carries a message
- ☞ Knowing that the print and pictures are related
- ☞ Knowing that a picture book has a title, an author and an illustration
- ☞ Identifying where to begin reading on the page.

As they gain more book related knowledge and experience, students can be introduced to a closer focus on the print:

- ☞ Knowing how print is read from left to right and down the page
- ☞ Identifying printed letters (upper and lower case)
- ☞ Identifying individual words and spaces between words
- ☞ Identifying some punctuation marks such as full stops, question marks and exclamation marks.

It is important in the first readings of a book that the teacher focuses on enjoyment and understanding of the text. In later readings the teacher can point out features of the print. Big books are very useful for focusing on text as their enlarged print allows every student in a whole group to see the text clearly. Once the students are familiar with the story and pictures in the text the teacher can point out and talk about the print features. Teachers point to the print while reading a book so that students can clearly see the direction for reading the text.

Some big (and smaller) books have particular words accentuated by making them in large font, sometimes bolded and with other visual effects, such as the smaller books *Clippety Clop* and *Trouble in the Ark* where the noisy verbs (*bellowed*, *mooed*, *hooted*, etc.) are printed in a variety of different fonts. Attention can easily be focused on these words and the teacher can discuss the pronunciation and meaning of the words and reasons why the author wanted them printed in this way. Some big books for the earliest levels, such as *I Went Walking* and *Mrs Wishy Washy* have only a small amount of very repetitive, often alliterative or rhyming text on a page, which makes it very easy for the students to follow the teacher's reading and for students to begin to associate spoken and written words.

Students can also easily 'echo chant' these books when the teacher reads a line and the students echo or repeat the line with the fluent expression of the teacher. This provides the students with a very early experience of fluent reading. Big books that play with language in terms of alliteration and rhyming, such as *Hullabaloo at the Zoo* and *Hairy Maclary* are particularly enjoyable and provide a clear focus on sounds.

Shared book experiences in Kindergarten, when carefully planned and tailored to the individual needs of students, can be used to address many aspects of literacy. In terms of knowledge about print and sounds of language, student's learning can be scaffolded from very broad text features to much finer aspects of text and print knowledge. Accommodations for different learners can also be made. Students who have

difficulties with sight and/or hearing should sit at the front of the group. For young students, particularly those who have developmental, hearing or language difficulties, or speak English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D), the following strategies for use in discussion around books have been found useful (Tabors, 1998, cited in Strickland & Schickedanz, 2009):

- ☒ Use lots of non-verbal communication
- ☒ Keep the message simple
- ☒ Talk about the here and now
- ☒ Emphasise the important words in a sentence
- ☒ Combine gestures with talk.

In the [EAL/D Progress Map Early Childhood Kindergarten - Year 2](#), see the 'Considerations for supporting EAL/D students' and other relevant sections.

The [Statewide Services Resource and Information Centre](#) provides targeted resources that support EAL/D students to acquire Standard Australian English (SAE).

The Better Beginnings website at the State Library has some excellent resources and suggestions for books to share with Kindergarten students in the [Four to Five](#) program. There are also resources written specifically for [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students](#).

SHARED WRITING AND LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE

In this strategy students dictate a 'story' about a personal experience, the teacher scribes it, whilst articulating the words very clearly and reads it back to the students. The students are then invited to read it back. This may be done individually or with groups of students. Students who have had few experiences with written language, will benefit from some individual sessions, although they may need to be part of a small group initially to have the process modelled for them. This is a particularly good strategy for teaching about sounds and print as it demonstrates the relationship between oral and written language: what students say can be written down and then read back as oral language. It is particularly motivating if the students have taken part in a hands-on experience, such as cooking or construction with various materials, or have been on a visit to the zoo or a farm.

Like shared reading, shared writing is an excellent way of demonstrating important written language conventions. The aspects of writing that the teacher models for students include:

- ② Writing for a purpose
- ② Expressing ideas in writing
- ② Writing words and spelling them conventionally
- ② Leaving spaces between words
- ② Using left to right and top to bottom orientation of writing
- ② Using capital and lower case letters, full stops and other punctuation marks.

Shared writing allows all students to experience the process of creative writing before they are able to write (and read) conventionally. The written text is particularly salient to the students as, since they have composed it themselves, the re-reading experience can be successful and authentic (Vukelich & Christie, 2009). Shared writing can be illustrated and put on display in the classroom, or made into a big book for later reading practice and enjoyment, or taken home to share experiences with parents/carers.

SONGS, RHYMES AND WORD PLAY

Songs, rhymes and finger plays have always been important features of Kindergarten classrooms. They are often used as transition activities in order to gain student's attention, particularly before a story session, or as a brief fill-in while waiting for another activity. And they are usually very successful 'attention getters', particularly if they finish with 'hands behind your back' or 'on your lap'! These are also important early literacy learning activities as they help students focus on and sometimes play with words and sounds. Digital recordings of songs, rhymes and finger plays for young students are available commercially; those made by the ABC are particularly relevant to Australian students. When students are first learning the songs, rhymes and finger plays it may be helpful, depending on the context, if teachers send home a letter to parents/carers, explaining the importance of learning these language sequences and providing the words so that parents know what is being learnt and may be able to reinforce this learning at home. Students from different cultural backgrounds may have different rhymes and songs. Where parents are able to share these, the whole environment is enriched and learning becomes more meaningful for their students. Appropriate jingles from television can also be useful in providing a familiar context for some students.

Once students have learnt some rhymes and songs they can begin to play with them. Word substitutions can be made with the simplest well-known rhymes, such as 'Mary had a little horse', and by changing the rhyming words in 'Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty was very tall'. Songs such as 'Old MacDonald had a farm', that call for specific word substitutions, are very effective in focusing student's attention on the sounds of words and also enjoyable as the words to be substituted are animal names and noises. This can be even more fun if, when students know it well, they improvise using animal names not usually found on a farm. Dinosaur names can be particularly fun and effective in focusing attention on words: 'And on that farm there was a *tyrannosaurus rex*'. Students can discuss and practise the noise the dinosaur might make.

STORYTELLING

Storytelling is a particularly effective way to focus on language and literacy. It is an important element of oral cultures, but is becoming a lost art today as the environment becomes increasingly visual, with most students exposed to a variety of electronic media in their homes and other environments. Most students watch television and DVDs on a daily basis and in many homes television is on for much of the day. And in shared book sessions, teachers read the text as students look at the pictures. Storytelling sessions with young students may involve some props, but the main focus is on listening to the words as they are spoken and perhaps watching the body language of the storyteller. Teachers' use of voice is particularly important to engage students in the story. They can vary the loudness of their voice and the pitch, the pace of the articulation of the words and also the emphasis on particular words, and they can pause before really important words as they create suspense.

It is useful when working with students who have little or no experience of told stories to keep the story short and briefly recount an experience that would be familiar to them, such as, 'One day, when I was a little girl/boy, when I was 4 years old... 'and then retell or make up a story about a simple event such as a having a birthday party or going to the swimming pool. It is important to make eye contact with the students and to use facial expression and some gestures in order to provide some visual cues that can help to maintain their attention. The use of a puppet, doll or stuffed toy to demonstrate the story events may also be useful to help attention and understanding for many students, particularly for EAL/D learners. It is important to include events and stories that have cultural significance for these students.

When they have had some experience of told stories students can be introduced to traditional stories such as Goldilocks and the Three Bears and the Gingerbread Boy. Simple props, such as puppets/finger puppets, or a gingerbread boy made in cooking, or sets of three bowls, chairs and beds can help students focus on and enjoy these stories. As these stories are available also in picture-book format, they can be displayed in the class library. In these ways students can have some visual props to help understanding and attention, although the main focus for most students is the words of the story.

In storytelling sessions students are exposed to many aspects of language, including: the language of stories ('Once upon a time'); enjoyment of language ('Run, run, run as fast as you can, you can't catch me I'm the Gingerbread man!', and, 'Who's been sitting in my chair?', pronounced in different tones of voice), and repetition of word sequences, in addition to story grammar and other literate conventions. They are also highly important learning sessions in that they help students attend to and listen for words and the sounds of language. This is a most important baseline skill for learning about words and sounds in the early years of school. As the story-teller changes the loudness and pitch of voice for each bear in the repeated sequences, 'Who's been eating my porridge/sitting in my chair/sleeping in my bed?', students are helped to focus on the words, and as the Gingerbread boy says, 'Run, run, run as fast as you can, you can't catch me I'm the Gingerbread man!', students are learning about rhyming sequences. Students enjoy repeating the sequences in dramatic play. Storytelling activities are an important part of the wider English curriculum and also help young students focus on speaking and listening to the sounds of language, such as rhyming (can/man) and alliteration (can't/catch). The teacher can explicitly focus students' attention on words in the stories that 'rhyme' or 'start with the same sound.'

FOCUS ON SOUNDS

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE FOR THIS SEQUENCE OF LEARNING:

At the beginning of Kindergarten students' prior knowledge of language and literacy for this sequence of learning cannot be assumed. Some will have experience of rich oral language and literacy environments and participation in a variety of experiences involving songs, rhymes, oral language games, storytelling and book sharing sessions. Others will not have had such experiences. Some, including those who speak English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) may not have had much experience with Standard Australian English. It is important that all students' language and literacy development is carefully monitored so that they can work at their own individual levels. This means that the teacher intentionally plans for some work with small groups of students at similar levels of language and literacy development so that teaching is directed at the group's specific learning needs.

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN

Knowledge:

- ☐ Experiences with language can be enjoyable
- ☐ Active listening involves particular behaviours
- ☐ Sounds can be talked about

Skills:

- ☐ Listen to sounds in the environment
- ☐ Identify sounds
- ☐ Discriminate between sounds
- ☐ Recall a sequence of sounds
- ☐ Talk about and describe sounds

TEACHING AND LEARNING: FOCUS ON SOUNDS

Routines for listening

Teacher notes (Teacher includes teachers and education assistants)

It is important to monitor individual student's listening skills. Information from checklists can be used to plan future learning that addresses the needs of all students.

Detailed monitoring of listening and speaking activities may identify students who have some form of speech or hearing or language difficulty. These students should be carefully monitored and discussed with parents/carers so that referrals to speech and language professionals are made as soon as possible, where appropriate.

The emphasis in this beginning part of the sequence is on students taking part in enjoyable experiences that help them listen to sounds in the environment, identify particular sounds and talk about them. It is important that the teacher draws their attention to the purpose of listening activities. Some teachers focus the student's attention through body language, by touching their own ears and asking students to do the same, perhaps asking them to: 'Put on your listening ears'. Some students may need to be directed individually by name: 'Alice, remember to put on your listening ears.' Touching ears gives a visual clue that is particularly important for EAL/D learners. If teachers can find out the words for listen and ears in student's own languages, these words can also be used, particularly in small group sessions.

All activities need to be pleasurable for the students, and if working with an adult, within each student's 'zone of proximal development'. It is important that when undertaking these activities teachers regularly remind students of the listening and speaking focus: 'Kiara, I really like the way you are listening to the sounds'.

Acknowledgment. The teaching suggestions outlined here have been adapted from many sources, including [Letters and Sounds: Phase 1](#). More details of activities and the sequence can be found at the Letters and Sounds website: <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00113-2008>

MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

- ☐ How well do the students demonstrate the listening behaviours they have been taught?
- ☐ How well are the students able to identify specific sounds?
- ☐ How well are the students able to recall a sequence of sounds?
- ☐ How well are the students able to talk about/describe sounds?

FOCUS ON SOUNDS

Routines for listening

Various listening experiences can become a part of the regular classroom routine. These include:

1. Reminders about good listening behaviours, with associated actions: stop talking (finger on lips), look at the speaker or what is being listened for (point to eyes) and listen (touch ears). This sequence can be made into a whole body listening chart with pictures showing the actions.
2. A 'Sound Walk', either inside or outside the classroom promotes active listening for sounds in the environment. The teacher explains that the students will need to be 'good listeners'. At various places students: 'Stop, Look and Listen', for a short time and then talk about what they can hear/heard. It is important, particularly for EAL/D learners that the teacher acknowledges all students' responses and then very carefully articulates appropriate words for what's heard. As the students become more experienced in listening for the sounds, they can focus on naming the source of the sound and also features of the sound, such as 'loud', 'soft' 'buzzing', 'cheeping', 'screeching'. They may also talk about sequences of sounds: 'First I heard'' Then I heard....'
3. These experiences can be extended in art and craft as students paint or draw what they heard (and saw) and in dramatic play as they become birds, aeroplanes and cars, moving and making the sounds they heard.
4. The beginning or end of 'quiet time' ('rest time') routine can provide opportunities for listening to sounds indoors, as the environment is usually quieter than usual. Students listen for sounds that are inside and outside the room.
5. The teacher and students may make a digital recording of sounds within and outside the room for later playback, listening and discussing in a quiet area or in a short mat session.
6. In a small group circle game, the teacher produces a bag containing objects that make a noise, such as a bell, a small toy drum or a shaker, asks one student to take an object out of the bag and demonstrate the noise it makes, while the rest of the group close their eyes. The rest of the group are asked, 'Which object is making that sound?'. When students are new to this game, particularly when there are EAL/D learners in the class, the teacher can focus all students' attention on the bag so that they watch carefully as each object is taken out. The teacher then articulates the name of the object very clearly: 'This is a [brief pause] drum. Listen to the sound of the drum.' In this way the names of the objects are brought to the student's attention before they are required to discriminate between the sounds of the instruments.
7. At the craft table students can make shakers, which have fillings that make different sounds, such as rice, buttons, shells and marbles. Students can describe the sound of their shaker when it is made. Then students can guess what is in each shaker by its sound. A shaker can also be put into a 'feely bag' so that the students have to shake the bag and identify what is in the shaker.

FOCUS ON SOUNDS

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN	TEACHING AND LEARNING: FOCUS ON SOUNDS	MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT
<p>Focus on sounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Instrumental sounds and moving to rhythms and songs <hr/> <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Listen to and identify sounds and rhythms ▶ Recall and repeat rhythmic sequences ▶ Match sounds to percussion instruments ▶ Move to particular rhythms ▶ Create own rhythms 	<p>Listening and moving to rhythm and music</p> <p>Teacher note</p> <p>Students will need lots of free play with instruments before engaging in the activities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teacher claps a simple brief rhythm and the students in the group repeat. This needs to begin with very, very simple rhythms. Some students will need lots of practice. Students can make up their own rhythms and the teacher can ask the group to repeat them. They can also make rhythmic sequences with percussion instruments. These sequences can be played 'quietly' and 'loudly; 'quickly' and 'slowly'. Students can talk about which instrument makes the 'loudest/quietest' sound. 2. Students match percussion instruments. The teacher has two sets of the same instruments, gives an instrument from one set to each student in a small group, and keeps the other set. The students hold up, name and make a sound with their instrument (drum, triangle, tapping sticks etc.) The teacher turns away from the students and plays an instrument from the second set without the students seeing it. The student's task is to identify which instrument made the sound. When the game is new to the students, it should be demonstrated with only two instruments and the number of instruments gradually increased. 3. Students match instrumental sound patterns. In a circle one student is given an instrument on which to play one sound. The instrument is passed around the circle and each student copies making the one sound. The level of difficulty is increased by adding more sounds to copy in a sequence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How well can the students repeat a simple rhythm? ▶ How well can the students move to a rhythm? ▶ How well can the students create their own rhythms? ▶ How well can the students match sounds to percussion instruments?

4. Students talk about instrumental sounds to illustrate a story told by the teacher. The teacher tells a familiar story such as Goldilocks and the Three Bears, gives each student in the group an instrument and discusses with the students which would be the best way to play it at different parts of the story (fast and lightly as Goldilocks skips to the bears' house'; slowly and loudly as Father Bear walks upstairs). The teacher retells the story indicating where the students should join in and they play their instruments as they see appropriate. This is best in a small group to begin unless it's outside as it can be a very noisy activity! The sounds can also be made with instruments the students have made.
5. Students listen to and take part in action songs and rhymes. Adding actions to songs and rhymes helps young students enjoy and focus their attention on the rhythm and sounds in the songs. Action songs and rhymes such as 'If you're happy and you know it clap your hands,' and 'Heads and shoulders, knees and toes' are most enjoyable for students and, as the actions relate closely to the words, attention is directed to the sound of the words. Recordings of students' songs are also useful for listening to and remembering sequences.
6. Students listen, remember and copy a rhythmic action. In a small group circle the teacher makes an action that creates a noise, such as clapping hands, clapping hands on legs, stamping feet. The students in the group 'pass around' the teacher's action sequence (such as stamp, stamp) in order, with the student next to the teacher copying it first, and the next student copying this student. When the action sequence gets back to the teacher the group discusses if and how complex sequences can be used. (This game can also be played with words and sentences as student's memory for sequences is extended.)

FOCUS ON SOUNDS

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN	TEACHING AND LEARNING: FOCUS ON SOUNDS	MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT
<p>Focus on voice sounds</p> <p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Words, combinations of words and other sounds are made with voices; ☒ Articulating words requires a focus on particular parts of the mouth. <hr/> <p>Skills:</p> <p>Students focus on voice sounds by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Making different sounds with their voices; ☒ Listening to and talking about voice sounds; ☒ Singing and Innovating on songs and rhymes; ☒ Repeating word strings; ☒ Listening to recordings of stories and rhymes. 	<p>Voice sounds</p> <p>Teacher note</p> <p>EAL/D learners may need support in making verbal responses. They may need to observe and listen, rather than take a speaking part, in the initial stages of verbal learning.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students focus on voice sounds as they make the sounds of different objects (a ball bouncing; a kettle boiling), animals (a cat meowing, loudly/softly; a snake hissing; a bee buzzing; a kookaburra laughing), and feelings (a happy voice; a sad voice) etc. 2. Students listen to/hear/talk about the sounds they make: ‘Which sounds make you feel happy? Which are the loudest/quietest sounds? Who made the loudest/quietest sounds? Which is your favourite sound? Why?’ Digital recordings of student’s voices can be made for later listening, ‘Can you hear who is talking? Is it Leila, or Jasmin, or Dusty?’ 3. Students focus on articulation: Students see how their mouths look in a mirror. As they make various sounds students look carefully at their mouths. They can be asked, ‘What does your mouth look like when you buzz like a bee; meow like a cat; hiss like a snake; laugh like a kookaburra?’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ How well do the students distinguish between different sounds? ☒ How well are the students able to focus on articulation? ☒ How well do the students join in songs and rhymes? ☒ How well do the students join in repetition of phrases and sentences from known stories? ☒ How well do the students focus on sound recordings of songs and stories?

4. Students focus on articulation: Students feel sounds in their mouths. Moving the tongue around the mouth helps students become aware of their mouths - front, back, sides/cheeks, tongue, teeth and lips. They can talk about what their tongue, teeth and lips do when they make particular sounds, such as buzz, hiss, meow, laugh etc. Mouth movements such as sucking, blowing, stretching and wiggling the tongue are fun to do and may help students with articulation.
5. Singing songs and rhymes in different ways. Students can learn songs and rhymes by listening to the teacher and other students and joining in, and also listening to recordings of songs (those from the ABC are particularly appropriate for Australian students). As students learn the songs and rhymes they can listen to their voices as they sing these 'loudly', 'softly', 'happily', 'sadly', to a piano or guitar accompaniment, as a group or individually.
6. Joining in with repeated phrases or rhymes in story reading or story telling focuses student's attention on voice sound sequences: 'Little pig, little pig, let me come in!', repeated in various voices is a fun activity that helps memory for word sequences.
7. Dramatising (in dramatic play or as a group activity) well-known stories such as Henny Penny also helps students focus on repeated phrases or rhymes.
8. Listening to sound recordings of stories and rhymes, either commercially available or prepared by a community member, at quiet time' or 'rest time' can help students focus on voice sounds, without support from pictures. Digital recordings of Mem Fox reading her own stories are commercially available; some can be downloaded from her [website](http://www.memfox.com) www.memfox.com.
9. Listening to and repeating teacher modelling of the use of words in particular social situations, such as how to greet and farewell a visitor helps students focus on voice sounds in specific words, phrases, sentences and social situations. See [First Steps Speaking & Listening Map of Development p. 55](#).

SECTION 1

Phonological awareness

TEACHING FOCUS	UNDERSTANDING ABOUT WORDS, SOUNDS AND LETTERS	KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM GUIDELINES	
<p>Phonological awareness (words, syllables and rhymes) + alphabet letters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Language is made up of words ▶ Spoken words can be broken into syllables. Some words are one syllable words ▶ Spoken words can be made up of smaller units of sound: Onset and rhyme ▶ Written words are made up of alphabet letters – graphemes. 	<p>Develop phonological awareness skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ know that spoken and written language can be broken into smaller parts ▶ hear and clap syllables in simple words ▶ investigate and explore onset and rime in simple CVC words ▶ discriminate rhyme in words ▶ explore letter-sound relationships 	<p>Engage in reading, writing and viewing behaviours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ use images, marks and approximations of letters and words to convey meaning ▶ recognise familiar written symbols in context, such as road signs and their name ▶ display reading/writing/viewing like behaviours in play and experiences ▶ use, engage with and share the enjoyment of language and texts in a range of ways

Investigate symbols and pattern systems

- ② recognise simple patterns and relationships
- ② recognise some letter names, for example the letters in their own name
- ② become aware that numbers are different from letters
- ② copy simple patterns

In this section of the suggested teaching and learning sequence that focuses on words, sounds and letters from Kindergarten to Year 1, **students focus on words and smaller parts of words in addition to beginning to learn about alphabet letters** as they engage in some enjoyable language and literacy experiences that are very important in helping them prepare for learning to read and write. In the preceding [preparation section](#) students have been learning to focus on language and literacy and on environmental and other sounds in the Kindergarten context. Whilst students have had their attention directed to words in fairly general ways, in this section of the sequence they focus in detail on specific aspects of words and parts of words.

Words

Awareness of words has been identified as one of the first ways in which students may become metalinguistically aware, that is being able to reflect on language as something that can be talked about and thought about, separately from its meaning. And, importantly for phonological awareness, most young students have their attention drawn to the sounds of words in everyday experiences, for example when they are asked to speak more clearly/loudly/quietly and when they are asked to 'use your words', instead of pointing, crying or showing frustration in inappropriate ways. They also have their attention drawn to written words when they recognise and begin to write their names or 'read' print in the environment. Awareness of words is important for the development of phonological awareness, since being phonologically aware means being able to reflect on sounds in words.

Syllables, onset and rime

The larger units of sound within words are syllables and onsets and rimes. In this sequence of learning, awareness of onset and rime is taught and monitored in rhyming tasks (Gillon, 2007). Young student's awareness of syllables and onsets and rimes has a relationship with how well they learn to read and write (Lonigan, 2006). Teaching awareness of syllables and rimes is important at the earliest levels of literacy learning as it helps students attend to and work successfully with words and larger parts of words.

Alphabet letters - graphemes

There is a very strong relationship between student's knowledge of alphabet letters and their early reading and writing achievement (NICHD, 2000). Students in Kindergarten vary widely in their knowledge of alphabet letters. For individual students this knowledge may vary from no knowledge of letters at all, to recognising the first letter of their name, to some knowledge of all or most of the alphabet letters. Learning of alphabet letters (upper and lower case), letter names and alphabetical order needs to be ongoing, that is not part of phonological awareness, but is developed, revised and extended alongside phonological awareness.

Phonological awareness and alphabet letters - graphemes

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE FOR THIS SEQUENCE OF LEARNING:

- ☒ Some experience of a rich oral language and literacy environment;
- ☒ Participation in a variety of experiences involving songs, rhymes, oral language games, story telling and book sharing sessions.

TEACHER NOTES

It is most important to monitor individual student's oral knowledge of sounds, words and letters. Information from checklists can be used to plan future learning that addresses the needs of all students.

Detailed monitoring of activities may identify students who have some form of language, speech or hearing difficulty. These students should be carefully monitored and referral to specialists made where appropriate.

WORD AWARENESS

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN	TEACHING AND LEARNING: FOCUS ON SOUNDS	MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT
<p>Knowledge about words :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▢ Language is made up of words ▢ Words can be thought about ▢ Words can be thought about and talked about separately from their meaning ▢ Spoken words can be written down and separated from each other by spaces <hr/> <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▢ Students talk about words ▢ Students talk about words separately from their meaning ▢ Students talk about long and short words in terms of the sounds of the word ▢ Students identify a word in written text ▢ Students separate individual words in spoken and written language 	<p>Focus on words</p> <p>The teacher sets up situations for focusing the students' attention on words in oral and written language and takes advantage of opportunities that arise during the day. Songs, finger plays, stories, drama, books and rhymes are all part of the literate environment of the classroom that provide many opportunities for focusing on words. Graeme Base's <i>The Waterhole</i> invites students to focus not only on the beautiful pictures and cut-outs, but also on the printed words (different sizes, fonts and colours) and the sounds of the words:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>One Rhino drinking at the waterhole. 'Snort, splosh!' (Mmm, delicious!);</i> 2. <i>Two Tigers lapping at the waterhole. 'Grrrrrr! (Goodness gracious, how very delectable!)</i> <p>Whilst awareness of words is presented here at the beginning of the focused sequence, most of the following activities can be continued alongside learning about syllables and rimes.</p> <p>Talking about words</p> <p>Students enjoy playing with the sounds of their own names and this makes activities personally meaningful. Their names can be talked about as words: 'My first name is Matilda. Matilda is one word'. The teacher can make use of a pocket chart for student's name cards and talk about how many names/words there are: 'How many words are on each card? How many names do you have?' The cards may contain the first name and the family name.</p> <p>As students use name cards for copying their names on art and other work they can compare cards and talk about how many words can be in a name. They can also talk about long and short words: 'Look at Abraham's name. Is it a long word or a short word? Look at Kyle's name. Is it a long word or a short word?' Does it look like a long/short word? Does it sound like a long/short word?</p>	<p>Focus Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▢ Can the students talk about how many words there are in a name card, label, sentence or other collection of words? ▢ Can the students think of a spoken short/long word and say why it's short/long? (Focus on the sound of the word: 'Butterfly is a long word because it sounds long'.) ▢ Can the students talk about words on a particular topic, such as feelings, animals or friends? ▢ Can the students role play writing words, experiment with letters or letter-like shapes to make their own role play words? ▢ Can the students copy personally significant words, such as their name with plastic letters? ▢ Can the students identify a word in a written text? ▢ When dictating a story do the students pause as the teacher scribes each word? ▢ Can the students match words by re-assembling a cut-up sentence that has been dictated?

Learning that words can be thought about and talked about separately from their meaning

Words can be thought about and talked about in many ways. In a group activity the students may be asked to think about words that describe feelings. 'Can you think about the word *happy*? How does your face look when you think about the word *happy*? How does your body look when you think about the word *happy*? This activity can be extended to talking about the words *sad*, *excited*, *tired* and so on.

Activities involving animal, bird and insect names are an appealing focus for discussion about words. Some are 'long' words (containing many letters and syllables) that sound very interesting, such as *hippopotamus*, *elephant* and *alligator*; others are 'short' words (one syllable and few letters) such as *cat* and *dog*.

In order to become phonologically aware, students need to learn to think and talk about words separately from their meaning and to realise that a word that sounds 'long' may not be referring to a 'long' object or creature. *Butterfly* may be a 'long' word but it doesn't represent a physically 'long' creature and *cow* may be a 'short' word, but it represents a long (and large) animal.

When the teacher pronounces words very carefully to focus students' attention on the sound of words, this can lead into a discussion of the number of beats or syllables in the spoken word (see the next part of this section about syllables).

The teacher models oral language games such as, 'I'm thinking of a word. It's an insect and it has beautiful colours; it's a butterfly.' 'I'm thinking of a word. It's an animal and it gives us milk; it's a cow'. Once the students are familiar with the game the teacher can introduce the idea of 'long' and 'short' words: 'I'm thinking of a short word. It's got wheels and takes people to town; it's a bus'.

Spoken words can be written down (and written words can be spoken), and written words are separated by spaces

The literate environment of the classroom may be used in many ways to show the connections between spoken and written words. Demonstrating these connections will help students develop knowledge about both spoken and written words.

In discussion with the students, the teacher models making labels for areas of the classroom. These labels may contain single words (*door*) or more than one word (*block area*). The teacher articulates each word slowly while writing it, and the students fix each label in the correct place. The students can 'read' the labels and talk about the words in terms of length and number of words, as they move around the room at various times of the day. They can also make their own labels in the writing area.

The teacher models the writing of a 'Morning Message' or 'Sentence of the Day' about special events or reminders. This is a good opportunity to discuss connections between spoken and written words and special features of words, including the fact that written words have spaces between them. At a transition time the teacher may set up in a line the number of hoops corresponding to the number of words in the Sentence of the Day, and the students say each word as they jump in each hoop. The changing of the day, date and weather chart also can lead to discussion of words as the key words are replaced on a daily basis.

Students dictate stories about their paintings and drawings. The teacher scribes, whilst saying the words aloud carefully, pausing after each word and drawing the student's attention to the spaces between words. As students become more familiar with this procedure the teacher may write the story, or a sentence from the story, again on a strip of paper. Then, with help if necessary, the students can cut up their sentence/s into separate words. With guidance, some students will be able to match these words to the words on their painting or drawing.

There are many computer programs and web applicativons available for young students. Some talking books highlight individual words as the story is read aloud. These can be helpful in teaching students to understand that words are individual units of language.

SYLLABLE AWARENESS

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN	SYLLABLE AWARENESS	MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT
<p>Syllables</p> <p>Knowledge about words :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Words are made up of smaller units of language: <hr/> <p>Syllables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Syllables are related to the rhythm of language <hr/> <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Students blend syllables ☞ Students segment syllables ☞ Students delete syllables 	<p>When learning about syllables students need to have some familiarity with rhythmic activities in music and movement sessions. Teachers may introduce the concept of syllables in musical activities in which students clap or use percussion instruments to signal rhythm.</p> <p>Songs where syllables are strongly accentuated, such as ‘Old MacDonald had a farm’ are suitable to begin with. ‘Heads and shoulders, knees and toes’ is another action song in which the syllables are strongly accentuated and it involves lots of movement.</p> <p>Marching songs are also enjoyable, help to emphasise rhythm and involve large body movement. Two favourites are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘The Grand Old Duke of York’ and, • ‘Let’s go marching, marching, marching. Let’s go marching, just like this’ <p>Following on from musical activities, students can find the rhythm in words by clapping the number of syllables (parts) they hear in their names: One clap for Jack, two for Bru-no, three for El-en-a and so on. Other motivating groups of words are those associated with animals and dinosaurs. Students and teachers can have fun blending and segmenting <i>don key</i>, and <i>el-e-phant</i>. Instead of clapping the syllables the students can jump or hop as they say each syllable.</p>	<p>Focus questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Can the students move to the rhythm of songs? ☞ Can the students blend syllables? ☞ Can you put these parts together: <i>sun</i> (pause) <i>shine</i>? ☞ Can you put these parts together: <i>Ib-ra-him</i>? ☞ Can the students segment syllables? ☞ Can you say the parts in your name? ☞ Can you clap the parts in your name? ☞ Can you say the parts in <i>toothbrush</i>? ☞ Can you say the parts in <i>dinosaur</i>? ☞ Can the students delete syllables? ☞ Say <i>moonlight</i>. Can you say <i>moonlight</i> without <i>light</i>? ☞ Say <i>playtime</i>. Can you say <i>playtime</i> without <i>play</i>?

Students who may have some difficulty in recognising syllables may be helped by an adult led activity in which they put together picture cards of objects (with one-syllable names) that make up compound words, such as *tooth* and *brush*. They pronounce the words individually as they push the pictures together and then say the compound word, for example *tooth, brush, toothbrush*. In order to segment words, the reverse process is needed and the pictures are moved apart: *toothbrush, tooth, brush*. Some other possible words are *football, sunlight, starfish, rainbow*.

As in the other activities, it is most important that the teacher articulates the words very carefully and models the task, 'Put these parts together, *star, fish, starfish*'. It is also important that the teacher explicitly praises appropriate correct responses: 'Well done! You put *star* and *fish* together and said *starfish*'. Where students need more scaffolding the teacher can help the student do the task and again draw attention to correct completion through praise: 'Great work! We put *star* and *fish* together to make *starfish*'.

RHYME AWARENESS

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN	RHYME AWARENESS	MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT
<p>Rhyme</p> <p>Knowledge about rhyme :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▢ Students discriminate rhyme in words. <hr/> <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▢ Students identify words that rhyme ▢ Students identify words that don't rhyme ▢ Students provide rhyming words 	<p>It is important that students have many experiences with rhyme in songs, books, and told stories such as <i>The Gingerbread Man</i> and <i>Henny Penny</i>. These are part of oral and written language culture. Where students come from homes in which a language other than English is spoken, if parents or carers are able to come into the classroom to share their songs and stories this will add richness to all student's experience.</p> <p>Students will need to build up and/or extend a repertoire of nursery rhymes and other rhyming songs, such as 'Miss Polly had a dolly...' , Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall'. Regular planned and impromptu sessions with rhymes in songs, told stories, poems and books, at various times during the day, will help student's development of rhyme awareness, in addition to exposing them to a rich variety of language patterns and extending their vocabulary. This is particularly important for students who have not had these experiences, so that they hear repeated rhyming patterns such as,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>'Run run as fast as you can You can't catch me I'm the Gingerbread Man.'</i></p> <p>It is also important for those who have had such experiences to continue to enjoy the sounds of language and to extend their knowledge of books, poetry and rhymes that emphasise sound patterns.</p> <p>After experiences with songs and rhyming stories the teacher can talk about 'words that rhyme', and how they 'sound the same at the end'. The teacher can model rhyming words and ask the students for some words that rhyme. They can then discuss their favourite rhyming stories and songs.</p>	<p>Focus questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▢ Do the students appear to enjoy songs and stories with rhyme by, for example, taking part in story and rhyme sessions, initiating singing of rhymes or asking for these activities? ▢ Do the students join in the singing or chanting of rhymes? ▢ When the teacher reads or tells a story containing rhyming words and pauses before the rhyming word, do the students supply the rhyming word? ▢ Can the students recognise words that rhyme? ▢ Do these words rhyme - <i>bat, hat</i>? ▢ Can the students recognize words that do not rhyme? ▢ Which word doesn't rhyme, <i>fish, dish, hook</i>? ▢ Can the students provide a rhyming word? ▢ Can you tell me a word that rhymes with <i>shell</i>? (Nonsense rhyming words are acceptable.)

The teacher and the students can construct a big book of 'Our Favourite Songs'. The teacher talks aloud whilst modelling the writing of the words of the songs, emphasising rhyming words, pointing out rhyming words on the page, pausing and waiting for the students to say the rhyme. The book can become a resource for choosing songs to sing. Students can be asked to choose songs on the basis of the rhyming words: 'I'm thinking of a song that has the rhyming words, Polly and dolly'.

When students are very familiar with particular rhymes they can play with the words to make a 'silly' song by changing the onset or rime: 'Heads and shoulders, knees and toes' can become, 'Beds and boulders, bees and bows', and in 'Old MacDonald had a farm' the 'Ee, ie, ee, ie, oh', can become 'He, hi, he, hi ho'.

Teachers can share small and big books that contain rhymes. Dr Seuss books, such as *There's a Wocket in my Pocket*, and other rhyming books, such as *Henny Penny*, *Mem Fox's Shoes from Grandpa* and *Denise Fleming's In the Tall Tall Grass* are fun to read and the teacher can draw the student's attention to words that rhyme. After reading the book the teacher can ask the students if pairs of words in the book rhyme, 'Does *dip* rhyme with *sip*?', and reinforce the correct response, 'Yes *dip* and *sip* rhyme. They sound the same at the **end**'. The teacher and students can make big books that repeat the rhyming patterns of books they have shared.

Students can use a box of dress-ups and props to 'dress up as a rhyme' from a rhyme or a story that they know, such as Humpty Dumpty, Henny Penny, Little Miss Muffet, Little Jack Horner or Jack and Jill. The teacher can ask the students to repeat the rhyme and emphasise the rhyming words. Students can also dress up as their own 'silly rhymes'.

Students can be encouraged to innovate on text to make their own 'silly' rhyming sequences, such as 'Run, run as fast as you can; you can't catch me I'm the gingerbread *can/pan/fan/nan*'. They can illustrate these silly rhyming sequences in art and craft activities and continue them in a running game at outdoor play.

It is also important to talk about words that **don't rhyme**, 'Do *cat* and *ball* rhyme?' 'No *cat* and *ball* don't rhyme; they don't sound the same at the **end**'. Pairs of words can be extended to groups of three in which only two of the words rhyme as in *ten*, *pen*, *dog*. The teacher asks, '*Ten*, *pen*, *dog* – which word **doesn't** rhyme?', and again reinforces the correct response. For practice the teacher may introduce a bag of small objects, some which have names that rhyme and some that don't rhyme. As the students take them out of the bag they name them and sort them into those that rhyme and those that don't.

Playing games can help students consolidate rhyming skills. Rhyming Snap and Bingo that involve identifying and matching rhyming pictures are useful, as is *Rhyming I Spy*: 'I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with...' If the students find this difficult, they can play *Where's Spot?* In this game the teacher hides a toy dog called Spot and asks, 'Where's Spot? He's hiding on something that rhymes with *hair*.' This makes the task more concrete and cuts down the number of possible answers.

ALPHABET LETTERS - GRAPHEMES (oral to written)

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN	ALPHABET LETTERS - GRAPHEMES	MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT
<p> <input type="checkbox"/> Learning alphabet letters (upper- and lowercase), letter names and alphabetic order takes place alongside the learning of phonological awareness. </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge about alphabet letters </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Alphabet letters have names </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Alphabet letters can be upper or lower case </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Alphabet letters can be sequenced in a specific order </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Alphabet letters make up words </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Alphabet letters can be written </p> <hr/> <p>Skills:</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Students name alphabet letters, upper and lower case </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Students say the names of the letters in alphabetical order </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Students identify specific alphabet letters in words and individually </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Students write their own name, with a pencil grip appropriate to their developmental level </p>	<p>Teacher note</p> <p>It is most important that the teacher points out that all letters have a name and all letters have at least one sound. Some students may have learnt some letter sounds as well as letter names. These students should be encouraged, but the teacher should make sure that if they are discussing letter sounds, they use the term <i>letter sound</i> and if they are talking about <i>letter names</i> then they use the term <i>letter name</i> consistently.</p> <p>In order to help develop interest in and knowledge about the alphabet the teacher shares with the students a variety of high quality alphabet books, drawing the students' attention to individual letters and letter names. McGee and Morrow (2005, p. 73) have developed some criteria for suitable alphabet books for use with young students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> There is a page for each letter; <input type="checkbox"/> The letter is prominently displayed and clear; <input type="checkbox"/> There are only a few pictures of familiar objects on each page; <input type="checkbox"/> The objects begin with the letter's most basic letter-sound association (vowels can be particularly tricky: single letter vowels, not digraphs are most suitable); <input type="checkbox"/> The objects are highly familiar to young students so that they are correctly recognised as starting with the target letter. <p>Note: There are some very sophisticated alphabet picture books such as <i>Animalia</i> by Graeme Base, which do not conform to these criteria but which are really valuable in themselves and should certainly be included as high quality student's literature.</p>	<p>Focus questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Which upper-case alphabet letters do the students recognise? <input type="checkbox"/> Do the students use the letter name and/or letter sound? <input type="checkbox"/> Which lower-case alphabet letters do the students recognise? <input type="checkbox"/> Do the students use the letter name and/or letter sound? <input type="checkbox"/> How far do the students know the order of the alphabet? <input type="checkbox"/> Can the students find specific letters in an alphabet chart/words?

Alphabet friezes and posters are an important part of the frequently used literacy environment, as are alphabet floor puzzles, games, letter cards and student's name cards. The teacher and teacher assistant can draw student's attention to letter names whenever appropriate in learning activities, for example when finding name cards to label art, craft and construction work.

The teacher and students can make a class big book of alphabet letters, using student's names, animals, dinosaurs or other areas of interest that can then be shared by the teacher and students and used as a highly motivating teaching resource.

Alphabet songs and games are useful in teaching alphabetic order and letter names. A really exciting circle game is one in which all the students begin by standing and the teacher holds up a letter card. The students, in turn around the circle, say the alphabet sequence until it is the turn of the student who says the letter that the teacher holds. The teacher gives the letter to this student, the student sits down and is 'out'. The teacher then holds up another letter and the sequence begins again. The game continues as each student is 'out' and sitting down. The winner is the last student standing. Then the students who are 'out' stand up and come to the front with their letters. Everyone can say the letters and, with teacher help, they can make a word. In this game parts of the alphabet are recited many times. The teacher may need to scaffold some student's responses. It is a highly motivating learning activity for students of all abilities, as it is a game of chance.

It is important that students have many opportunities to practise writing for their own purposes in different contexts. At the writing centre, they should be able refer to an alphabet chart for their writing.

Students can also be encouraged to write at dramatic play centres. They should be allowed to choose from a range of writing implements, including those that are suitable for students with less developed small motor control. These will include large crayons, pencils and highlighter pens. Practising letter writing with finger paint, shaving foam, water painting with large brushes, and in the sand pit, is particularly important for these students.

SECTION 2

Phonemic Awareness

TEACHING FOCUS	UNDERSTANDING ABOUT WORDS, SOUNDS AND LETTERS
Phonemic Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="779 788 1144 884">☞ Spoken words are made up of smaller units of sound: Phonemes <li data-bbox="779 900 1144 995">☞ Phonemes can be blended in reading and segmented in spelling

KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM
GUIDELINES

Develop phonological awareness skills

- ☞ know that spoken and written language can be broken into smaller parts
- ☞ investigate and explore individual sounds and sounds in spoken words
- ☞ hear and begin to identify first and last sounds in simple words
- ☞ explore letter-sound relationships

The phonemic awareness focus in Kindergarten, as set out in the Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines, is on the skills of isolating first (alliteration) and final sounds in words.

The research literature shows a very strong relationship between student's awareness of phonemes and later reading and writing (NICHD, 2000; Rowe, 2005). Alliteration (awareness of the first phoneme in words) is usually the first of the phonemic skills to develop, for example knowing that ball and bat start with the same sound and that the sound is /b/. Being able to hear and isolate the first sound in a word is a skill that becomes very important once students begin to read and write words, as it can give the first clue about the pronunciation of a word in reading, and the first clue about the first letter to write in spelling. Students who have been exposed to the activities in the earlier parts of this sequence will be familiar with alliterative patterns from finger plays, songs and books such as 'Each peach, pear, plum'. Students can extend their knowledge of first sounds in words, to learning about final sounds.

Some students during the year will be ready to move onto isolating middle sounds, and to blending and segmenting phonemes in phonically simple CVC words such as 'dog', 'Mum', 'Dad'. Research has shown the reversible skills of blending and segmenting to be the most important phonemic skills as they are the basic strategies for decoding words in reading and encoding words in spelling. When teaching these skills clear articulation of sounds (phonemes) by the teacher helps students hear and focus on target sounds and words.

ISOLATION OF THE FIRST PHONEME IN WORDS (ALLITERATION)

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN	ALPHABET LETTERS - GRAPHEMES	MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT
<p>Knowledge about first phonemes in words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▢ Spoken words begin with an identifiable phoneme <hr/> <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▢ Students identify the first phoneme in a word ▢ Students articulate the first phoneme in a word ▢ Students provide words that start with a target phoneme ▢ Students identify words that do not start with a target phoneme. ▢ Students create their own alliterative sequences 	<p>Teacher note</p> <p>Alliteration involves recognising the first phonemes (sounds) in words. Some students will find this easy; others will find it difficult. It is important that all activities are enjoyable and successful for students. Small group experiences with students who have similar learning needs are particularly appropriate. Students will need lots of experiences with songs, rhymes, games and stories that play with sounds before they become aware of the first sounds/phonemes in words.</p> <p>It is most important that correct terminology is used consistently. When students are introduced to alliteration it is important to focus on the sound, and that the word 'sound' (or phoneme) is used consistently. When talking about words and student's names that start with the same sound it is important to emphasise the sound, for example: 'Michael and Martha and Mitchell, they all start with the same sound. They start with the sound /m/.' Some students may point out that that the names start with the letter M. The teacher should accept and celebrate this response by pointing out that the names start with the sound /m/ and that yes, this sound is written as the letter M.</p> <p>In the following activities it is important that the teacher draws student's attention specifically to the 'first sound' in words and talks about 'words that start with the same sound'.</p>	<p>Focus questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▢ Can the students identify the first phoneme in words? ▢ Do <i>cat</i> and <i>car</i> start with the same sound? ▢ Can the students articulate the first phoneme in words? ▢ What sound does <i>car</i> start with? ▢ Can the students give a word starting with the same phoneme as a target word? ▢ Can you tell me a word that starts with the same sound as <i>dog</i>? ▢ Can the students identify words that do not start with the same sound? ▢ Do <i>Emily</i> and <i>Jack</i> start with the same sound? ▢ Do <i>Emily</i> and <i>Elliott</i> start with the same sound? ▢ How well can students contribute to the creation of an alliterative pattern?

Sharing books

Many student's books by well known authors contain alliterative patterns, for example in *Clippety Clop* by Pamela Allen there are repeated patterns of 'clippety clop' and 'plip plop' and in *Possum Magic* by Mem Fox there are alliterative sequences such as 'Mornay and Minties in Melbourne' and a 'piece of pavlova in Perth'. Similarly in Graeme Base's *The Waterhole* there are various alliterative sequences as the different animals drink from the waterhole, 'Snort, splosh!', 'Two Tigers', 'wallowing in the waterhole'. These words can be emphasised while reading the book, and after discussion of the content the teacher can reread the book asking students to listen very carefully for words that 'start with the same sound'. It is important to pause briefly before these sequences and emphasise the words deliberately so that the students' attention is focused on the words and they can successfully identify them. Students will enjoy repeating the sequences with active emphasis on the sounds.

Word play

The teacher models 'silly sound stories' for each student using their names, 'Tom the tiger took ten toucans', 'Mighty Marvin made many muffins', 'Super Sarah sizzles seven silly sausages'. The silly stories can be written and illustrated with photographs and/or collage. Students can try making up their own stories.

Sound songs

Students learn 'sound songs' such as 'Ants on the apple a, a, a'. The teacher can draw attention to the way the shapes of the students' mouths change as they articulate different sounds: lips may be open /a/ or closed /b/ and /p/. Using small hand-held mirrors students can be encouraged to exaggerate and 'feel the sound in your mouth', as well as 'listen to your voice' to help them gain a multi-sensory representation of differences in first phonemes.

Games

The students go on a treasure hunt around the classroom or the outside area looking for objects starting with a particular sound (/t/) and saying /t/, /t/, as they look. When they have found something they think starts with /t/ they place it in a treasure box. With the teacher they decide if each object begins with /t/ and should stay in the treasure box.

In order to practise discrimination between different phonemes, students can take an object from a 'surprise bag' collection that contains objects beginning with one of two phonemes, for example, /a/ and /m/. They then place their object in one of two boxes either the one that already contains something beginning with /a/ and one that contains something beginning with /m/. As students become familiar with the task the sounds can become more difficult to discriminate, such as /b/ and /p/. Adding more boxes (and sounds) also raises the difficulty level of the task.

'I-Spy' is an enjoyable game. However, it needs careful scaffolding in the initial stages as some students find it very difficult. Teacher modelling and guided practice are important: 'I spy someone whose name begins with /t/. It's 'Tobias'. It is useful to begin by limiting the focus to closed sets, such as student's names, animals, transport and dinosaurs so that the choice of words is very limited and students are scaffolded for success.

Creative Arts

Students make pictures based on the alliterative patterns found in books, such as 'Mornay and Minties in Melbourne' and in other classroom activities, such as 'silly sound stories' and the sounds in 'Ants on the apple'. The pictures can be made with various materials, such as collage, paint or finger paint.

Drama

Students practise the alliterative patterns of books and 'silly stories' in drama activities. They can re-enact Clippety Clop paying particular attention to the sounds as the donkeys go 'clippety clop'. As dramatising this particular story is very active, with galloping donkeys, it would be a good outdoor activity.

Construction

Students practise recognition of words beginning with a given sound, such as /m/ by making them from clay, play-dough or construction materials.

Teacher note: During all these activities students need to be reminded of the specific literacy purpose of the activity: 'You've drawn a **dog**, a **dish** and a **dinner**. They all start with /**d**/. Can you think of anything else you could draw that starts with /**d**'?

ISOLATION OF THE FINAL PHONEME IN WORDS

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN	ALPHABET LETTERS - GRAPHEMES	MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT
<p>Knowledge about final phonemes in words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▢ Spoken words end with an identifiable phoneme <hr/> <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▢ Students identify the last phoneme in a word ▢ Students articulate the last phoneme in a word ▢ Students provide words that end with a target phoneme 	<p>Teacher note</p> <p>Isolation of the final phoneme is usually more difficult than isolation of the first phoneme and some students may need lots of practice.</p> <p>The teaching and learning activities described for isolating the first phoneme can be adapted to teach phoneme isolation in the final position. For example, instead of thinking of words that begin with a particular sound, students think of words that end with a particular sound, such as /p/ - <i>sheep, dip, sleep, map, top, deep, tap, chip</i>.</p> <p>Students's books may emphasise final sounds as well as beginning sounds. Pamela Allen's <i>Clippety-Clop</i> has repetitive sequences of 'plip-plop' and 'clip-clop' where final phonemes are the same.</p> <p>Students who are able to demonstrate this knowledge with first and final phonemes may be ready to move on to working with middle phonemes and blending and segmenting phonemes.</p>	<p>Focus questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▢ Can the students identify the last phoneme in words? ▢ Do <i>bat</i> and <i>sit</i> end with the same sound? ▢ Which of these words have the same last sound? <i>Dog, leg, house</i>. ▢ Can the students articulate the last phoneme in words? ▢ What is the last sound in <i>doll</i>? ▢ Can the students give a word ending with the same phoneme as a target word? ▢ Can you tell me a word that ends with the same sound as <i>hop</i>?

ISOLATION OF THE MIDDLE PHONEME IN WORDS

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN

Knowledge about middle phonemes in words

- Spoken one-syllable words contain an identifiable phoneme in the middle.

Skills:

- Identify the middle phoneme in a one-syllable word.
- Articulate the middle phoneme in a one-syllable word.
- Provide one-syllable words that have the same middle phoneme.
- Identify one-syllable words that do not have the same middle phoneme.

ALPHABET LETTERS - GRAPHEMES

Teacher note

Isolation of the medial phoneme is much more difficult than isolation of the first and final phoneme as the middle sound is often overlapped by the phonemes on either side.

The teaching and learning activities described for isolating the first phoneme can also be adapted to teach phoneme isolation in the middle of a one-syllable word.

It is important to begin by choosing **simple CVC words** such as *tap, big, ten, hop, bug*.

MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

Focus questions

- Can the student identify the middle phoneme in one-syllable words?
- Do *bat* and *tap* have the same sound in the middle?
- Which of these words have the same middle sound - *man, rat, leg*?
- Which of these words doesn't have the same middle sound - *man, rat, leg*?
- Can the student articulate the middle phoneme in one-syllable words?
- What is the middle sound in *doll*?
- Can the student give a word, with the same middle phoneme as a target word?
- Can you tell me a word that has the same middle sound as *dog*?

BLENDING AND SEGMENTING PHONEMES IN WORDS

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN	BLENDING AND SEGMENTING PHONEMES IN WORDS	MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT
<p> <input type="checkbox"/> Oral blending of two and three phoneme single syllable words </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Oral segmenting of two and three phoneme single syllable words </p> <hr/> <p>Teacher note</p> <p>Reversible skills :</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> The skills of blending and segmenting are reversible: the word sat can be segmented into the sounds /s/ /a/ /t/ and blended to make the word sat. These skills are vital for reading and writing words. </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> The skill of blending is often easier for students than segmenting so may be introduced first. However, because the two skills are interdependent, in practice they are often learnt together. </p>	<p>Oral blending and segmenting</p> <p>This introduction to blending and segmenting is informed Letters and Sounds Phase 1 Aspect 7 (DfES, 2007).</p> <p>Blending</p> <p>The teacher introduces the students to a named puppet or doll (eg Sam), and explains that Sam says words v-e-r-y s-l-ow-l-y (clear and slow articulation of the phonemes in a word). Naming the toy or puppet, so that slow articulation of words can be related to Sam’s ‘sound talk’. This gives the students something for them to help them to associate the skill of blending — hearing the slow articulation of each sound (phoneme).</p> <p>The teacher explains the purpose of the activity: to be able to say the <i>stretched</i> words that Sam says. In role-play talking and listening to Sam, the teacher models a word in ‘Sam’s talk’ and blends it to pronounce the word: ‘Where would you like to go Sam? Sam says he wants to go to the z-oo. Zoo, he wants to go to the z-oo, zoo. Where does Sam want to go?’ This can be extended into asking Sam where else he might want to go. The teacher can model blending of other one-syllable words, such as h-o-me, to the b-ea-ch, to the s-ea.</p> <p>The students practise Sam’s sound talk as the teacher asks them to say each word that Sam says: ‘What is Sam saying? Z-oo?’ Where does he want to go? He wants to go to the z-oo.’</p> <p>Once students are familiar with ‘Sam’s talk’, the teacher can model it in many classroom situations, particularly in transitions between activities that involve movement. ‘Everybody h-o-p, <i>hop</i>. Everybody j-u-m-p, <i>jump</i>. Everybody stand on one l-e-g, <i>leg</i>’. Everybody s-i-t, <i>sit</i>. The word to be blended should be the last word in the sentence so that students hear the sounds to be blended and then the blended word, next to each other. The combination of the sounds and the movement is an effective, multi-sensory way of teaching and reinforcing these skills.</p>	<p>Focus questions</p> <p>Blending</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Can the student blend two- and three-phoneme words? </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Can you put these sounds together z-oo (or b-a-t)? </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> What word do they make? </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Can the student identify a matching picture when given the segmented word? </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Which picture is the s-ea </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> (c-a-t)? </p> <hr/> <p>Segmenting</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Can the student say all the sounds in the word at (fat)? </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Fat. What sounds can you hear? </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> When using Elkonin sound boxes, can the student correctly represent the phonemes in two- and three-phoneme words? </p>

Focus on letter sounds

The focus here is on oral, rather than written words, as it is an introduction to blending and segmenting.

Some students may be familiar with letter sound relationships already and this should be acknowledged. However, it is most important that students **segment with letter sounds**, not letter names.

Onset and rhyme

Some teachers prefer to introduce blending and segmenting of onset and rhyme, for example h-at and d-og before segmenting all the phonemes in a word. In this case only CVC words should be used. This may be helpful for some students, but is not part of the sequence introduced here.

In a synthetic phonic approach each sound is segmented: eg: d/o/g and then blended back together 'dog'.

Teacher note: Two and three phoneme words with continuous sounds (/s/, /m/, /n/, /z/, as in *zoo, see, sea, man, Sam*, are the easiest for students to process. Modelling of oral blending of these sounds needs to be very smooth and student's repetition of them needs to be carefully monitored: *zzzzooo, sssee, mmmmaaannn, Sssaaamm*. Stop sounds (/p/, /b/, /g/, /t/) are harder to blend, and care needs to be taken that /uh/ is not added to these sounds. Blending of the word *pit* should be p-i-t not puh-i-tuh.

Segmenting

Segmentation is also introduced through 'Sam's talk.' The teacher explains that the **purpose** is to listen to sounds in words and practise talking like Sam and then shows the students some toy animals **modelling** how Sam would say them: 'This is a *dog*. Sam says it's a d-o-g.' 'This is a *cow*. Sam says it's a c-ow. How would Sam say cow?' The students practise segmenting as teacher invites them to repeat single syllable words and then say them in 'sound talk', just as Sam would say them.

Segmenting can also be taught and practised in transition or routine activities. As segmentation is the reverse of blending, the movement activity becomes: 'Everybody *hop*, h-o-p. Everybody *jump*, j-u-m-p'. As students become more familiar with segmentation the teacher only says the sounds, 'Everybody j-u-m-p'.

Practising blending and segmenting in learning centres

Once students have some experience in blending and segmenting phonemes, the teacher can introduce concrete representations of them. This might begin with a discussion of words in 'Sam's talk' and how he says the sounds in words. As the teacher and students say words in 'Sam's talk', the teacher puts up one finger for each phoneme in the word. In the word *sit*, as she says /s/ she puts up one finger, another as she says /i/, and another as she says /t/, 'There are **three** sounds in the word *sit*, /s/ /i/ /t/'. This will be a most important strategy for learning phonics.

The students will need many experiences of teacher and teacher assistant modelling of oral blending and segmenting in addition to guided practice. Some suggested experiences are outlined below.

Creative arts

Using play dough, ask the students to sculpt the object you are saying: p-i-g, d-o-g, m-a-t. Encourage the students to repeat what is said and to articulate the word, *pig*, *dog*, *mat*.

Drama

In the home corner ask: 'Can you put the doll in the b-e-d, *bed*?' (blending), or 'Can you say *bed* in 'Sam's talk'? (segmenting).

Games

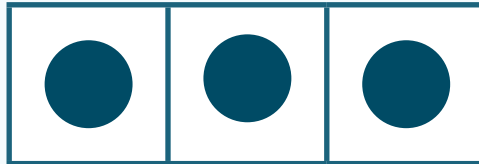
Teach and play the game 'Blending I-Spy'. Begin by modelling, 'I spy a h-a-t, *hat*. What do I spy? Yes, it is a *hat*!' Adjust the level of difficulty as the student's blending skills develop. 'Sound Bingo' can also be used.

Construction play

Play 'Segmenting Skyscraper'. Give the students a two- or three-phoneme word and ask them to say it slowly, identifying each sound, as *Sam* would (eg *Sam* becomes /S/-/a/-/m/). Count out a block for each sound heard; 3 blocks for *Sam*. As students segment each word, they use the blocks to make a skyscraper.

Sound boxes

Students can use counters to represent all the individual phonemes in a word in a concrete form. Sound boxes (also known as Elkonin boxes) can be used to blend and segment words. Students will need 2 boxes for two phoneme words (at) and three boxes for three phonemes (cat). The students put one token in a box for each sound they 'hear' in a word. The sound box below is for a three-phoneme word, such as /d/ /o/ /g/ or /c/ /a/ /t/.

**Teacher note**

During these activities student's progress needs to be continuously monitored and they should be reminded of the specific literacy purpose of the activity.

Segmenting: 'Great! When you say **dog** slowly like Sam you hear **three** sounds, /d/ /o/ /g/. Now let's get one block for each sound you hear.'

Blending: 'What word can you hear when you **blend** these sounds together /s/ /i/ /t/? Yes, when you blend /s/ /i/ /t/, the word is **sit**.'

High-frequency words

These need to be taught as part of the decoding process

This document has been written for the literacy needs of Kindergarten students. It takes a broad view of the literacy context and includes extensive use of student's literature, storytelling, songs, rhymes, games and movement. Within this broad context there is a specific focus on the underpinning learning about words, sounds and letters that research has shown to be important for later literacy learning and that are part of the Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines. Teachers may find that some students are ready to move on to more advanced concepts and skills, and will use their professional knowledge to make informed decisions about those who need to consolidate the concepts and skills presented here, and those who may be ready to move on to the next phase of learning [Phonics and phonological awareness for reading and spelling](#) Pre-primary/Year 1. Some students who regularly engage with written texts and are beginning to identify personally significant words, such as names of friends and family, will be ready to begin to focus on some words frequently found in texts.

The high-frequency word list is provided for teacher reference only and is not a teaching list for Kindergarten students.

100 HIGH-FREQUENCY WORDS

1. the	21. that	41. not	61. look	81. put
2. and	22. with	42. then	62. don't	82. could
3. a	23. all	43. were	63. come	83. house
4. to	24. we	44. go	64. will	84. old
5. said	25. can	45. little	65. into	85. too
6. in	26. are	46. as	66. back	86. by
7. he	27. up	47. no	67. from	87. day
8. I	28. had	48. mum	68. students	88. made
9. of	29. my	49. one	69. him	89. time
10. it	30. her	50. them	70. Mr	90. I'm
11. was	31. what	51. do	71. get	91. if
12. you	32. there	52. me	72. just	92. help
13. they	33. out	53. down	73. now	93. Mrs
14. on	34. this	54. dad	74. came	94. called
15. she	35. have	55. big	75. oh	95. here
16. is	36. went	56. when	76. about	96. off
17. for	37. be	57. it's	77. got	97. asked
18. at	38. like	58. see	78. their	98. saw
19. his	39. some	59. looked	79. people	99. make
20. but	40. so	60. very	80. your	100. an

Appendix 1: What is phonics?

Phonics refers to knowledge of the sound-letter relationships that are used in reading and writing. It involves knowledge of sounds (phonological awareness), alphabet letters and groups of letters (graphemes), and their systematic relationships. The fundamental elements of phonics are:

- ④ identifying sound units in spoken words
- ④ recognising the common spellings of each phoneme
- ④ blending phonemes into words for reading
- ④ segmenting words into phonemes for spelling

Phonics is also used to refer to a teaching method that emphasises the explicit teaching of sound-letter correspondences. According to The Australian National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy: **Phonics instruction** refers to 'explicit instruction and practice with reading words in and out of text. Several approaches have been used to teach phonics systematically, including: *synthetic phonics*, *analytic phonics*, *embedded phonics*, *analogy phonics*.

Key features of these approaches are summarised below:

- ④ **Analytic phonics** uses a whole-to-part approach that avoids having students pronounce sounds in isolation to recognise words. Rather, students are taught to analyse letter-sound relations once the word is identified. For example, a teacher might write the letter 'p' followed by several words: *put*, *pig*, *pet*, *play*. The teacher would help students to read the words by noting that each word begins with the same sound that is associated with 'p'.
- ④ **Synthetic phonics** programs use a part-to-whole approach that teaches students to convert graphemes into phonemes (e.g., to pronounce each letter in 'stop', /s/-/t/-/o/-/p/) and then blend the phonemes into a recognisable word.
- ④ **Embedded phonics** and onset-rime phonics approaches teach students to use letter-sound relationships with context clues to identify and spell unfamiliar words encountered in text.

- ④ **Analogy phonics** teaches students to use parts of written words they already know to identify new words. For example, students are taught a set of key words that are posted on the classroom wall (e.g., *tent*, *make*, *pig*) and are then taught to use these words to decode unfamiliar words by segmenting the shared rime and blending it with a new onset (e.g., *rent*, *bake*, *jig*). (Rowe, 2005, p. 88).

In Australia there has been much recent interest in synthetic phonics. Deslea Konza explains what is involved in a synthetic approach:

“ A *synthetic approach begins with a strong focus on individual letters. 'Synthetic' is an unfortunate term, because for some people this word means 'artificial' or 'not real'; whereas in fact it refers to synthesising (blending) sounds together to form words. Blending is the underlying process involved in reading an alphabetic language and, for this reason, the letters are taught in an order that facilitates blending into common CVC words. As soon as students know letters that can make a word, they practise blending the sounds together' (Konza, in press, 2016, p. 159).”*

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