Understanding the role of phonics in promoting reading development.

Part I

Definitions
Automaticity
Decoding and Encoding
Letter-Sound correspondence
Definitions

• Phonics
  – The study of the relationship between the speech sounds (phonemes) and the letters that represent them.
  – Sometimes referred to as decoding.
  – The study of phonics provides for the development of the skill in decoding of visually unfamiliar words.

• Decoding
  – The process of converting written language into spoken sounds.

• Encoding
  – The reverse
  – The process of converting oral language into written language.
• Decodable text
  – A created text that is suitable for the application of previously taught phonics skills and contains a limited number of high frequency words.
Automaticity

• Automaticity refers to processing information at a competent level without requiring conscious effort.

• Samuels and LaBerge (1974) researched and explained how reading fluency develops.

• Automaticity is the rapid recognition of a word without conscious attention to the decoding process.
Automaticity is....

• a key in developing readers who become fluent readers.

• being able to recognize and process information without thinking about it on a conscious level.

• the ability to look at words and read them aloud without thinking.
• Automaticity, the recognition and recall of words and their meanings, is the result of experiencing words in print again and again.
Sight Words

Sight words are words recognized and pronounced immediately, not requiring the use of decoding or word analysis strategies.
• Sight word knowledge or ability is developed over time as a result of exposure to words through extensive reading experiences with print.

• The most common sight words for beginning readers include their names, environmental print and the high frequency words that appear in students’ reading materials.

• Words become sight words after repeated exposure to them in meaningful context.
Dolch List of Basic Sight Words

The Dolch List is the most well known word list.

“Recent analysis shows that these words still account for approximately 50% of the words in K-3 reading materials.”

Explicit Instruction of Sight Words

- Sight words may be directly/explicitly taught and assessed.
Three characteristics of the words that should be taught as initial sight words:

1. They should appear frequently in print (high frequency).

2. They should have meanings that are in the students’ oral vocabularies.

3. They often cannot be recognized or pronounced by applying phonics rules.

• Teaching irregular words as sight words enables readers to recognize them automatically when they encounter them in print without stopping to decode them.
Strategies for developing sight word knowledge:
– Label common classroom items
– Utilizing word walls
– Repeated readings of print at a student’s independent or instructional level
High frequency words

• High frequency words are the 400 or so words that make up nearly 70% of reading selections.
Phonics

• Phonics consists of two elements:
  – Knowledge or understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds
  – The ability to blend sounds represented by letters
• Letters in the English language can represent by more than one sound (c, s, z).
• Sounds of letters are indicated as such: /f/
Decoding an Unknown Word

• The use of phonics produces only a close approximation of the pronunciation of an unknown word.

• The pronounced word must be in the reader’s oral language
  – to check the accuracy of the decoding process.
  – to check for the meaning of the word in its contextual usage.

  • Example: Pitta are almost extinct because of acid rain.

Phonics

There are two basic categories of sounds in English:

Consonants

For simple purposes, there are 21 single consonant letters. Three of them do not represent distinctive sounds: c, q, x.

Consonant digraphs – two consecutive consonant letters that represent one speech sound

- sh, th, wh, ch, (new sound unlike the sound of either letter)
- ck, kn, wr, gn, pn, gh (sound of one of the single consonants)
- gh, ph (another sound, /f/)
- **Consonant blends**
- Two or three consonant sounds clustered together in a word or syllable.
- All the consonant sounds are heard.
- Examples: str, spl, scr, sn, sw, br, dr, gr, bl, pl, fl)
Vowels

- The letters a, e, i, o, and u always function as vowels.

- The letter y is sometimes a consonant (as in yellow) and sometimes a vowel (as in my).
Consonants

• C, Q, and X do not represent phonemes that are identified by their own name.
• They are identified by other consonant sounds.
  – C as associated with
    • /s/ in cent
    • /k/ in coat
  – Q as associated with
    • /k/ /w/ in quit
    • /k/ in antique
  – X as associated with
    • /z/ in exit
    • /k/ /s/ in sox
    • /z/ in xylophone
• It is very difficult to sound most consonant sounds in isolation.

• Some consonant sounds cannot be pronounced easily without adding a bit of the vowel sound.

• Try the initial sound in boat.
  boat – “buh” --- buh-oat is not boat
• Sometimes consonant letters have no sound. They are referred to as silent letters.

• Two like-consonants together in a word generally represent one sound.
  – Muffin, letter, happen, less
• The **b** is silent when it follows an **m** in the same syllable.
  – Climb, lamb, bomb,
  – The **b** in **number** is not silent because it is not in the same syllable.
• When **b** precedes **t** in the same syllable, the **b** is usually silent.
  – doubt, debt
• The consonant **h** is
  – silent when it follows the vowel in a word or syllable.
    • oh, hurrah, shah
  – silent when it is the initial consonant of a word. (Generally)
    • heir, hour, honest
  – silent when it follows the consonants **g**, **k** and **r**.
    • ghost, khaki, ghastly, khan, rhino, rhyme
• The **k** is silent at the beginning of a word or syllable when followed by **n**.
  – knob, knit, known, knee

• Two like-consonants appearing in a word generally represent one sound.
  – balloon, dollar, jelly, bell

• The letter **l** is sometimes silent when followed in the same syllable by **m, k or d**.
• When p is followed by s, t, or n at the beginning of a word, the p is usually silent. psychology, psalm, pneumonic
Then to make it more confusing....

- Some consonants may represent two different sounds.
- Can you pick out the consonants with two sounds?

  Fish    missed  waltz    bone
  Bank    of       zoo      list
Digraphs
Two letters that stand for a single sound.

• The digraph **ph** represents the sound we associate with /f/.
  – photo, alphabet, phoneme

• The **gh** may represent /f/ or be silent.
  – laugh, cough, high, through

• The **dg** digraph is very reliable as /j/.
  – judge
More Confusing Consonants

• The letter **G**
  – (the soft sound) /j/ when followed by e, i, y
  – (the hard sound) /g/ when followed by a, o, u

• The letter **C**
  – /k/ when followed by a, o, u
  – /s/ when followed by e, i, y

• The letter **X** could be omitted from our alphabet by using the letters **gz** (example),
  **ks** (box), **z** (Xerox)
• The consonant **s** is so unreliable. Check it out:
  – Rugs
  – Is
  – Does
  – Peas
  – Some
  – Pleasure
  – Whose
  – So
  – Surely
Vowels & More
So what’s with the Y?

- Y functions as a consonant only when it represents the phoneme heard in yo-yo.
- Y represent no vowel of its own. When it’s a vowel, it takes the sounds of i or e. Unless....we’ll get to that.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>by</th>
<th>happy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>why</td>
<td>lucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fly</td>
<td>baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cry</td>
<td>windy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• The five basic vowels a, e, i, o, u, alone and in combination with another vowel, represent the 19 vowel phonemes of our English language.
Categories of Vowel Sounds

- Short
- Long
- Vowel digraphs
- Diphthongs
- Schwa sound
- Y as a vowel
- And exceptions
Short Vowel Sounds

- a apple
- e elephant
- i igloo
- o octopus
- u umbrella
Breve

• A breve is the curved line over a vowel letter in a word. This diacritical mark indicates that the vowel sound is short.

• Some dictionaries do not use the breve. The lack of a mark indicates that the sound of the vowel will be short.
• The most common vowel-consonant pattern is that of CVC (Consonant-vowel-consonant) in which the V (vowel) represents its short sound.
  
  rat
  bit
  pet
  hot
  bus
• Often the vowel phoneme in a closed syllable is short. A **closed syllable** ends with a consonant phoneme.

  win dow  
  be gin  
  pen cil  
  ban jo
VCCe

- Vowel-consonant-consonant-final e

  since  prince  chance

The **final e** is silent and the first vowel usually represents its short sound.

Exceptions: paste  waste
Long Vowel Sounds

• A  ape
• E  eagle
• I  ice cream
• O  oval
• U  unicorn
The macron, a straight line over a vowel letter, indicates that the vowel will use the long vowel sound.
VCe

• Vowel-consonant-final e
• When a one-syllable word has two vowels, one of which is a final e, the e is silent and the first vowel usually represents its long sound.

Exceptions: give love have come
dine hope face
ride cube phone
• Another time when the vowel is long is that of an **open syllable**.

Examples:  pa per
           fe ver
           ti ger
More exceptions

- When **i** is followed by **gh** it will represent its long sound.
  
  sight  high  right  sight  sigh

- When **i** or **o** is followed by **ld**, the vowel usually represents the long sound.
  
  cold  child
The Schwa

• The vowel in an unaccented syllable
• Sounds kind of like “uh”
• Examples (the underlined vowel):
  – Alone    harmony
  – Extra    celebrate
  – Vacation  about
  – Pencil
R-controlled Vowels

• Vowels in which the vowel sound is affected by the r.

  Car          her
  Girl         corn
  Urgent       farmer
  Curl         first

***ir --- er --- ur
Diphthongs

- A diphthongs are represented by two vowel letters where two sounds are heard.

- Examples:

  - oi: oil, broil, foil
  - oy: toy, enjoy, boy
  - ou: house, blouse, mouse
  - ow: brown, clown, cow
Vowel Digraphs

• Two vowel letters that make one sound.
• Examples:
  oo  food  loon
  oo  hook  crook
Other Vowel Pairs

• When two vowels appear together in a word or syllable, the first usually represents the long sound and the second is silent.

• Some vowel pairs follow the generalizations more consistently than others.

• The most consistent appear in these words:
  
  rain  play  boat  each  keep  pie