

NSW Department of Education and Training  
Learning and Development

# Literacy teaching guide: Phonics



The *Literacy teaching guide: Phonics* and the *Literacy teaching guide: Phonemic awareness* are companion guides and as such should be read in conjunction with each other.

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## Foreword

This teaching guide on phonics is one of a series of connected resources to support literacy teaching.

These resources incorporate the most recent research on literacy and literacy education, the findings of national and international reviews and teachers' experience with, and feedback on literacy support materials that the Department has produced in the past.

This guide needs to be read and used in conjunction with that on phonemic awareness, which has been simultaneously published. These two critical aspects of literacy need to be taught and learned together.

The teaching of phonics has been the subject of some public debate. The Department's position is clearly stated in our Literacy Policy, namely, that phonics should be explicitly and systematically taught, within an integrated and balanced program.

This guide reaffirms that principle. Indeed, with the benefit of research and experience, it articulates even more strongly the need for explicit and systematic teaching.

Teachers using this guide will find a significant body of evidence-based information to support the teaching and learning of phonics. The guide examines and *debunks* some of the commonly held misconceptions or *myths* about teaching phonics. It recommends a sequence for the teaching of phonics knowledge and skills and presents a process that supports teachers to teach phonics in an explicit and systematic way, as part of a balanced and integrated literacy program. Teachers will also find practical ideas and suggestions to enhance their phonics teaching.

Additional support for the teaching and learning of phonics is available in the form of a *Literacy Continuum*. This continuum sets out eight critical aspects of literacy and their developmental markers. Phonics is one of these critical aspects. A further online professional learning resource, that is linked to the phonics aspect of the continuum will provide teachers with phonics learning strategies.

Your feedback and suggestions on this guide would be appreciated. As this resource will be online, it will be regularly revised. Your comments should be emailed to: [pa.curriculum@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:pa.curriculum@det.nsw.edu.au).

While the teaching of phonics is essential, no one aspect of literacy learning is sufficient to becoming literate. Effective literacy teaching includes all aspects critical to successful literacy development, within a balanced and integrated program.

I commend this teaching guide to you and wish you every success as you work with your colleagues to improve the learning of your students.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Trevor Fletcher".

Trevor Fletcher  
Deputy Director-General, Schools



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*Phonics involves knowing the connections between printed letters and speech sounds.*

*Phonics is one of the aspects of literacy critical to successful literacy learning.*

# Introduction

## Purpose

This resource has been developed to help teachers gain deeper insights into the teaching of phonics. It offers advice on why and how to teach phonics and provides a range of teaching and learning strategies to develop students' phonics knowledge and skills.

In simple terms, phonics involves knowing the connections between printed letters (and combinations of letters) and speech sounds. For example, students show their phonics knowledge when they are asked to point to the letter *m* and provide the sound it makes.

Phonics instruction involves teaching students to know the relationships between letters and sounds and how to use this knowledge to recognise words when reading, and to spell words when writing.

Experts argue about how much emphasis should be placed on phonics instruction, but just about all agree that phonics is one of the aspects of literacy critical to successful literacy learning.

Recommendation 2 from the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2005) states that:

*... teachers provide systematic, direct and explicit phonics instruction so that children master the essential alphabetic code-breaking skills required for foundational reading proficiency. Equally, that teachers provide an integrated approach to reading that supports the development of oral language, vocabulary, grammar, reading fluency, comprehension and the literacies of new technologies.*

Accordingly, phonics should be taught explicitly and systematically as part of a balanced and integrated literacy program.

## Links to the *Literacy Continuum*

Early years teachers will be familiar with the early literacy continuum used in the *Best Start* Initiative.

Eight critical aspects of literacy form the foundation of this continuum. Phonics is one of these aspects.

The continuum describes the development of literacy knowledge and skills typically expected of most students in these eight critical aspects.

Along each critical aspect key developmental points are signalled by *clusters of markers* along the continuum.

Hence, *The process in action: Phonics* (pp. 32–47) in this guide is organised around each cluster of phonics markers.

## About this guide

This guide is one in a series, each dealing with a critical aspect of literacy development.

Others in the series focus on:

- Phonemic awareness
- Vocabulary knowledge
- Aspects of speaking
- Concepts about print
- Aspects of writing
- Comprehension
- Reading texts.

NB: Other crucial areas of literacy, such as grammar, spelling, punctuation and listening are developed within a number of the above aspects.

It is important that this guide on phonics (knowing letter-sound relationships) is used in conjunction with the *Literacy teaching guide: Phonemic awareness* (manipulating sounds in words).

Phonics and phonemic awareness are closely related. Learning about one aspect reinforces the other. Both are concerned with sounds, with phonemic awareness involving spoken language and phonics involving written language. For example, you are asking your students to show their phonemic awareness when you say *mat* and ask them to say the three separate sounds they hear in the word.

This guide and each of the other guides, will be supported by a summary of the literature upon which the advice in the guide is based.

The guide avoids the use of technical language however, at times, it has been necessary to use terms that are specifically related to the teaching of phonics. A glossary has been provided at Appendix 1 to define these terms.

*Phonics and phonemic awareness are closely related. Learning about one reinforces the other.*



## Exposing phonics *myths*

For decades now, the teaching and learning of phonics has been the subject of debate. It seems everyone has an opinion, so much so that a host of *myths* about phonics teaching and learning have almost become accepted as *truths*. Exposing some of these commonly held *myths* is intended to prompt teachers to examine and reflect on their classroom practices in light of the information about phonics teaching provided in this guide.

Some of the more common myths about teaching phonics are listed below in italics together with statements in bold that *debunk* these *myths*.

*Myth: Reading is primarily about decoding symbol to sound. If students are thoroughly taught every possible letter-sound relationship and their various combinations, they will become proficient readers and writers.*

On the basis of a comprehensive synthesis of findings from the related evidence-based research, Center (2005) notes that the systematic, explicit teaching of phonics is a *necessary condition* but not a *sufficient condition* for the teaching of reading. Since reading essentially involves two basic and complementary processes: learning how to decipher print and understanding what the print means, an integrated approach to reading instruction is mandatory.

Phonics instruction is never a total reading program.

Programs that focus too much on the teaching of letter-sound relationships and not enough on putting them to use are unlikely to be very effective. In implementing systematic phonics instruction, ... *educators must keep the end (original emphasis) in mind and ensure that children understand the purpose of learning letter-sounds and are able to apply their skills in their daily reading and writing activities* (National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, 2005).

*Myth: Teaching the class one letter-sound relationship per week (often introducing these letter-sounds in order of the alphabet) is an effective way to start teaching phonics in Kindergarten.*

This guide provides teachers with a sequence for phonics teaching that facilitates the use of the synthetic phonics. This method encourages teachers to introduce particular groups of letter-sound correspondences that will allow Kindergarten students to begin blending and segmenting words as soon as possible. For example, in the sequence on p. 17, the first four letters introduced would be *a*, *m*, *t* and *s*.

*Myth: Students should first learn all single letter sounds before they are taught the names of letters to avoid students confusing letter names and sounds.*

Students often learn letter names before they learn letter sounds. Although it is sometimes advised to leave the teaching of letter names until after the sounds of letters have been learned, it makes sense to teach letter names early in the phonics program. The difference between a letter name and a letter sound is easily understood by most students.

*Myth: Phonics, phonemic awareness and phonological awareness are one and the same thing – they all have something to do with sounds and/or letters.*

These three terms are closely related with learning in one area reinforcing the others. However, the three terms are not the same or interchangeable. Phonological awareness is a broad concept that not only includes phonemic awareness but also encompasses awareness of things like words, rhyme, syllables and onset and rime. Phonemic awareness is a sub-skill of phonological awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in spoken words while phonics involves making connections between sounds and letters when reading and spelling.

*Myth: Students need to know all letter-sound relationships before they begin learning about other aspects of literacy, such as comprehension.*

A number of aspects of literacy are critical to early literacy success. Phonics is one of these aspects. As part of a balanced and integrated literacy program, students need explicit teaching in other critical aspects of literacy such as comprehension, at the same time as they are learning about phonics. Development of skills and knowledge in one aspect of literacy complements and supports the others.

*Myth: In the early years most of the literacy session time, that is approximately one and a half hours per day, should be devoted just to phonics activities (sometimes in the form of a commercial phonics program).*

In the early years, phonics teaching needs to be provided in regular, focused minilessons lasting approximately 10–20 minutes, as part of an overall daily literacy session.

*Myth: Phonics knowledge is caught not taught. Students will discover phonics knowledge simply by doing lots of hands on, fun activities such as: playing word games and doing letter/sound matching activities or cutting out pictures of things that start with particular sounds.*

Letter-sound correspondences are arbitrary and therefore difficult to discover without explicit teaching. Left to chance or inference alone, many students would acquire phonics knowledge too slowly or fail to learn it at all.

*Myth: Teaching phonics can impede the reading process by encouraging students to rely too much on decoding and not enough on reading for meaning. This results in students that 'bark at print' and don't understand what they have read.*

Effective phonics teaching supports students to readily recognise and produce familiar words accurately and effortlessly and to identify and produce words that are new to them. Developing automatic word recognition will support and enhance students' comprehension skills.

## Catering for student diversity when teaching phonics

Schools cater for a diverse student population that includes students from a range of cultural, social, linguistic, religious, economic and political backgrounds and some who may have limited or disrupted educational experiences. These students have diverse needs, interests, experiences, abilities, learning styles and intelligences.

This diversity provides substantial benefits for the students themselves and for the wider community. At the same time, the diverse literacy learning needs of students should be taken into account when planning, teaching and assessing phonics if all students are to have the opportunity to successfully learn.

Teachers have a particular responsibility to ensure that students with disabilities are able to access the curriculum. Accordingly, teachers should refer to Disability Programs Directorate website (see Appendix 2) and to school and regional support staff who can suggest effective strategies and resources to use with these students. In addition, Appendix 3 provides specific advice in relation to teaching phonics to students experiencing significant difficulties in learning to read.



As well, there may be particular students or groups of students from diverse backgrounds who require additional support when learning about the letter-sound relationships of Standard Australian English. Teachers should refer to Departmental websites (see Appendix 2) and to school and regional support staff for assistance in providing effective support to meet the

learning needs of these students. In addition, Appendices 4–6 provide specific advice for teachers when teaching phonics to Aboriginal students, students learning English as a second language and students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

*The diverse literacy needs of students must be taken into account when planning, teaching and assessing phonics if all students are to have an equal opportunity to succeed.*

To meet the diverse learning needs of all students in relation to phonics, effective teachers:

- establish what students already know about phonics
- provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their phonics knowledge in different ways
- plan for and differentiate phonics instruction to meet students' different learning needs
- group students responsively to accommodate the diverse range of phonics learning needs in the classroom, understanding that groupings will be flexible and change as students' needs change
- draw upon the rich and varied experiences and understandings that each student brings to the classroom
- make connections between students' experiences and the learning of new phonics knowledge
- provide challenge for all students
- ensure that students are engaged, motivated and encouraged to meet learning challenges
- provide appropriate and timely support and feedback to students.



*Effective teachers draw on students' experiences and understandings and make connections to these when teaching phonics.*

# About phonics teaching

## Principles of effective phonics teaching

The following principles underpin the teaching of phonics suggested in this guide.

**Phonics knowledge and skills are critical to becoming literate.**

An essential part of learning to read and write is the understanding that letters and combinations of letters make up particular sounds and words. Without knowing letter-sound correspondences, learners are deprived of a fundamental means of recognising and producing known words and of figuring out new ones when reading and writing.



**Phonics needs to be explicitly taught.**



Letter-sound correspondences are arbitrary and therefore difficult to discover without explicit teaching. Left to chance or inference alone, many students would acquire phonics knowledge too slowly or fail to learn it at all.

Phonics teaching needs to begin early in Kindergarten and be provided in short, regular, fast-paced teaching sessions (around 20 minutes overall with time distributed as best judged by the teacher).

Explicit phonics teaching requires teachers to clearly and consistently enunciate the sounds they are teaching.

It is important that teachers develop and continually refine their ability to enunciate the phonemes in words. Teachers need to model the pronunciation of letters and demonstrate how to blend the letters in order (initial, medial and final) through a word.

**Phonics needs to be systematically taught.**

There are 44 phonemes (the smallest units of sound in words) in Standard Australian English, represented by 26 letters of the alphabet in multiple combinations. Teaching phonics in an effective sequence will significantly influence the rate at which students successfully acquire phonics knowledge and skills (see *A suggested sequence for introducing new phonics learning*, p. 17 and *Vowel and consonant phonemes and their graphemic (letter) representations*, pp. 18–19).



### Phonics needs to be taught in an integrated literacy program.



Students need to understand that a word is made up of a series of discrete sounds in order for them to make sense of phonics teaching. Thus, phonemic awareness and phonics teaching need to be integrated.

As well, phonics needs to be integrated into other parts of a literacy session and into learning in other learning areas. The more students are provided with scaffolded opportunities to practise their phonics learning in authentic reading and writing contexts, the more successful they will be in applying and transferring this knowledge.

### Phonics needs to be taught in a balanced literacy program.

Over time, an effective literacy program needs to be balanced in relation to the *Four Literacy Resources* (see Appendix 7) and include teaching of all critical aspects of literacy. While the purpose, task or context of a particular literacy session may require a stronger focus on one aspect over others, an effective early literacy program will incorporate a balance of aspects including phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary knowledge, comprehension, writing, speaking, concepts about print and reading texts.



### Phonics needs to be taught to a level of automaticity.



Phonics should be taught and practised to a level where decoding becomes habitual and automatic. In this way, students will readily recognise and produce familiar words accurately and effortlessly and be more likely to effectively identify and produce words that are new to them. Developing automatic word recognition will support and enhance comprehension.

### Phonics teaching is enhanced by an emphasis on multi-sensory activities.

High quality phonics teaching involves the use of auditory, visual and kinaesthetic activities that acknowledge students' different learning styles and encourages them to activate as many of their senses as possible. Activities could involve students moving their bodies to make letter shapes, manipulating magnetic letters to make words, tracing letters and words with fingers in the air or with sticks in sand, tapping out phonemes, writing letters with crayons, pencils, chalk, whiteboard markers or using a computer or Interactive Whiteboard to create and manipulate words and texts.



Phonics teaching needs to be supported and reinforced using quality texts.



Students need frequent opportunities to practise and apply their developing knowledge. The use of *decodable* texts is sometimes advocated to reinforce phonics learning. Authentic, well-structured, interesting texts of the type currently used in early years' classrooms are preferable as:

*... many books written for young children have a high degree of repetition anyway, above and beyond high frequency words. Furthermore, the vast choice of available books will potentially contribute to them developing and extending their vocabularies and general knowledge.*

Solity & Vousden, cited in Rose, 2006.

Experienced teachers know that:

*... in the course of phonics teaching, as children start to get the hang of it, they begin to self-teach and need to read a lot to consolidate their skills, that is, to develop effortless reading and focus more on comprehending the text (Rose, 2006).*

Phonics teaching is enhanced by the use of technology.

ICT in general and Interactive Whiteboards in particular, have the potential to impact on and provide benefits for phonics teaching and learning. Interactive Whiteboards extend a teacher's repertoire of skills by enabling them to:

- link to prior phonics learning by revisiting saved work and building on it in subsequent lessons
- manipulate letter combinations during phonics teaching sessions
- make modelled and guided phonics teaching more interactive, interesting and engaging.



## Phonics methods

There are several different methods for teaching phonics.

The suggested strategies for teaching and learning phonics in this guide draw more heavily on the use of one of these methods, synthetic phonics.

Teachers may find, however, that it is useful at different points in their teaching to draw on two other methods, that is, analytic phonics and analogy phonics, depending on the instructional purpose and context.

The following descriptions of the three methods referred to above follow those in the *Glossary of terms* in *Teaching Reading* (2005), the Report and Recommendations of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy.

### Synthetic phonics

Synthetic phonics uses a part-to-whole approach that teaches students letter-sound (grapheme-phoneme) relationships in a clearly defined incremental sequence. Students are taught small groups of letter sounds during short, brisk daily sessions so they can begin blending (synthesising) when reading and segmenting letter sounds in words when spelling.

For example, after being taught the letters and sounds /s/ /t/ /o/ /p/ students can be supported to blend these letter sounds to read words such as *stop*, *top*, *pot*. When blending it is important to emphasise the initial, medial and final sounds. As well, students can segment the sounds in these words to write them.

### Analytic phonics

Analytic phonics teaching starts at the word level. Students are taught to analyse letter-sound relations once a word is identified.

For example, a teacher might write the letter *p* followed by several words: *put*, *pig*, *pen*, *play*. The teacher helps students read the words by noting that each word begins with the same sound that is associated with the letter *p*.

### Analogy phonics

Analogy phonics teaches students to use parts of written words they already know to identify new words.

For example, with the word 'tent' the onset is 't' and the rime is '-ent'. Students are taught to take the rime '-ent' and blend it with new onsets, e.g. r-ent, b-ent, s-ent.



## Sequencing phonics instruction

In relation to phonics instruction, *sequencing* involves giving consideration to the order in which phonics knowledge and skills are taught.

When students are learning letter-sound relationships in phonics, they are making connections between printed letters and speech sounds (phonemes). Phonemes are the smallest units of sound in words. There are 44 phonemes in Standard Australian English, represented by 26 letters of the alphabet in multiple combinations. The range of vowel and consonant phonemes and some of their graphemic (letter) representations are shown for teacher reference on pp. 18–19.

An effective sequence for teaching phonics builds from simple to complex, common to uncommon and known to unknown. In addition, an effective sequence will facilitate student learning by, for example, minimising potential confusion, such as letters or blends that look and/or sound alike, or introducing continuous sounds like /m/ and /s/ before stop sounds like /t/ and /p/ because they are easier to blend.

### Connections with phonemic awareness

In the companion guide, *Literacy teaching: Phonemic awareness* teachers are supported with information about how to teach students to hear, say and manipulate the sounds in spoken words.

It provides a suggested sequence for teaching students to become phonemically aware.



In essence the sequence for developing phonemic awareness describes how students progress from being able to hear and say the sounds in words (in the initial, medial and final positions), to blending and segmenting the sounds in words, to eventually being able to manipulate the sounds in words (adding, deleting and substituting phonemes).

Phonics and phonemic awareness are co-dependent skills. It is important throughout the process of teaching phonics that teachers encourage students to use their developing phonemic awareness (ability to hear and say sounds) to assist them to make connections between the sounds they hear and the way they are represented in writing (phonics).

As students progress through the phonics learning sequence on the facing page, they will draw on their phonemic awareness skills, knowledge and understanding.

*Teaching phonics using an effective sequence will facilitate student learning.*

*Teachers need to begin phonics teaching as soon as possible in Kindergarten.*

## A suggested sequence for introducing new phonics learning

The following sequence will support the systematic teaching and learning of all 44 phonemes represented on the following pages.

NB: Prior to teaching students about letter-sound relationships ensure they are able to visually discriminate letters e.g. identify letters that are the same in words.

### Teach students to recognise and write single letter-sound (grapheme/phoneme) correspondences.

Following is a possible order for introducing letter-sound correspondences:  
*a m t s i f d r o g l h u c b n k v e w j p y x q z*  
 (Carnine, Silbert and Kameenui, 1997).

So that students can begin blending and segmenting words as soon as possible, teachers are encouraged to introduce:

- small groups of letters in quick succession (e.g. a, m, t, s, i, f, d)
- the most common sound for each of the new letters.

NB: Avoid introducing letters that look alike and sound alike together, e.g. *b* and *d*, *a* and *u*.

### Teach students to recognise and write letter combinations (grapheme/phoneme correspondences) beginning with combinations that are easier.

Examples would include consonant digraphs: *sh, ch, th, ck*.

Explore different ways a phoneme can be represented e.g. /sh/ as in *ship, mission, chef*.

NB: To avoid confusion, separate letter combinations that sound or look similar, e.g. *ar* in *farm* and *ur* in *burn*.

### Teach students to recognise and write more difficult letter combinations (grapheme/phoneme correspondences).

Examples would include vowel digraphs: *or, ue, ie, ee*.

Explore all the different ways the phoneme can be represented in words eg. /or/ as in *torn, door, warn, haul, law, call*.

NB: It is important to focus on the long vowel sound made when two vowels are split by a consonant e.g., *gate, shine, tune, bone*.

Use known letter-sound correspondences to blend and segment simple words e.g. VC words *at* and CVC words *sat*.

NB: It is easiest to blend *continuous* sounds like *r, l, s, m, f* and then a vowel. *Stop* sounds, such as *t, p, b, c*, are harder to blend, especially at the beginning of words.

It is important that students are taught to:

- blend phonemes in order all through a word to read the word
- segment a word into its constituent phonemes to spell the word.

Frequently occurring words that are phonically irregular such as *the* and *was* will need to be taught as sight words.

Use known letter combinations to blend and segment words, that is, CVCC e.g. *desk, park* and CCVC, e.g. *slip, drag*.

Segment words into onset (the part of the word before the vowel) and rime (the part of the word that includes the vowel and onwards), as in *slip*: *sl* (onset) and *ip* (rime).

## Vowel and consonant phonemes and some of their graphemic (letter) representations

Word pronunciation may vary.

### Consonants

Phoneme	Common spelling	Letter combinations			
/b/	b baby	bb ribbon			
/d/	d dog	dd add	ed filled		
/f/	f field	ff cliff lf calf	ph photo	gh laugh	ft often
/g/	g game	gg egg	gh ghost	gu guest	gue catalogue
/h/	h hat	wh who			
/j/	j judge	g giraffe d soldier	dge edge	gg exaggerate	ge page
/k/	k kite	c cat cc acclaim	q(u) quick* qu bouquet	ch Christmas lk folk	ck back box*
/l/	l lamb	ll spell			
/m/	m mouse	mm summer	mb comb	mn autumn	lm calm
/n/	n nut	nn sunny	gn gnat	kn knife	pn pneumonia
/p/	p paper	pp happy			
/r/	r rabbit	rr horrid	wr wrist	rh rhythm	
/s/	s sun	ss miss st listen	se house ce face	sc science c city	ps psychic
/t/	t toe	tt better	th Thomas	ed clapped	
/v/	v violet	f of	ph Stephen	ve stove	
/w/	w was	wh why	qu quick*	o choir	
/y/	y yes	i opinion	j hallelujah		
/z/	z zebra	zz buzz ze maze	s has	ss scissors	x xylophone
/ng/	ng ring	n pink	ngue tongue		
/th/ (voiced)	th then				
/th/ (unvoiced)	th thin				
/ch/	ch chip	tch watch	tu future	ti question	te righteous
/sh/	sh ship	ce ocean si tension	ti station sc conscience	s sure c special	ch chef
/zh/	s treasure	si division	z azure		

## Vowels

Phoneme	Common spelling	Letter combinations			
/ɑ/	a cat	ai plait			
/e/	e peg	ea bread a many	u bury	ie friend	ai said
/i/	i pig	e England ie sieve	o women y system	u busy	ui build
/o/	o log	ho honest	a want		
/u/	u plug	o love	oo flood	ou trouble	
/oo/	oo look	u bush	ou would	o wolf	
/ow/	ow down	ou shout	ough bough		
/oi/	oi coin	oy boy	uoy buoy		
ā	ai pain	ay day ei vein ey they	a_e gate aigh straight ea break	a station et croquet	eigh weigh au gauge
/ē/	ee sweet	ea heat ay quay ei receive	e these ey key eo people	ie thief oe phoenix	y happy i ski
/ī/	igh light	ie tried ai aisle is island	i mind uy buy	y my ye rye	i_e shine eigh height
/ō/	oa road	ow blow ew sew	o_e bone eau beau	oe toe oo brooch	ough though o no
/ü/	oo moon	ue blue ough through o who	ew grew ui fruit	u_e tune ou croup	oeu manoeuvre oe shoe
/ə/	er sister	ar dollar e ticket eur chauffeur	our honour u cactus a ago	or doctor ur augur	i dolphin re centre
ü	ure cure	our tourist			
/ä/	ar cart	a fast	au laugh	er sergeant	ear heart
/û/	ir first	ur burn our journey	en wooden	ear pearl	or word
/ēə/	ear fear	ee beer	ere here	ier pier	
ā	air stairs	ear bear ayer prayer	are hare	ere where	eir their
/ô/	or fork	oor door aw law	ar warn ore more	au haul oar board	a call

\* Some letters have more than one phoneme. For example: the x in *box* has two phonemes /k/ and /s/ and the x in *example* has /g/ and /z/, the qu in *queen* has two phonemes /k/ and /w/.

*Specific reference to phonics is found throughout the NSW English K–6 syllabus.*

## The NSW English K–6 syllabus and the Four Literacy Resources model

Teaching phonics is mandated by the NSW English K–6 syllabus and supported by the Four Literacy Resources model of literacy.

### Phonics and the NSW English K–6 syllabus

The importance of phonics instruction is clearly stated in the NSW English K–6 syllabus.

*Knowledge of letter-sound relationships gives students a degree of independence in learning to recognise words and in reviewing them. It develops students' visual images of words because it allows them to attend to the letter components of the words and their sequencing. It is important that students understand that the pattern of letters that is unique to each word is not arbitrarily chosen but depends on a conventional system. The English language uses the alphabet to relate printed letters to speech sounds using a system of correspondences (the alphabetic principle).*

*NSW English K–6 syllabus, 1998.*

Specific reference to phonics is found throughout the syllabus in the **Indicators**, the **Content Overviews** and the **Scope and Sequence of Phonological and Graphological Processing**.

For example, from the **Indicators**, *recognises most sounds of the alphabet; uses groups of letters to represent words; says and writes the beginning and ending sounds of spoken words.*

For example, from the **Content Overviews**, students will be provided with opportunities to: *use phonological (sound awareness) and graphological (visual processing) cues to decode written texts, e.g. knowledge of the letters and their sounds to predict words. Teachers will: draw attention to letters of the alphabet.*



For example, from the **Scope and Sequence of Phonological and Graphological Processing**, students will be provided with opportunities to: *blend known letter-sound relationships to form VC\* (e.g. at) and CVC (e.g. sit) spoken and written words.*

\* V represents a vowel, C represents a consonant

## Phonics and the *Four Literacy Resources* model

The *Four Literacy Resources* developed by Professor Allan Luke and Professor Peter Freebody and introduced in *An introduction to quality literacy teaching* is a conceptual framework that captures the range of literacy capabilities that all students need to become literate (see Appendix 7).

The model organises these literacy capabilities into four key literacy resources:

- Code-breaking** is the ability to break the code of written texts by recognising and using the fundamental architecture of written language, including the alphabet, sounds in words, spelling, structural conventions and patterns.
- Meaning-making** is the ability to understand and compose meaningful written, visual, spoken, digital and multimodal texts.
- Text-using** is the ability to use written, spoken, visual, digital and multimodal texts in functional ways within and outside the school setting.
- Text-analysing** is the ability to critically analyse written, spoken, visual, digital and multimodal texts and understand that texts represent particular points of view and influence people's ideas.

It's important not to assume that the four resources should be taught or learned in a linear or hierarchical sequence. In fact, effective literacy teaching will often address these resources in combination.

In identifying four different groups of capabilities, the model does, however, help to unpack the specific resources that students need to develop. Hence there will be times when teachers need to focus their teaching more on one resource than others, depending on students' needs and the lesson purpose.

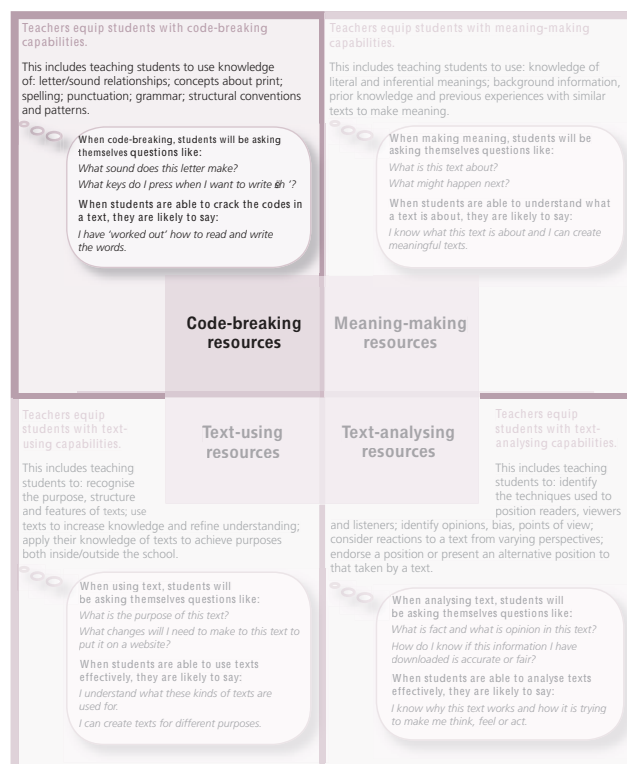
For example, as part of becoming an effective code-breaker, students need to develop knowledge about letter-sound relationships, so there will be times when teachers need to explicitly focus on teaching phonics.

The *Four Literacy Resources* model highlights the importance of developing students' code-breaking skills and therefore their phonics knowledge. At the same time, it demonstrates the place of phonics and the place of phonics teaching within a balanced and integrated literacy program.

*In becoming literate, students need to develop literacy capabilities in all four literacy resources. That is: code-breaking meaning-making text-using text-analysing.*

*There will be times when teachers need to explicitly focus on code-breaking as part of a balanced and integrated literacy program.*

The *Four Literacy Resources* model



NB: Whenever the word 'text' is used it includes written, visual, oral/aural, digital and multimodal texts.

## Being *explicit and systematic* about teaching phonics in a balanced and integrated literacy program

Effective literacy teachers plan, sequence and directly teach phonics skills. They provide a balanced literacy program for their students by teaching all aspects of literacy that are key to literacy success. As well, they ensure that phonics instruction occurs in meaningful contexts.

The teaching of phonics can be said to be explicit, systematic, balanced and integrated when teachers:

- know the phonics knowledge, understandings and skills required by the *NSW English K–6 syllabus* and *A suggested sequence for introducing new phonics learning* (p. 17)
- use assessment information to identify phonics learning goals for all students
- take into account the diversity of learners in classes and make appropriate adjustments to their planning, teaching and assessment
- group students based on phonics assessment information, understanding that student grouping needs to be flexible and will change as students' needs change
- based on an effective phonics learning sequence (p. 17), plan focused mini-lessons on phonics
- explicitly teach phonics skills through modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies (p. 24)
- integrate explicit phonics teaching with teaching phonemic awareness
- include opportunities for students to practise and apply phonics knowledge and skills within the literacy session and other learning areas
- teach phonics in a stimulating and rich literacy environment, that includes the use of authentic texts and contexts
- ensure that over time, students receive balanced instruction in the skills and knowledge needed to be effective code breakers, meaning makers, text users and text analysts.



Explicit

Systematic

Balanced

Integrated

## Explicit and systematic phonics teaching

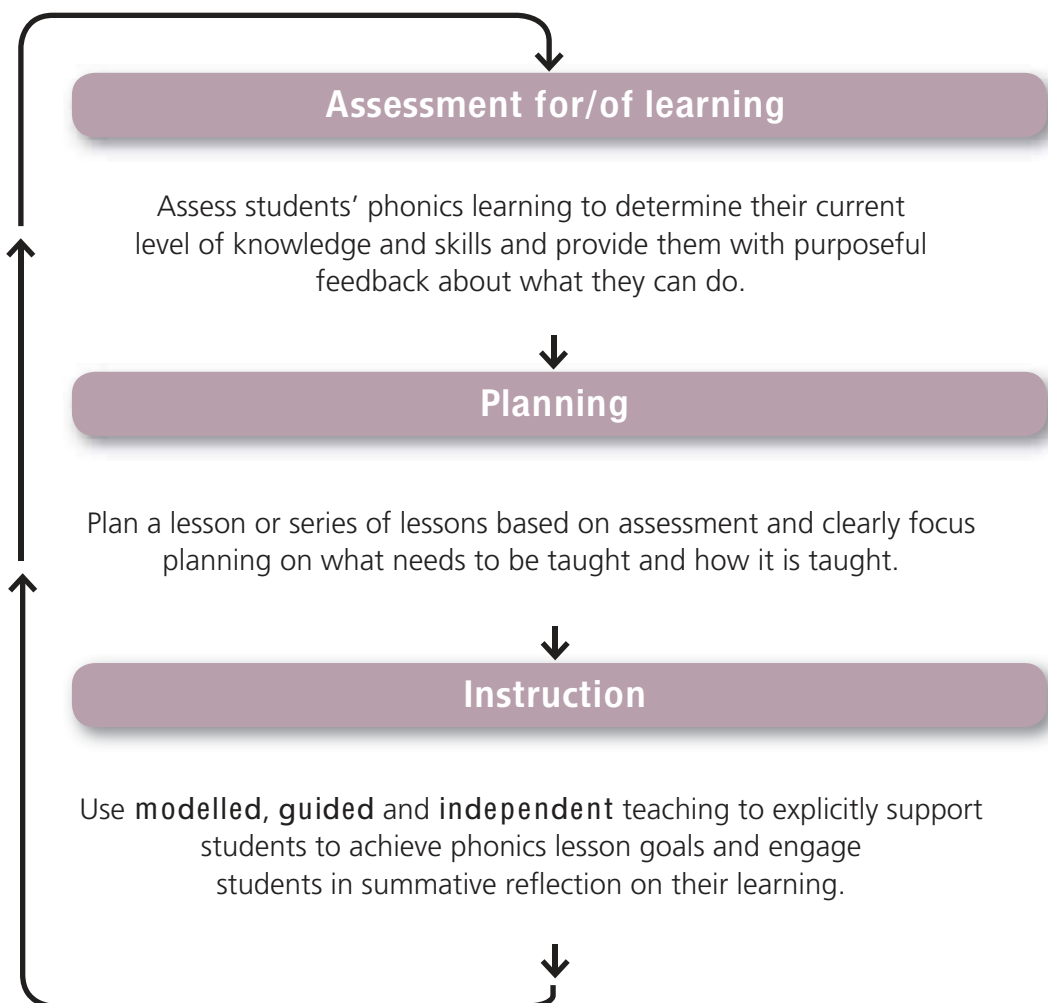
Explicit and systematic phonics teaching should not be confused with *drill and practise* or a return to authoritarian classrooms where teachers tell and test and where students memorise and regurgitate.

Explicit and systematic teaching involves the deliberate explanation and demonstration of new phonics learning. Failing to provide students with explicit and systematic phonics teaching is to leave important learning up to students to *figure out* for themselves, often resulting in frustration, disengagement and underachievement.

The diagram below represents a process for teaching phonics in an explicit and systematic way and signals the place of modelled, guided and independent teaching within the process.

It is built on the concept that at its most basic level, teaching phonics in an explicit and systematic way involves a continuous cycle of assessing, teaching and learning. Later in this guide, the process below for explicit and systematic phonics teaching is put into action.

### A process for explicit and systematic phonics teaching





## Three key strategies: Modelled, guided and independent teaching

Three key strategies known as modelled, guided and independent teaching are central to effective literacy teaching. Understanding and using these strategies will assist teachers to teach phonics effectively.

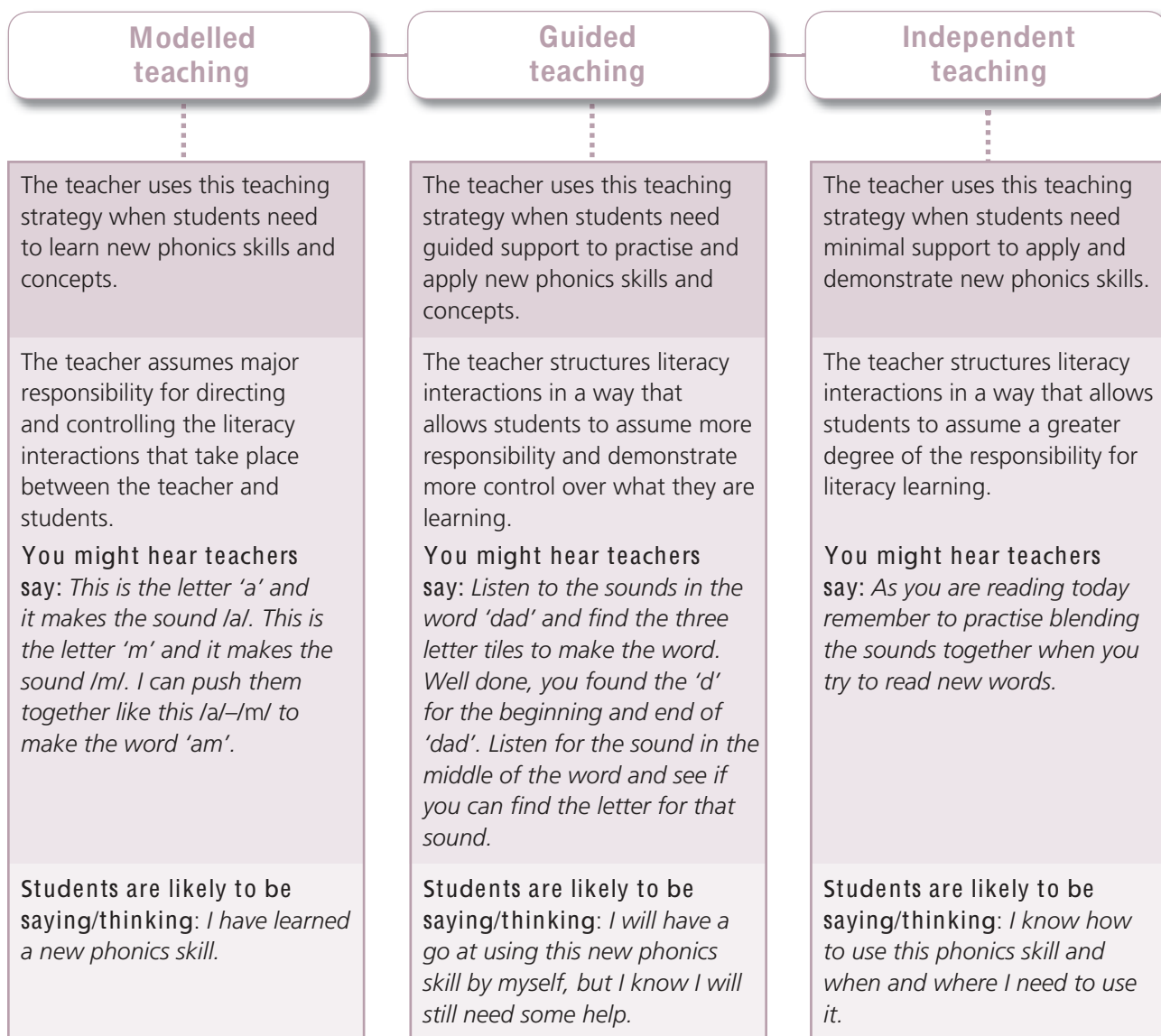
Modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies focus on how the teacher moves the level of responsibility for learning from teacher to student. The strategies emphasise a controlled shift by the teacher according to students' readiness. The teacher's ultimate aim is to support students to move from being dependent learners to being independent learners. That is, to be able to apply and transfer their learning to new contexts.

The teacher decides whether to use modelled, guided or independent teaching with the whole class, a small group or individual students. Decisions about grouping students for phonics instruction are determined by classroom-based assessment information. The teacher will maximise the potential for students to *take on* new phonics learning by using authentic texts and creating authentic contexts.

In **modelled teaching**, scaffolding is direct, teacher-led and obvious.

In **guided teaching**, scaffolding provides just enough support from the teacher to enable students to successfully demonstrate new learning.

In **independent teaching**, scaffolding provides minimal support from the teacher and greater opportunity for students to demonstrate their new learning and apply it to other contexts.



In an overall sense, the three strategies describe how teachers structure and deliver teaching in response to students' learning needs. Descriptions of modelled, guided and independent teaching are given below.

### **Modelled teaching**

In modelled teaching, the teacher explicitly and directly teaches new phonics skills and concepts based on a planned, systematic sequence for teaching phonics. The teacher leads, demonstrates, models and explains the phonics skill to be learned and *thinks aloud* the learning processes involved. The teacher activates prior phonics knowledge, introduces new phonics terminology, builds on known understandings about phonics, and scaffolds students in concrete and visible ways (see examples of modelled teaching in Sarah's story on p. 26).

### **Guided teaching**

In guided teaching, the teacher still operates in a planned and systematic way but allows students more control. The literacy interactions are focused on the new phonics learning introduced during modelled teaching. Informed by student assessment information and knowledge of the phonics learning sequence, the teacher knows exactly what he or she expects students to be able to do. As needed, the teacher provides explicit explanation, scaffolds students with just enough support to succeed, corrects errors and provides feedback. The students are more actively involved and *hands on* with their phonics learning, talking about, demonstrating, organising, practising and applying what they know and can do (see examples of guided teaching in Toby's story on p. 28).

### **Independent teaching**

In independent teaching, the teacher has made a decision that students are ready to apply their phonics learning independently. The teacher knows the phonics skills he or she wants students to demonstrate as a result of the modelled and guided teaching. As needed, the teacher provides differentiated tasks and increased opportunities for student self-direction and self-monitoring. Students take more control, demonstrating, practising, applying and reflecting on their phonics learning. Students show they can transfer their phonics learning to other situations and contexts (evidence of independent teaching can be found in Mark's story on p. 27 and Alice's story on p. 27).

## Early years' teachers *talk about* teaching phonics in their literacy sessions

Previous NSW Department of Education and Training support materials introduced K–6 teachers to the notion of a sustained, balanced and integrated literacy session.

K–6 teachers have developed a range of effective ways of organising literacy sessions. It is evident that K–6 teachers manage the *ebb and flow* of balanced and integrated literacy sessions in highly individualised ways.

This guide assists early years' teachers to incorporate explicit and systematic phonics teaching into their current literacy session structure.

On these pages, four teachers provide insights into how typical literacy sessions can incorporate explicit phonics teaching.

Sarah, a Kindergarten teacher, describes how she introduces a new letter-sound relationship.



I begin my literacy session with modelled teaching. I choose an enlarged text that features the particular letter that I have planned to focus on. This letter comes from my programmed sequence of letter-sound relationships.

As I read the text, the students *follow* the text with their eyes. During reading, while attending to text meaning and concepts about print, I reinforce previously learned letter-sound relationships.

I identify the focus letter with students (in the text, using magnetic letters, on cards or on the whiteboard) and tell them the letter name and the sound it represents. We discuss student names beginning with the letter-sound, the shape of the letter and any distinguishing features of the letter.

I then re-read the text, pausing when I come to a word beginning with the focus letter and asking students to provide the letter name and sound. We might also use our knowledge of previously learned letter-sound relationships and meaning to go further than initial letter-sounds and blend some words in the text.

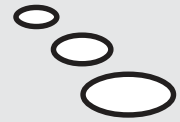
Those students I observe to know the new letter-sound relationship would be set up to practise and apply the new knowledge by using it to make some words using letter frames, magnetic letters, etc.

Those students who need more help remain with me for some really directed, modelled teaching using magnetic letters, etc.

Throughout the remainder of the literacy session I make sure that I remind the students to use the new letter-sound relationship as they read and write.

*Effective teachers explicitly teach phonics within a wider context of a theme or topic, a shared book, etc so that the purpose of learning phonics is made clear and relevant (Louden, et al., 2005).*

Mark, a Year 1 teacher, describes how he explicitly teaches phonics to a group of students who require additional support in using letter-sound relationships to read and spell.



Most of my students know how to use letter-sound relationships to help them to read and spell, but I have a small group of students who have difficulty segmenting sounds to spell words. So that I can devote time to explicitly work with this group of students, I usually begin my literacy session with partner reading for 10 minutes. I work with the group using magnetic letters, letter tiles or small chalkboards to consolidate segmenting CVC and CCVC words.

Following this brief, explicit, small group modelled teaching lesson, my literacy session continues with modelled teaching of writing for the whole class. I have set up a class mailbox so I might model how to write a letter to a friend. During the modelling process I would use *think aloud* to demonstrate what I do when attempting to spell unknown words. I talk about how segmenting the sounds in the word could help me.

As the students write their own letters for the mailbox, I support individual students, reminding them to use their knowledge of segmenting sounds to help them spell words.

*Effective phonics teaching involves clear explanations of word level structures while maintaining a focus on text level features, with a particular emphasis on comprehension of texts (Louden, et al., 2005).*

Alice, a Year 3 teacher, explains how she caters for the individual phonics needs of students within her literacy session.

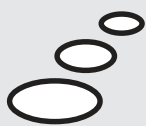


Most of my students have a good knowledge of phonics and I make sure that I constantly remind them to use this knowledge, not only in the literacy session but in their reading and writing in other Key Learning Areas.

Sometimes I find there are exceptions and I need to provide additional explicit teaching for individuals who have not developed efficient blending and segmenting skills.

This might involve me sitting with the student one-on-one during a class writing session and explicitly modelling how to hear and record sounds in words as the student writes.

*... educators must keep the end [original emphasis] in mind and ensure that children understand the purpose of learning letter-sounds and are able to apply their skills in their daily reading and writing activities (National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, 2005).*



Toby, a Year 2 teacher, describes how he explicitly teaches phonics during the guided reading component of the literacy session.

I group my students for guided reading during my literacy session. I set up a series of learning experiences. These experiences focus on students practising and applying previous learning. I work with one group at a time and include some explicit phonics teaching for each group. While I have a similar phonics focus for each group (for example, blending onset and rime, from my phonics teaching sequence), I differentiate the level of support based on each group's needs.

With my first guided reading group, I might focus on how to blend CVC sounds to read words, while with my fourth group, I might focus on using known letter combinations (sl, dr, etc) to read words. If I need to, I spend some time using magnetic letters to demonstrate the blending process.

As each student reads their guided reading text to me, I encourage them to use their knowledge of blending when reading. I also remind them to cross-check with other sources of information, like meaning, as they are reading.

*Effective teachers provide careful scaffolding, including guided practice in a variety of contexts, to ensure that important phonics concepts are learnt (Louden et al., 2005).*

## Getting ready to put explicit and systematic phonics teaching into action

### Key points to remember:

Quality phonics teaching involves the teaching of:

- letter-sound correspondences in an incremental way
- the highly important skill of **blending** the sounds in order, all through words to read them
- the equally important skill of **segmenting** words into phonemes to spell
- **blending** and **segmenting** as reversible processes.

### Key resources that will assist and enhance phonics teaching

Interactive Whiteboard, enlarged texts, alphabet charts, plastic letter shapes, magnetic letters, letter tiles, domino cards with letters and pictures, packs of alphabet cards, lotto sheets with letters, word frames, word shapes, flip books, individual student whiteboards, transformation board, magazines, advertising brochures, cereal boxes. (See pp. 64–73 for learning activities that incorporate the use of these resources.)

# Explicit phonics teaching in action

## Navigating this section of the guide

This section of the document is about implementing explicit phonics teaching in the classroom. It provides specific guidance for teachers about how to systematically assess, plan and teach the phonics segment of their literacy sessions. It has been designed to be used with the *Literacy Continuum* and to specifically link with, complement and support the *Best Start Kindergarten literacy assessment* process.

The information contained on the next double page (p. 30 and p. 31) is vital to understanding how to:

- navigate this section of the document
- put explicit phonics teaching into practice in the classroom.

*At a glance: The phonics aspect of the Literacy Continuum* (p. 30) is a one page summary of the eight clusters of markers that appear along the phonics aspect of the *Literacy Continuum*.

*A process for explicit and systematic phonics teaching* (p. 31), is a diagram that presents a process for teaching phonics in an explicit way. The diagram is built on the concept that effective teaching involves a continuous cycle of assessing, teaching and learning.

The process on p. 31 is informed by this core concept but goes further to *step out* for teachers how to be more explicit, particularly about the planning and teaching that needs to take place to maximise the potential for student learning. It specifically demonstrates how teachers can use modelled, guided and independent teaching in the phonics segment of their literacy sessions.

Following p. 30 and p. 31, each double page thereafter focuses progressively on a different set of phonics markers on the *Literacy Continuum*.

These pages provide a model of the kind of teaching needed to move students to the next cluster of markers on the continuum.

*Teachers need to systematically assess, plan and teach phonics within their daily literacy sessions.*

## At a glance: The phonics aspect of the *Literacy Continuum*

(The following clusters of phonics markers are those that are represented on the *Literacy Continuum*.)

► Markers assessed through *Best Start Kindergarten literacy assessment*

### First cluster of markers:

- Identifies one letter that is the same in words.
- Unable to name letters in a given word.
- Unable to say the sounds for letters in a given word.

### Second cluster of markers:

- Identifies two or more letters that are the same in words.
- Identifies some letters that are the same in more than one context.
- Names some letters in a given word.
- Says one of the sounds for letters in a given word.
- Writes approximate letters for some sounds.

### Third cluster of markers:

- Identifies all letters that are the same in more than one context.
- Names most letters in a given word.
- Says some of the sounds for letters in a given word.
- Blends up to three sounds in words when reading.
- Writes letters to correspond with single letter sounds.

### Fourth cluster of markers:

- Names all letters in a given word.
- Says most of the sounds for letters in a given word.
- Spells unknown words phonetically with most letters in the correct sequence.

### Fifth cluster of markers:

- Attempts to read more complex words using letter/sound knowledge.
- Blends initial consonants with common vowel patterns or word families.
- Uses knowledge of letter clusters and vowel digraphs to spell unfamiliar words.

### Sixth cluster of markers:

- Segments sounds in consonant clusters to spell unfamiliar words.
- Uses familiar words and letter clusters to decode words when reading.

### Seventh cluster of markers:

- Recognises that common suffixes in words can have different sounds, e.g. *wanted*, *talked*.
- Understands that sounds can be represented in various ways when spelling words, e.g. *meet*, *meat*.

### Eighth cluster of markers:

- Knows common sounds for vowel digraphs and uses syllabification when reading/spelling.
- Uses knowledge of word identification strategies including blending, segmenting and letter patterns when reading/spelling.

Appendix 8 shows links to the NSW *English K–6 syllabus* and support documents for each cluster of continuum markers.

## A process for explicit and systematic phonics teaching

### Assessment for/of learning

Use *Best Start*/classroom-based assessment to determine and record students' current phonics knowledge and skills.

Select the clusters of phonics markers on the *Literacy Continuum* that best describe your students' current phonics knowledge.

Determine the starting points for explicit instruction using the next cluster of markers on the continuum for the class/group/individuals.

### Planning

Establish learning goals by rewording the starting point continuum markers to reflect desired student behaviours.

Break each learning goal into the small *bits* of knowledge/skills/understandings required by students.

Consider the *Teaching points* provided with each cluster of markers on the following pages.

Consider whether the explicit phonics teaching is required for the class, groups or individuals.

Select the instructional strategies (modelled, guided or independent teaching) that will enable students to achieve their phonics learning goals.

### Instruction

Allocate time for short, focused phonics teaching within literacy sessions.

Begin by linking new phonics learning to previous learning and tell students the focus of the explicit teaching episode.

Model the required new phonics learning (see modelled teaching p. 24).

Provide guided support for new phonics learning (see guided teaching p. 24).

Review and provide more modelled and guided phonics teaching as required.

Provide independent teaching, including opportunities to practise and apply new phonics learning in 'real' contexts (see independent teaching p. 24 and Appendix 9, *Ideas for practising and applying phonics learning*).



## The process in action: Phonics

### First cluster of markers

- ▶ Identifies one letter that is the same in words.
- ▶ Unable to name letters in a given word.
- ▶ Unable to say the sounds for letters in a given word.

NB: This cluster of markers could be useful to inform transition to school programs.

### Assessment for/of learning

Use classroom-based assessment or *Best Start* assessment to assess the above markers.

The first cluster of markers on the *Literacy Continuum* would be the starting point for explicit instruction for those students who have not yet demonstrated behaviours described in the above cluster of markers.

Based on the first cluster of markers, the new learning goals would be:

- identifies letters that are the same in a given word
- names letters for some sounds.

### Planning

Based on the learning goals, the explicit teaching would be focused on:

- the concept of same and different
- the concept of a letter/word
- how to identify letters that are the same in words (explicit teaching example provided on page 33)
- a few letter-sound correspondences in the initial, medial and final positions in words, e.g. a, m, t, s.

See *A suggested sequence for introducing new phonics learning*, p. 17.

Teaching points:

- ensure that when teaching letter-sound correspondences, examples of the letter-sound correspondence are provided in the initial, medial and final position in words
- use only the most common pronunciation for the phonemes
- immediately students know some letter-sound correspondences, begin teaching students how to blend and segment VC and CVC words (see explicit teaching example provided on p. 33)
- where possible, use words from texts being used in the classroom
- use the terms *letter* and *word* explicitly
- use the terms *same* and *different* explicitly
- discuss similarities/differences in letter shapes using language to describe letters, such as *tall*, *short*, etc.
- use the students' names as a way to introduce letter-sound correspondences
- teach the letter name and sound at the same time
- stress blending all of the sounds in a word from left to right.

## Instruction

Following is an example of short, sharp, explicit phonics teaching focused on how to identify letters that are the same in words.

Link new learning to previous learning and tell students the focus of the explicit teaching episode.

*Say: Yesterday we learned about letters and words. Today we are going to look for letters that are the same in words.*

**Model the required new learning.**

*Say: Here is the letter 'a'. I'm going to find another letter that is the same. I'll look for a letter that is short and round and has a stick on the side. Tell me when I point to a letter that is the same.*

**Provide guided support for the new learning.**

Provide other words with the same letters in them, e.g. *banana, summer, bottle*. Support students to find the letters that are the same in the words. Encourage students to use the terms such as *letter, same*.

**Review and provide more modelled teaching and guided teaching as required.** *Say: Well done, you found all of the letters that are the same in the words by looking closely at the letter shapes.*

**Provide independent teaching, including opportunities to practise and apply new phonics learning in *real* contexts. This will involve:**

- making explicit links for students between new phonics learning and other contexts or learning areas.
- ensuring students are provided with opportunities to practise new phonics learning as part of the processes of reading and writing within the literacy session.

Appendix 9, *Ideas for practising and applying phonics learning*, provides some independent teaching activities organised around each cluster of markers that could be used to support this part of the process. Decide whether students have achieved the learning goals using observation, interaction and students' work samples.

## The process in action: Phonics

### Second cluster of markers

- ▶ Identifies two or more letters that are the same in words.
- ▶ Identifies some letters that are the same in more than one context.
- ▶ Names some letters in a given word.
- ▶ Says one of the sounds for letters in a given word.
- Writes approximate letters for some sounds.

### Assessment for/of learning

Use classroom-based assessment or *Best Start* assessment to assess the above markers.

The second cluster of markers on the *Literacy Continuum* would be the starting point for explicit instruction for those students who have not yet demonstrated behaviours described in the above cluster of markers.

Based on the second cluster of markers, the new learning goals would be:

- identifies letters that are the same in words
- identifies some letters or sounds in a word
- writes letters for known sounds.

### Planning

Based on the learning goals, the explicit teaching would be focused on:

- how to identify letters that are the same
- the concepts of letter name and letter sound
- how to provide letter names and produce letter sounds
- some additional letter-sound correspondences in the initial, medial and final positions in words, e.g. i, f, d, r, o, g, l, h (explicit teaching example provided on page 35)

See *A suggested sequence for introducing new phonics learning*, p. 17.

Teaching points:

- ensure that when teaching letter-sound correspondences, examples are provided for the letter-sound correspondence in the initial, medial and final positions in words
- as students learn additional letter-sound correspondences, continue teaching students how to blend and segment sounds in words
- use words from texts in the classroom
- use the terms *letter* and *sound* explicitly
- show the letter-sound in the initial and final position, e.g. /d/ dot, red
- show the letter-sound in the medial position, e.g. /i/ bin, /o/ hot
- stress blending all of the sounds in a word from left to right.

## Instruction

Following is an example of short, sharp, explicit phonics teaching focused on the letter-sound correspondence for d, /d/.

Link new learning to previous learning and tell students the focus of the explicit teaching episode.

*Say: In our book, we learned about the letter 'f' and the sound /f/. Today when we are reading, we are going to look at the letter 'd' and the sound /d/.*

Model the required new learning.

*Say: Listen to these words: 'dot', 'dice', 'desk'. These words all start with the same /d/ sound. Say the words after me listening for the /d/ sound. This is how we write the letter 'd'. Try writing a 'd' in the air, on your friend's back, on the floor. Listen to these words: 'red', 'mad', 'hid'. These words end with the same /d/ sound. Say the words after me, listening for the /d/ sound.*

Provide guided support for the new learning.

*Say: The sound we are listening for is /d/. Each of the words will start or end with the /d/ sound. As I say the word, stand up if the /d/ is at the beginning of the word and write the 'd' letter in the air. If the /d/ sound is at the end of the word, sit down and write the letter 'd' on the carpet. The first word is 'dust'. Yes, you heard the /d/ sound that is at the start of the word 'dust'. Now the next word is 'sad'. Yes, you heard the /d/ sound that is at the end of the word 'sad'.*

Review and provide more modelled teaching and guided teaching as required.

Provide independent teaching, including opportunities to practise and apply new phonics learning in *real* contexts. This will involve:

- making explicit links for students between new phonics learning and other contexts or learning areas.
- ensuring students are provided with opportunities to practise new phonics learning as part of the processes of reading and writing within the literacy session.

Appendix 9, *Ideas for practising and applying phonics learning*, provides some independent teaching activities organised around each cluster of markers that could be used to support this part of the process. Decide whether students have achieved the learning goals using observation, interaction and students' work samples.

## The process in action: Phonics

### Third cluster of markers

- ▶ Identifies all letters that are the same in more than one context.
- ▶ Names most letters in a given word.
- ▶ Says some of the sounds for letters in a given word.
  - Blends up to three sounds in words when reading.
  - Writes letters to correspond with single letter sounds.

### Assessment for/of learning

Use classroom-based assessment or *Best Start* assessment to assess the above markers.

The third cluster of markers on the *Literacy Continuum* would be the starting point for explicit instruction for those students who have not yet demonstrated behaviours described in the above cluster of markers.

Based on the third cluster of markers, the new learning goals would be:

- recognises most letters and hears some sounds in a word
- blends up to three sounds when reading
- writes letters to correspond with letter sounds.

### Planning

Based on the learning goals, the explicit teaching would be focused on:

- the remaining letter-sound correspondences in initial, medial and final positions in words, e.g. u, c, b, n, k, v, e, w, j, p, y, x, q, z

See *A suggested sequence for introducing new phonics learning*, p. 17.

- how to blend and segment VC and CVC words, e.g. at, sat (explicit teaching example provided on page 37).

Teaching points:

- ensure that when teaching letter-sound correspondences, examples are provided for the letter-sound correspondence in the initial, medial and final positions in words
- blending combines the sounds into a word. Segmenting is the reverse of blending. The two concepts can be taught together. Blending is easier for most students. Model oral blending first, encouraging students to listen for sounds
- as students learn additional letter-sound correspondences, continue teaching students how to blend and segment words
- where possible, use words from texts in the classroom.

## Instruction

Following is an example of short, sharp, explicit phonics teaching focused on how to blend and segment CVC words.

Link new learning to previous learning and tell students the focus of the explicit teaching episode.

*Say: Last week we were listening to see if we knew any sounds in words. Today we are going to try to say all three sounds in a word and push them together to make a word.*

**Model the required new learning.**

Write a CVC word from a text using magnetic letters, e.g. *sat*. *Say: We can read this word by saying each of the sounds and pushing them together. When I say /s/ /a/ /t/ and push the sounds together, I make the word 'sat'. If I pull the sounds apart, I can write the word 'sat'.*

**Provide guided support for the new learning.**

Form another word from the text, e.g. *man*. Encourage students to blend the sounds to read the word *man* and then try to write the word. Repeat for other CVC words. *Say: Well done, you were able to push the letters together to read the word 'man'.*

Review and provide more modelled teaching and guided teaching as required.

Provide independent teaching, including opportunities to practise and apply new phonics learning in *real* contexts. This will involve:

- making explicit links for students between new phonics learning and other contexts or learning areas.
- ensuring students are provided with opportunities to practise new phonics learning as part of the processes of reading and writing within the literacy session.

Appendix 9, *Ideas for practising and applying phonics learning*, provides some independent teaching activities organised around each cluster of markers that could be used to support this part of the process. Decide whether students have achieved the learning goals using observation, interaction and students' work samples.

## The process in action: Phonics

### Fourth cluster of markers

- ▶ Names all letters in a given word.
- ▶ Says most of the sounds for letters in a given word.
- Spells unknown words phonetically with most letters in the correct sequence.

### Assessment for/of learning

Use classroom-based assessment or *Best Start* assessment to assess the above markers.

The fourth cluster of markers on the *Literacy Continuum* would be the starting point for explicit instruction for those students who have not yet demonstrated behaviours described in the above cluster of markers.

Based on the fourth cluster of markers, the new learning goals would be:

- recognises all letters and hears most sounds in words
- blends sounds when reading
- spells unknown words phonetically with letters correctly sequenced.

### Planning

Based on the learning goals, the explicit teaching would be focused on:

- consolidating how to listen to, count and identify individual sounds in words
- consolidating how to stretch and blend sounds to read words
- consolidating how to break up or segment words into individual sounds
- how to blend CCVC words (explicit teaching example provided on page 39)
- sounds (phonemes) that are represented by two or more letters.

Teaching points:

- continue to use the terms *letter* and *sound* explicitly
- continue to model oral blending first, encouraging students to listen for the sounds
- it is important to continue to stress blending sounds in a word from left to right
- encourage students to look at the word and count the number of letters, then listen to the sounds and count the number of sounds
- when modelling the writing of a word, verbalise the process of segmenting, i.e. listening to the sounds to see if the sequence is correct.

## Instruction

Following is an example of short, sharp, explicit phonics teaching focused on how to blend and segment CCVC words.

Link new learning to previous learning and tell students the focus of the explicit teaching episode.

*Say: Last week we were listening to the sounds in words and pushing them together to read words and we pulled them apart to write words. Today we are going to listen to some more sounds.*

**Model the required new learning.**

*Say: Listen to this word: 'spin'. How many sounds can you hear in this word? Yes, four. Watch while I write the word 'spin'. How many letters in the word 'spin'? Yes, four. Listen to this word: 'trip'. Listen as I stretch it out. How many sounds? How many letters?*

**Provide guided support for the new learning.**

Provide further examples of CCVC words. Support students to follow the sequence of looking at the word, counting the letters; saying the word and counting the sounds; blending the sounds together to form the word and writing the word by breaking it up into the sounds. *Say: Good listening, there are four letters and four sounds in 'trip'.*

**Review and provide more modelled teaching and guided teaching as required.**

**Provide independent teaching, including opportunities to practise and apply new phonics learning in *real* contexts. This will involve:**

- making explicit links for students between new phonics learning and other contexts or learning areas.
- ensuring students are provided with opportunities to practise new phonics learning as part of the processes of reading and writing within the literacy session.

Appendix 9, *Ideas for practising and applying phonics learning*, provides some independent teaching activities organised around each cluster of markers that could be used to support this part of the process. Decide whether students have achieved the learning goals using observation, interaction and students' work samples.



## The process in action: Phonics

### Fifth cluster of markers

- Attempts to read more complex words using letter/sound knowledge.
- Blends initial consonants with common vowel patterns or word families.
- Uses knowledge of letter clusters and vowel digraphs to spell unfamiliar words.

### Assessment for/of learning

Use classroom-based assessment to assess the above markers.

The fifth cluster of markers on the *Literacy Continuum* would be the starting point for explicit instruction for those students who have not yet demonstrated behaviours described in the above cluster of markers.

Based on the fifth cluster of markers, the new learning goals would be:

- reads more complex words using letter-sound knowledge
- blends initial consonants with common vowel patterns
- uses letter clusters and vowel digraphs to spell words.

### Planning

Based on the learning goals, the explicit teaching would be focused on:

- how to blend sounds in words
- how to use common vowel patterns to decode words (explicit teaching example provided on page 41)
- how to use letter clusters to spell words
- how to use vowel digraphs to spell unknown words.

Teaching points:

- letter clusters include consonant blends in which both sounds are heard, e.g. *sl, tr, bl, dr*, etc.
- letter clusters include consonant digraphs in which the two letters represent only one sound, e.g. */sh/, /ch/*
- common vowel digraphs include */ea/, /ay/, /er/, /or/, /ai/, /ee/, /oa/, /oo/, /ar/, /ir/, /oi/, /ou/*
- vowel digraphs representing the same sound can be taught together, e.g. */ee/* and */ea/, /ai/* and */ay/*.

## Instruction

Following is an example of short, sharp, explicit phonics teaching focused on how to use common vowel patterns to encode words.

Link new learning to previous learning and tell students the focus of the explicit teaching episode.

Say: *We have been learning about the vowels a, e, i, o and u. Today we are going to use some vowel patterns to spell words.*

**Model the required new learning.**

Say: *We are going to use the vowel pattern /ai/. The vowel a and the vowel i join together to make the sound /ai/. Watch as I write it on the board. Write it on the floor in front of you. This sound is in the middle of the word 'train'. Clap the number of sounds. The first sound is /t/. Help me write it. The next sound is /r/. Now I can hear the /ai/ sound. I now have 'trai-' written. The last sound is /n/. Help me say the word.*

**Provide guided support for the new learning.**

Students write their words on a sheet of paper. Say a series of /ai/ words such as *grain, paid, hail, trail* and support the students in spelling the words, using the process modelled. A list of these words is displayed. Say: *Well done, everyone. Excellent spelling of /ai/ words.*

**Review and provide more modelled teaching and guided teaching as required.**

**Provide independent teaching, including opportunities to practise and apply new phonics learning in *real* contexts.** This will involve:

- making explicit links for students between new phonics learning and other contexts or learning areas.
- ensuring students are provided with opportunities to practise new phonics learning as part of the processes of reading and writing within the literacy session.

Appendix 9, *Ideas for practising and applying phonics learning*, provides some independent teaching activities organised around each cluster of markers that could be used to support this part of the process. Decide whether students have achieved the learning goals using observation, interaction and students' work samples.

## The process in action: Phonics

### Sixth cluster of markers

- Segments sounds in consonant clusters to spell unfamiliar words.
- Uses familiar words and letter clusters to decode words when reading.

### Assessment for/of learning

Use classroom-based assessment to assess the above markers.

The sixth cluster of markers on the *Literacy Continuum* would be the starting point for explicit instruction for those students who have not yet demonstrated behaviours described in the above cluster of markers.

Based on the sixth cluster of markers, the new learning goals would be:

- segments sounds in consonant clusters to spell words
- uses known words and letter clusters to decode words when reading.

### Planning

Based on the learning goals, the explicit teaching would be focused on:

- consolidating and reviewing the concept of segmenting
- how to identify consonant clusters or chunks within words
- how to identify and use letter clusters to decode words (explicit teaching example provided on page 43)
- how to use analogy (familiar words) to decode words.

Teaching points:

- continue to emphasise how blending helps to read words and segmenting helps to spell words
- consonant clusters include consonant blends in which both sounds are heard, e.g. *sl*, *tr*, *bl*, *dr*
- consonant clusters include consonant digraphs in which the two letters represent only one sound, e.g. */sh/*, */ch/*, */ck/*, etc.
- letter clusters include rimes, e.g. *ash* (*cr-ash*), *ank* (*th-ank*), *ain* (*tr-ain*).

## Instruction

Following is an example of short, sharp, explicit phonics teaching focused on how to identify and use letter clusters to decode words when reading.

Link new learning to previous learning and tell students the focus of the explicit teaching episode.

Say: *We have been learning how to identify consonant clusters or chunks within words. Today we are going to use parts of words we know to read other words.*

**Model the required new learning.**

Say: *Let's read this sentence: So, the little fox went back to his home. Ask students to say the underlined word. Yes, 'b -ack'. Let's look at the last part of the word '-ack'. Watch as I write it on the chart. Say each letter as it is written, finally saying the -ack rime or chunk.*

**Provide guided support for the new learning.**

Hold up the word card *track*, telling students to look for the part of the word they know *ack* to solve the new word. Say: *What does the word say? Who can give me a sentence with the word 'track'?* This word card is then stuck on the chart. Repeat the process with a series of words, such as *black, shack, whack, packing*. Say: *Well done, you have used the part of words you already know to read other words.*

**Review and provide more modelled teaching and guided teaching as required.**

**Provide independent teaching, including opportunities to practise and apply new phonics learning in *real* contexts. This will involve:**

- making explicit links for students between new phonics learning and other contexts or learning areas.
- ensuring students are provided with opportunities to practise new phonics learning as part of the processes of reading and writing within the literacy session.

Appendix 9, *Ideas for practising and applying phonics learning*, provides some independent teaching activities organised around each cluster of markers that could be used to support this part of the process. Decide whether students have achieved the learning goals using observation, interaction and students' work samples.

## The process in action: Phonics

### Seventh cluster of markers

- Recognises that common suffixes in words can have different sounds, e.g. *wanted*, *talked*.
- Understands that sounds can be represented in various ways when spelling words, e.g. *meet*, *meat*.

### Assessment for/of learning

Use classroom-based assessment to assess the above markers.

The seventh cluster of markers on the *Literacy Continuum* would be the starting point for explicit instruction for those students who have not yet demonstrated behaviours described in the above cluster of markers.

Based on the seventh cluster of markers, the new learning goals would be:

- recognises that suffixes can have different sounds
- recognises that the same sound can often be spelt in different ways.

### Planning

Based on the learning goals, the explicit teaching would be focused on:

- how to identify the base word
- how to identify suffixes
- how to listen to and identify the different sounds of some suffixes
- sounds that are represented differently (explicit teaching example provided on page 45).

Teaching points:

- suffixes come at the end of words
- the -ed suffix is a common spelling error whereby students write it as /t/ sound, e.g. *talkt*
- some words sound the same and are spelt the same, but have different meanings, e.g. *wind/wind*
- some words sound the same but are spelt differently and have different meanings, e.g. *their/there*, *where/wear*
- charts displaying treated words are effective classroom resources.

## Instruction

Following is an example of short, sharp, explicit phonics teaching focused on sounds that are represented differently.

Link new learning to previous learning and tell students the focus of the explicit teaching episode.

Say: *We've been learning how to spell words by listening to the sounds in the words. Today we are going to look at some words which sound the same but are not spelt the same.*

**Model the required new learning.**

Write a sentence on the board, such as, *The girl came here to hear her brother play the piano.*

Read the sentence emphasising the underlined words. Say: *I know both words say 'hear' and I know the second 'hear' has the little word 'ear' in it, so it means to listen. The other word means a place.*

**Provide guided support for the new learning.**

Write the words *hear* and *here* on the board. Read a series of sentences which include the word *hear* or *here*. The students write the words on their paper. Support students to use mnemonics to spell *hear* correctly, that is, the smaller word *ear* is inside the word *hear*, which means to listen.

Say: *That's correct. I can hear bells, uses the 'hear' word, with the smaller word 'ear' inside it.*

**Review and provide more modelled teaching and guided teaching as required.**

**Provide independent teaching, including opportunities to practise and apply new phonics learning in *real* contexts. This will involve:**

- making explicit links for students between new phonics learning and other contexts or learning areas.
- ensuring students are provided with opportunities to practise new phonics learning as part of the processes of reading and writing within the literacy session.

Appendix 9, *Ideas for practising and applying phonics learning*, provides some independent teaching activities organised around each cluster of markers that could be used to support this part of the process. Decide whether students have achieved the learning goals using observation, interaction and students' work samples.

## The process in action: Phonics

### Eighth cluster of markers

- Knows common sounds for vowel digraphs and uses syllabification when reading/spelling.
- Uses knowledge of word identification strategies including blending, segmenting and letter patterns when reading/spelling.

### Assessment for/of learning

Use classroom-based assessment to assess the above markers.

The eighth cluster of markers on the *Literacy Continuum* would be the starting point for explicit instruction for those students who have not yet demonstrated behaviours described in the above cluster of markers.

Based on the eighth cluster of markers, the new learning goals would be:

- knows and uses vowel digraphs and syllabification when reading and writing
- uses blending, segmenting and letter patterns when reading and writing.

### Planning

Based on the learning goals, the explicit teaching would be focused on:

- reviewing how to use blending to decode unknown words
- reviewing how to use letter patterns to decode unknown words
- consolidating using syllabification to read and spell words
- other vowel digraphs, e.g. /ay/, /ea/, /ow/ (explicit teaching example provided on page 47).

Teaching point:

- breaking words into syllables is easier than blending and segmenting when reading and writing – other vowel digraphs include: /oe/, /ew/, /ue/, /aw/, /aul/, /ail/.

## Instruction

Following is an example of short, sharp, explicit phonics teaching focused on how to use vowel digraphs.

Link new learning to previous learning and tell students the focus of the explicit teaching episode.

*Say: We've been learning how to spell by using consonant clusters. Today we're going to learn about vowel digraphs. A vowel digraph is made up of two sounds that together represent a single sound like /ea/ in 'meat'.*

**Model the required new learning.**

*Say: Let's look at the word 'seat'. We can read this word by looking at the letters and saying the sounds for the letters. They are /s/ /ea/ /t/. The letters 'e' and 'a' go together to make the one sound (the vowel digraph) in this word.*

**Provide guided support for the new learning.**

Students have a sheet of paper/pencil or small board/chalk. Students copy the word *boat* from the board. Support the students to write other words that have the vowel digraph /oa/ in them. *Say: What words have you written? Well done, you were able to write some words with the vowel digraph /oa/ in them.*

**Review and provide more modelled teaching and guided teaching as required.**

**Provide independent teaching, including opportunities to practise and apply new phonics learning in *real* contexts. This will involve:**

- making explicit links for students between new phonics learning and other contexts or learning areas.
- ensuring students are provided with opportunities to practise new phonics learning as part of the processes of reading and writing within the literacy session.

Appendix 9, *Ideas for practising and applying phonics learning*, provides some independent teaching activities organised around each cluster of markers that could be used to support this part of the process. Decide whether students have achieved the learning goals using observation, interaction and students' work samples.



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# Appendix 1

## Glossary

### **alphabetic principle**

The alphabetic principle is the understanding that letters are used to represent speech sounds and that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds.

### **base word**

A base word is a word from which many other words are formed, e.g. many words can be formed from the base word *migrate*: *migration*, *migrant*, *immigration*, *immigrant*, *migrating*, *migratory*.

### **blend (noun)**

A blend is a combination of two or three consonant letters with separate sounds, e.g. *br*, *dr*, *str*; sometimes called a consonant cluster.

### **blend/blends/blending (verb)**

To blend is to merge sounds together to pronounce a word, e.g. /s/- /a/- /t/ blends together to pronounce the word *sat*.

### **consonant**

A consonant, e.g. *t*, *s*, *b*, *r*, *d*, *g*, is any letter other than a vowel (*a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*).

### **consonant digraphs**

A consonant digraph is two consonants that together represent a single sound, e.g. /ch/ in *chip* or the /sh/ in *ship*.

### **decode/decodes/decoding (verb)**

To decode is to apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships, including knowledge of letter patterns, to correctly pronounce or read written words. Understanding these relationships gives students the ability to recognise familiar words quickly and to identify words they haven't seen before.

### **digraph**

A digraph is two letters that together represent a single sound; there are consonant digraphs, e.g. /ch/ in *chip* or the /sh/ in *ship* and vowel digraphs, e.g. /oa/ in *boat* and the /ea/ in *seat*.

### **grapheme**

A grapheme is the smallest unit of writing, which could be either a letter or combination of letters that corresponds to or represents phonemes, e.g. *f* in *frog*, the *ph* in *phone*, the *gh* in *cough*.

### **graphological processing**

Graphological processing is the processing of visual information about words and texts in print, e.g. punctuation, letter sequences.

### **graphophonic information**

Graphophonic information is information related to letters and sounds. Students use graphophonic information to assist decoding at the word level.

### **mnemonic**

A mnemonic is a personalised memory cue, e.g. *The station-er sells station-ery*.

**multimodal text**

A multimodal text is a text that includes more than one 'mode'. It may incorporate combinations of spoken or written language, still or moving images, it may be produced on paper or electronic screen and may incorporate sound.

**multisyllabic word**

A multisyllabic word is a word that consists of more than one syllable, e.g. *banana* (/ba/na/na/) has three syllables.

**onset and rime**

Onset and rime are the separate sounds in a word, i.e. the beginning part of a word (onset) and the rest of the word (rime), e.g. *b-ark*

**phoneme**

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word, e.g. the word *if* has two phonemes /i/ and /f/.

**phonemic awareness**

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, say and manipulate sounds in words.

**phonetically**

To spell phonetically is to write words according to the way they sound rather than the standard dictionary spelling.

**phonological awareness**

Phonological awareness is a broad concept that includes phonemic awareness as well as an awareness of things like words, rhyme, syllables and onset and rime.

**phonological processing**

Phonological processing is the processing of information about the sounds of language and letter-sound relationships when comprehending text, e.g. single sounds, blends.

**scaffold/scaffolds/scaffolding (verb)**

To scaffold is to provide temporary 'point of need' support that enables students to acquire new learning. Support is progressively adjusted as students become increasingly able to independently demonstrate their learning.

**segment/segments/segmenting (verb)**

To segment is to break up a word into separate sounds, e.g. the word is *sat*, the separate sounds are /s/-/a/-/t/. It is the reverse of blending.

**segmentation (noun)**

Segmentation is the breaking down of a spoken word into word parts by inserting a pause between each part. Words can be segmented at the word level (in the case of compound words), at the syllable level, at the onset and rime level, and at the phoneme level.

**semantic information**

Semantic information is information related to meaning. Students use semantic information to assist decoding at the word, sentence and text level.

**syllable**

A syllable is a unit of sound within a word, e.g. the word *cat* has one syllable, the word *bobcat* has two syllables.

**syntactic information**

Syntactic information is information about the way in which sentences and clauses are structured. Students use syntactic information to assist decoding at the word, sentence and text level.

**vowel**

A vowel is any letter other than a consonant, i.e. *a, e, i, o, u*.

**vowel digraphs**

Vowel digraphs are two vowels that together represent a single sound, e.g. */oa/* in *boat* and the */ea/* in *seat*.

## Appendix 2

### Websites for additional information and support

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## Appendix 3

# Supporting students with significant difficulties in learning to read

'Certain teaching approaches for the teaching of reading have emerged in the empirical literature as effective for all students, whether or not they experience reading difficulties.' (National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2005) *Teaching Reading*, Report and Recommendations, p. 16)

Contemporary research demonstrates that reading difficulties can, in the main, be prevented when early explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics are part of the classroom reading program.

It is expected that all but a very small number of students will have mastered all but the most complex of the phonemic awareness and phonics skills necessary for proficient reading and spelling by the end of Stage 1. More complex letter/sound relationships will continue to be taught throughout Stage 2 (NSW *English K-6 Syllabus* p. 82).

For the 2-4% of students who have been identified with significant difficulties in learning to read, continued individualised systematic instruction in phonics beyond Stage 1 is required as part of their reading instruction.

Students with significant difficulties in learning to read invariably have difficulties understanding and applying letter-sound correspondence to decipher unfamiliar words they encounter in text.

Whilst there exists a reciprocal relationship between phonemic awareness and phonics, once letters are introduced the focus of decoding instruction should be on students using their knowledge of letter-sound correspondence (phonics) to blend and segment words as they read and spell.

Further information about planning and programming explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics can be found at:

**Disability Programs Directorate**

<<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentssupport/programs/disabilitypgrms/dpresources.php>>

## Appendix 4

# Supporting Aboriginal students

Aboriginal Education & Training Directorate encourages teachers to adopt the approach of teaching phonics and phonemic awareness to Aboriginal students from a bidialectal perspective.

It is important to develop and maintain ongoing partnerships with Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal communities and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc to provide culturally inclusive learning environments for Aboriginal students.

In planning to teach phonics and phonemic awareness for Aboriginal students it is important for teachers to be aware of Otitis media (OM) and the language and dialects used by Aboriginal students. This knowledge and understanding will assist teachers in how to best address these differences in their teaching and learning plans as they guide Aboriginal students towards meeting age appropriate outcomes.

Teachers need to be aware that many Aboriginal students suffer hearing loss from OM and that these students experience great difficulty in learning in busy and noisy classrooms. One of the many specific problems for children suffering OM is poor phoneme discrimination with an inability to hear low intensity sounds, such as *ed, s, v, th*.

Strategies to support children with OM include:

- revising the correct production of sounds
  - practising hearing and saying the correct sounds in words, learning and practising segmenting words into syllables, segmenting beginning sounds from the rest of words and segmenting individual sounds
  - learning, practising and applying the correct alphabetic code to the sounds in a word.
- (Intervention Strategies for Aboriginal Children with Conductive Hearing Loss, Department of Education, Western Australia)

Teachers need to also be aware of the differences in language and dialect between Standard Australian English, Aboriginal English and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander creole. The diversity of a child's language is heavily influenced by geographical location and family interactions.

It is common for Aboriginal students to *code-switch* between the different dialects. Code-switching is a term used to describe a speaker's movement from one language or dialect to another. This movement can occur at various levels of language use (sound, grammar and meaning) and for various reasons. Change from one language or dialect to another is often governed by social rules and expectations.

Although Standard Australian English is similar to Aboriginal English, it has specific differences in structure (grammar), semantics (meaning) and phonology (sounds). The difference in phonology makes it difficult for students to sound out words. For this reason there is a need to make sure students develop strengths across all code breaking and meaning making skills.

The different linguistic features of Standard Australian English need to be systematically taught and scaffolded for Aboriginal students through a variety of modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies. Such supportive teaching strategies will facilitate students' success in the use of a variety of written and spoken genres, whereas negative strategies, such as correction after the task, may lead to students feeling devalued and unwilling to participate in lessons.

**Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate**

<<https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/lists/directoratesaz/aet/index.htm>>



## Appendix 5

# Supporting students who are learning English as a second language (ESL)

In relation to students who are learning English as a second language (ESL), there are a number of issues that need to be considered in developing literacy in English, including the teaching of phonics and phonemic awareness.

When teaching phonics to students whose language background is not Standard Australian English teachers need to consider the letter-sound relationships in Standard Australian English that may cause confusion for these students. For example:

- choice of symbols
- number of symbols
- sequence of symbols
- directionality of symbols (scanned left-right, right-left, top-bottom)
- the relationships between written symbols and spoken language e.g. letters may correspond to different sounds
- the pronunciation of words
- intonation patterns including stressed and unstressed sounds
- grammatical usage
- morphemes (the smallest meaning units within words) may be different or used to serve a different function.

ESL students are very diverse in terms of their language background, prior educational experiences, knowledge of English and literacy experience in either English or their first language. These diverse experiences may impact on ESL students' development of literacy in English in the following ways:

### *Age at enrolment:*

ESL students may enrol with little or no English at any age or stage of schooling. As a result, students in the upper primary or high school years may have no understanding of letter-sound relationships in English and may require specific teaching of phonics and phonemic awareness.

### *Student's first language:*

The similarity or difference between the student's first language and English in the area of sound-symbol relationships may impact on the student's development of that understanding in English. For example, students who have experienced a language with a different script such as Greek or Arabic or a language such as Chinese which uses characters may experience some difficulties.

### *Previous education and development of literacy skills:*

Some ESL students are literate in their first language and have had school experiences comparable to those of their English-speaking peers, while others, in particular refugee students, may have had very little or severely disrupted previous education. As a result, some have well-developed literacy skills in their first language while others have no literacy skills in any language.

### *Previous learning of and exposure to English:*

Some students with some previous learning of, or exposure to, English will come to school with knowledge of the letter-sound relationships, while others with no or very limited opportunity to hear English or interact with English speakers will require ongoing opportunities to practise and refine their English language skills.

ESL students who are at the beginning stage of learning English may not be able to distinguish individual sounds or phonemes as they are focusing on gaining meaning from the whole text.

In developing a teaching program for ESL students, it is essential to provide a balanced and integrated approach to the teaching of phonics, giving students opportunities to practise and repeat sounds to develop their listening and speaking skills as a foundation for the development of literacy skills. For some ESL students who only use English and hear English sounds at school, learning accurate letter-sound relationships within a meaningful context is integral to developing an understanding of how language works.

### **Multicultural Programs Unit**

<https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/lists/directorate/az/equity/multicultural/index.htm>

## Appendix 6

# Supporting students from low socio-economic backgrounds

Educational research confirms the profound and growing effects of social and economic inequality on the educational outcomes of students. Currently, there is a significant and unacceptable gap between the average achievement of students from low socio-economic status (SES) families as a group and all students.

The reasons for the links between educational outcomes and socio-economic status are complex. Students from low SES backgrounds are a diverse group encompassing the full range of learning abilities. Generalisations about the nature, background and experience of these students cannot do justice to the diversity of students or their communities.

Support for students from low SES backgrounds must focus on improving literacy outcomes. English language literacy is the tool which learners need to participate fully in education and training. Since the late 1990s, literacy teaching in NSW public schools has been underpinned by a social or functional view of language that acknowledges that literacy is learnt in social contexts and children's views about the nature and purpose of literacy are shaped by the cultural and social practices they engage in at home, at school and in the broader community.

While it is imperative that aspects of literacy critical to early literacy success, such as phonics and phonemic awareness, are taught explicitly and systematically, it is important that they are taught in a balanced and integrated way. This means to acknowledge that students learn to read by integrating the four sources of information (semantic, grammatical, graphological, phonological) and by acquiring strategies to apply the four literacy resources (Freebody & Luke 1990) to interacting with a text.

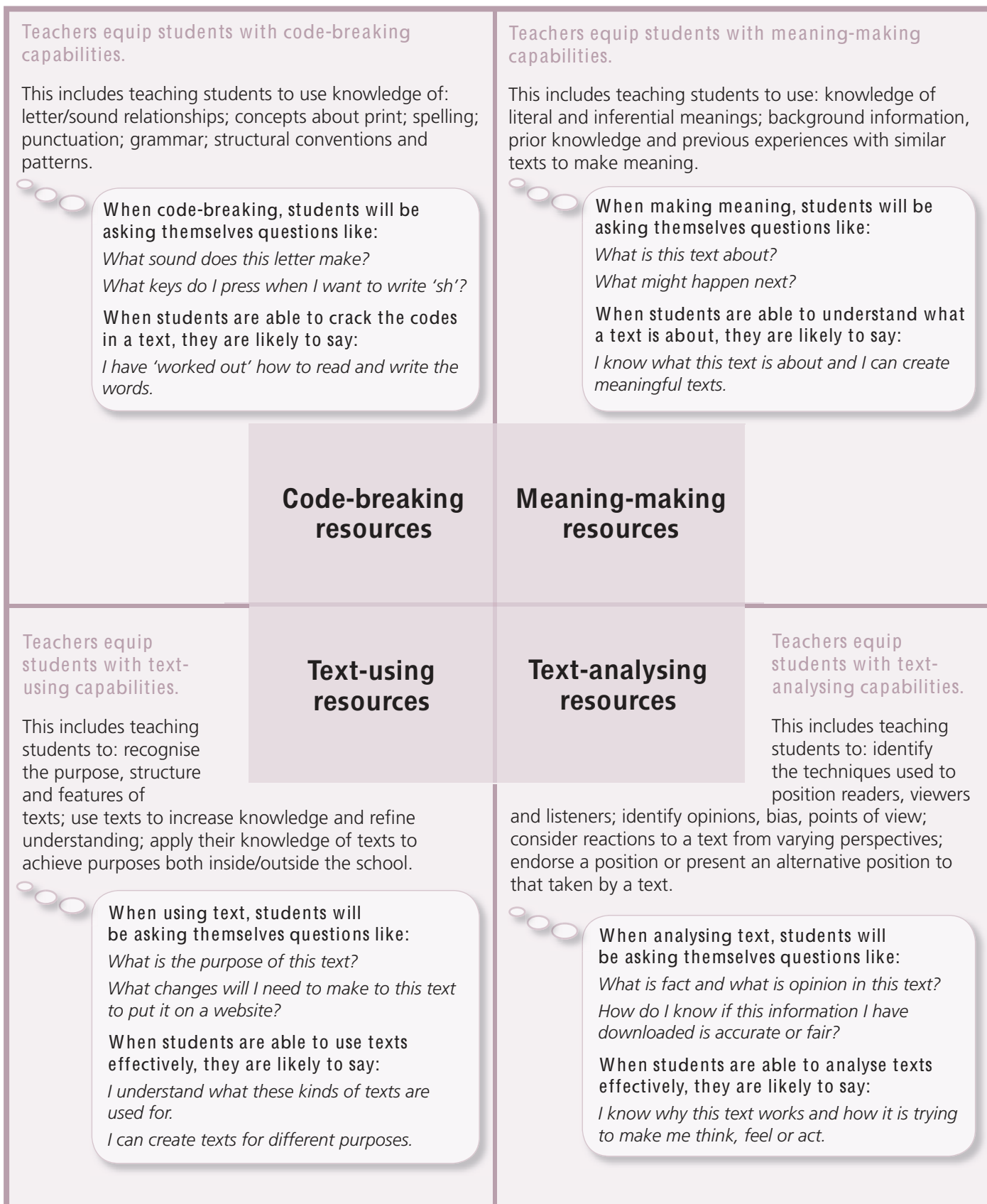
Explicit, systematic, balanced and integrated teaching of the four literacy resources (code-breaker, text participant, text user, text analyst) is essential for all students regardless of their stage. It is particularly important for students from low SES backgrounds as these students often have a greater dependence on school to provide the knowledge of language required to access the school curriculum. They may arrive at school with orientations to language and meaning-making that are different from the orientations required and valued by the school. When the meanings for which the student typically uses language when engaging in home interactions are very different from the meanings that are required at school, the student will need ongoing assistance to respond effectively to what the school is offering and demanding.

**Priority Schools and Equity Coordination Unit**

<<https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/lists/directoratesaz/equity/psec/index.htm>>

# Appendix 7

## The *Four Literacy Resources* model



NB: Whenever the word 'text' is used it includes written, visual, oral/aural, digital and multimodal texts.

## Appendix 8

### Linking the NSW *English K–6 syllabus* and the *Literacy Continuum*

#### First cluster of markers:

- ▶ Identifies one letter that is the same in words.
- ▶ Unable to name letters in a given word.
- ▶ Unable to say the sounds for letters in a given word.

#### Outcomes and Indicators

RES1.6 Demonstrates developing reading skills and strategies for reading books, dealing with print and comprehending texts

- *visually discriminates same/different letters*

#### Scope and Sequence of Phonological and Graphological Processing ES1

- *discriminates between letters through matching exercises*

#### English K–6 Modules

##### Teaching English: beginning reading

- *recognises that words are made up of letters that have distinct shapes*

#### Second cluster of markers:

- ▶ Identifies two or more letters that are the same in words.
- ▶ Identifies some letters that are the same in more than one context.
- ▶ Names some letters in a given word.
- ▶ Says one of the sounds for letters in a given word.
- Writes approximate letters for some sounds.

#### Outcomes and Indicators

RES1.6 Demonstrates developing reading skills and strategies for reading books, dealing with print and comprehending texts

- *visually discriminates same/different letters*
- *identifies by naming some letters of the alphabet*

RES1.8 Identifies some basic language structures and features of texts

- *recognises letters of the alphabet*

WES1.9 Engages in writing texts with the intention of conveying an idea or message

- *writes some letters of the alphabet*

WES1.11 Begins to use letters to represent known words when spelling

- *says the sound of letters within a word*

#### Content Overview Talking & Listening

- *recognises, matches and says individual sounds*

#### Scope and Sequence of Phonological and Graphological Processing ES1

- *discriminates between letters through matching exercises*
- *writes and says letters for some sounds in a word beyond the initial sound*

#### English K–6 Modules

##### Teaching English: Beginning reading

- *recognises that words are made up of letters that have distinct shapes*

##### Teaching English: Sound-letter relationships

- *recognises the links between sounds and letters in a word*

**Third cluster of markers:**

- ▶ Identifies all letters that are the same in more than one context.
- ▶ Names most letters in a given word.
- ▶ Says some of the sounds for letters in a given word.
- Blends up to three sounds in words when reading.
- Writes letters to correspond with single letter sounds.

**Outcomes and Indicators**

RES1.6 Demonstrates developing reading skills and strategies for reading books, dealing with print and comprehending texts

- *recognises most sounds of the alphabet*
- *identifies new words using initial letter to guess the word*

RES1.8 Identifies some basic language structures and features of texts

- *recognises letters of the alphabet*

WES1.11 Begins to use letters to represent known words when spelling

- *says and writes sounds of letters*

**Scope and Sequence of Phonological and Graphological Processing ES1**

- *writes and says letters for some sounds in a word beyond the initial sound*
- *identifies new words using known letter-sound relationships*

**Content Overview ES1 Reading**

- *uses phonological and graphological cues to decode written text, such as the knowledge of the letters and their sounds*
- *recognises, matches and says individual sounds*

**English K–6 Modules**

**Teaching English: Sound-letter relationships**

- *recognises the links between sounds and letters in words*

**Teaching English: Spelling**

- *uses letters to represent first and final sounds in words*

**Fourth cluster of markers:**

- ▶ Names all letters in a given word.
- ▶ Says most of the sounds for letters in a given word.
- Spells unknown words phonetically with most letters in the correct sequence.

**Outcomes and Indicators**

RES1.6 Demonstrates developing reading skills and strategies for reading books, dealing with print and comprehending texts

- *blends sounds to form words*

WES1.11 Begins to use letters to represent known words when spelling

- *writes words that contain known letter-sound relationships*

**Scope and Sequence of Phonological and Graphological Processing ES1**

- *blends known letter-sound relationships to form spoken and written words*
- *spells unknown words phonetically with most of the letters in the correct sequence*

**English K–6 Modules**

**Teaching English: Spelling**

- *uses letters to represent first and final sounds*

**Fifth cluster of markers:**

- Attempts to read more complex words using letter/sound knowledge.
- Blends initial consonants with common vowel patterns or word families.
- Uses knowledge of letter clusters and vowel digraphs to spell unfamiliar words.

**Outcomes and Indicators**

RS1.6 Draws on an increasing range of skills and strategies when reading and comprehending texts

- *draws on knowledge of letter-sound relationships when trying to read unknown words*
- *blends sounds to work out unknown words*

WS1.11 Uses knowledge of sight words and letter-sound correspondences and a variety of strategies to spell familiar words

- *writes words using blends, letter combinations and vowel digraphs*

**Scope and Sequence of Phonological and Graphological Processing S1**

- *recognises consonant digraphs, vowel digraphs and long vowel sounds*
- *identifies the sounds of known letter clusters*
- *blends sounds in written words to work out unknown words*
- *spells words using consonant blends, digraphs and long vowel sounds*

**Content Overview S1 Reading**

- *practises using phonological and graphological cues to decode written texts, including letter-sound knowledge and sound blending*
- *uses knowledge of letter combinations and blends when writing words*

**English K–6 Modules****Teaching English: Reading**

- *identifies blends, syllables, onsets in reading words*
- *uses knowledge of familiar letter patterns*

**Sixth cluster of markers:**

- Segments sounds in consonant clusters to spell unfamiliar words.
- Uses familiar words and letter clusters to decode words when reading.

**Outcomes and Indicators**

RS1.6 Demonstrates developing reading skills and strategies for reading books, dealing with print and comprehending texts

- *visually discriminates same/different letters*
- *identifies by naming some letters of the alphabet*

RS1.8 Identifies some basic language structures and features of texts

- *recognises letters of the alphabet*

WS1.11 Begins to use letters to represent known words when spelling

- *says the sound of letters within a word*

**Scope and Sequence of Phonological and Graphological Processing S1**

- *spells words using consonant blends, digraphs and long vowel sounds*
- *identifies the sound of known letter clusters, syllables or unknown words*

**Content Overview S1 Writing**

- *uses knowledge of letter combinations and blends when writing words*
- *practises using phonological and graphological cues to decode written words including letter-sound knowledge and sound segmenting*

**English K–6 Modules****Teaching English: Spelling**

- *uses knowledge of familiar letter patterns*
- *uses phonological awareness and knowledge of letter sound correspondences*

**Seventh cluster of markers:**

- Recognises that common suffixes in words can have different sounds, e.g. *wanted*, *talked*.
- Understands that sounds can be represented in various ways when spelling words, e.g. *meet*, *meat*.

**Outcomes and Indicators**

WS1.11 Uses knowledge of sight words and letter-sound correspondences and a variety of strategies to spell familiar words

- *draws on knowledge of common letter patterns and letter-sound correspondences to spell words*

**Scope and Sequence of Phonological and Graphological Processing S1**

- *recognises that common suffixes in words can have different sounds*
- *understands that letter names remain constant but the sounds they represent may vary*

**English K–6 Modules**

**Teaching English: Reading**

- *uses phonological awareness and knowledge of letter-sound correspondences*
- *understands that letter names remain constant but the sounds they represent may vary*

**Eighth cluster of markers:**

- Knows common sounds for vowel digraphs and uses syllabification when reading/spelling.
- Uses knowledge of word identification strategies including blending, segmenting and letter patterns when reading/spelling.

**Outcomes and Indicators**

RS1.6 Draws on an increasing range of skills and strategies when reading and comprehending texts

- *blends words with vowel digraphs*
- *breaks words into syllables when trying to read unknown words*
- *builds word families with known rimes*
- *draws on knowledge of letter-sound relationships when trying to read unknown words*
- *blends sounds to work out unknown words*
- *uses known letter clusters when trying to read unknown words*

WS1.11 Uses knowledge of sight words and letter-sound correspondences and a variety of strategies to spell familiar words

- *draws on a knowledge of common letter patterns and letter-sound correspondences when spelling words*

**Scope and Sequence of Phonological and Graphological Processing S1**

- *identifies the sounds of known letter clusters or syllables in unknown words*

**Content Overview S1 Reading**

- *practises using phonological and graphological cues to decode written words including letter-sound knowledge, sound blending and segmenting words into syllables*

**English K–6 Modules**

**Teaching English: Reading**

- *identifies blends and syllables in reading words*
- *manipulates letter sequences of a word to make another word*

**Teaching English: Spelling**

- *uses a letter or letter combination to represent most syllables in words*

## Appendix 9

### Ideas for practising and applying phonics learning

First cluster of markers:

- ▶ Identifies one letter that is the same in words.
- ▶ Unable to name letters in a given word.
- ▶ Unable to say the sounds for letters in a given word.

Write an identified letter, e.g. *a*, on an Interactive Whiteboard, overhead transparency or chart paper. Students copy the letter on a sheet of paper and locate and cut out the same letter from magazines, advertising brochures, cereal boxes, etc. and paste them onto the sheet of paper. Repeat this activity over a few days for other letters, e.g. *m, t, s, i, f, d*.

Use an enlarged text including shared reading texts to focus on finding letters in initial, medial and final positions in words.

Ask students to match the printed form of letters, e.g. sorting all the examples of the letter *t* from a pile of other letters; circling all the examples of the letter *s* in a magazine.

Assist students to find words in texts that begin with the same sound as their name. Paste onto a sheet to form a collage.

Second cluster of markers:

- ▶ Identifies two or more letters that are the same in words.
- ▶ Identifies some letters that are the same in more than one context.
- ▶ Names some letters in a given word.
- ▶ Says one of the sounds for letters in a given word.
- Writes approximate letters for some sounds.

As students engage with a range of everyday texts, ask them to see how many known letters or sounds they can find in initial, medial and final positions in words, e.g. for the letter *m* students may find *mouse, am, Amy*.

Have students use magnetic letters and plastic letter shapes to make and read VC and CVC words such as *dog, dig, log, hid, fig*.

Build up and display word banks using words with introduced letters and sounds. Have students read these words.

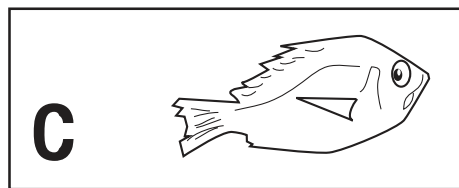
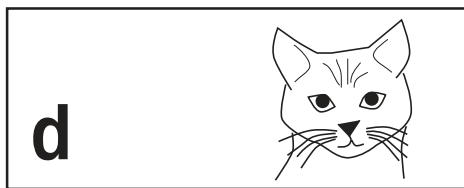
Provide a variety of opportunities to practise writing letters and words with known sounds, such as: sand tracing, finger painting, writing in the air, rainbow writing, using a number of different colours to form a rainbow effect.

Encourage students to segment the sounds in words when writing. Use the *think-aloud* strategy to demonstrate how to segment words.



### Dominoes

Make or purchase a set of *Dominoes* cards such as:



Share dominoes between players. Ask players take turns to match a letter with a picture beginning with the same sound or vice versa. The first player to put all their dominoes down or whoever has the least number left, is the winner. Some suggestions for letters and pictures include: *apple, bed, cat, dog, elephant, fish, gate, hat, ice-cream, jam, kite, leaf, man, needle, orange, pig, queen, rabbit, sun, toe, umbrella, violin, window, xylophone, yacht, zebra.*

### Concentration

Play *Concentration* with two sets of alphabet cards. Place both sets face down on the floor. Students take turns in turning over two cards. If the cards match, then the student keeps the cards. If the cards are different, the cards are turned back over again in their original places. The student with the most pairs at the end of the game is the winner.

### Word Bingo

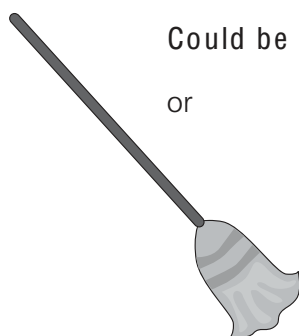
Make some sets of *Bingo* word grids using words with different combinations of the known sounds.

Each student has a card. The caller (initially the teacher) calls out words with different combinations of the known sounds. Students listen to teacher's call and put a counter on the word if it is on their card. The first student to cover all words on their card is the winner. The winner becomes the caller. Students can select a new word grid for a new game.

### Guess the missing letters

Write the initial letter for a word then dashes for other letters in the word on an Interactive Whiteboard, overhead transparency or chart paper, e.g. b \_ \_ \_ \_ .

Students guess the missing letter or sounds in the word. As students guess, write the letters that could be correct on the left and the guesses that could not be correct on the right. Discuss whether student guesses are possible or impossible. When students guess a letter that is possible, a part of the drawing (e.g. broom) is completed.



Could be  
or

Could not be  
bt

**Third cluster of markers:**

- ▶ Identifies all letters that are the same in more than one context.
- ▶ Names most letters in a given word.
- ▶ Says some of the sounds for letters in a given word.
  - Blends up to three sounds in words when reading.
  - Writes letters to correspond with single letter sounds.

Ask students to use individual whiteboards and markers or magnetic letters to make VC and CVC words e.g. *at*, *sat*, making known sounds. Ask students to blend the sounds to read the words aloud.

Play a variety of games to practise making words using known letters and sounds, e.g. *Bingo*, *Lotto*, *Dominoes*, *Snap*, *Fish*.

Provide opportunities for students to practise segmenting known letters and sounds during guided teaching of writing and in shared writing.

**Have-a-go sheets**

Introduce *Have-a-go sheets* for students to attempt spelling words. Provide the letters along the top and bottom for students to refer to when attempting to write sounds in words.

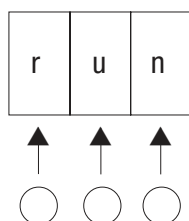
Provide support by modelling segmenting of words if necessary, discussing and ticking correct letters or reinforcing useful strategies noted in early attempts.

For example:

A a B b C c D d E e F f G g H h I i J j K k L l M m														
My first attempt					My second attempt					Spelling checked				
N n O o P p Q q R r S s T t U u V v W w X x Y y Z z														

**Word frames**

Provide students with a word frame card, divided into the correct number of sounds/letters, e.g. *run*.



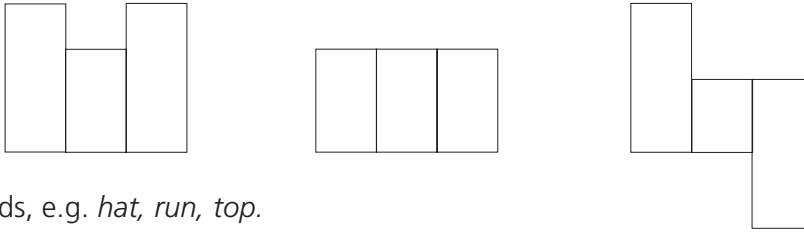
In pairs or small groups, students take it in turns to:

- select a card from prepared VC and CVC word frame cards
- say the word, breaking it into individual sounds, e.g. /r/ /u/ /n/
- push a counter onto each letter, saying the sound for each letter
- blend the sounds together and repeat the word, e.g. *run*.

### Word shapes

Construct a set of word shapes. Students sort word cards with the matching word shape.

For example:



Word cards, e.g. *hat*, *run*, *top*.

### Flip books

Make flip books. Write the base letter combination on cardboard, e.g.



Letters are attached to the front on smaller pieces of cardboard, e.g. *c*, *b*, *m*, *r*, *h*, *p*.

As pages are turned students read the words that are made, e.g. *cat*, *bat*, *mat* and so on.



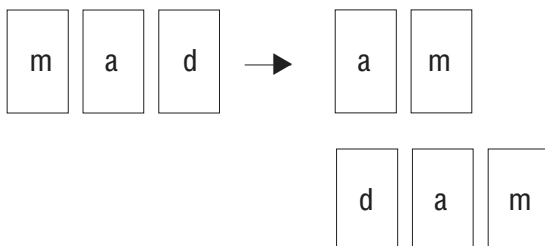
### Cut and make

Select some words that contain known sounds. Photocopy a set of words for students onto coloured cardboard. Students cut up the words and rearrange the letters, making as many different words as possible and then reading the words by blending the sounds.

These letters can then be stored in envelopes or small plastic bags for students to use at a later time.

For example, if the student cuts the word card for *mad* into individual letters showing *m*, *a*, *d* and then makes *am* and *dam*.

mad	ran	sit
bed	fun	pot



**Fourth cluster of markers:**

- ▶ Names all letters in a given word.
- ▶ Says most of the sounds for letters in a given word.
- Spells unknown words phonetically with most letters in the correct sequence.

During modelled teaching of reading, stop at words to reinforce new phonics skills and knowledge, e.g. *How do I say this word? The first two letters go together: 'st'; and we say the last two letters like this lol, lpl. So the word is 'st-o-p', 'stop'. That makes sense. She saw a stop sign on the road.*

Use teacher or student made flip or slide books which focus on known letter or sound combinations.

Build data banks of words belonging to word families, e.g. ee data bank. Have students practise reading these regularly and use these as a basis for sound games and activities.

**Celebrity heads**

Select three volunteers to sit out the front on chairs. A word is written on the Interactive Whiteboard, overhead transparency or chart paper behind each student's head. The chosen words contain known letter-sound combinations. Each student takes it in turn to ask a question about their words which can only be answered with a *yes* or *no* answer.

For example: *Does my word have three sounds?*  
*Does my word begin with /s/?*  
*Does my word have more than three letters?*

Once a *no* response is received, the next student asks a question/s. The game continues until each of the volunteer students correctly name all the letters or sounds in their particular word.

Fifth cluster of markers:

- Attempts to read more complex words using letter/sound knowledge.
- Blends initial consonants with common vowel patterns or word families.
- Uses knowledge of letter clusters and vowel digraphs to spell unfamiliar words.

Use sound cards or sound grids to demonstrate the regularities and irregularities of familiar words. Regular words are spelt the way they sound and irregular words are not spelt the way they sound. Regular word, e.g. frog.

f	r	o	g
---	---	---	---

Irregular word, e.g. little.

l	i	tt	le
---	---	----	----

Play word games which focus on words such as CVCC and CCVC words e.g. *desk, from*. These include games such as *Concentration, computer games, Battleships, Word Dominoes*.

Provide magnetic letters or letter tiles so that students can make new words from words they know, e.g. if students are familiar with *boat*, they may exchange the initial letter to make *goat, coat*.

Provide a long word, e.g. *hippopotamus*, and ask students to find little words in it, e.g. *hip, pot, am, us, pop, mop*.

**Word sorts**

Provide students with a list of words and ask them to sort according to things the students notice, e.g. all the words that end in *ed*, have a silent e or have *ai* in them.

**Which word am I?**

Display a list of words on an Interactive Whiteboard, overhead transparency or chart paper that focus on letter combinations or are a word family.

Students ask questions to guess the mystery word. These questions can only have a *yes* or *no* answer.

Examples of questions could include:

- *Do I start with 'st'?*
- *Do I have the /ee/ vowel digraph?*
- *Do I end in 'ck'?*

Delete words by crossing them out according to the answers given. Students continue to ask questions until the correct word is identified.

For example:

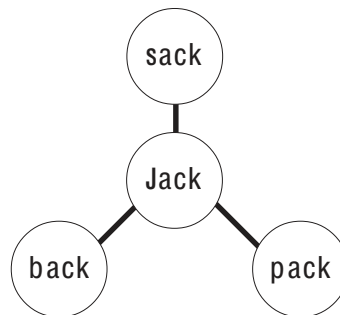
- *Do I start with st?*

<del>sheep</del>	<del>smog</del>	<del>tack</del>	stop	<del>from</del>
<del>clean</del>	<del>shop</del>	steep	<del>team</del>	<del>clap</del>
<del>rack</del>	stack	<del>read</del>	<del>frog</del>	<del>keep</del>

## Word webs

Write the focus word in the centre circle. Students fill in as many circles as possible. The word web helps students make different kinds of associations, such as words that:

- sound the same
- have a similar letter combination.



## Guess the word

Write a word on an Interactive Whiteboard, overhead transparency or chart paper (e.g. *meat*) and using the vowel digraph *ea* ask the students to make new words using this vowel digraph, e.g. *mean, lean, leaf, meal*.

This process is then repeated with other words. Students follow using individual whiteboards.

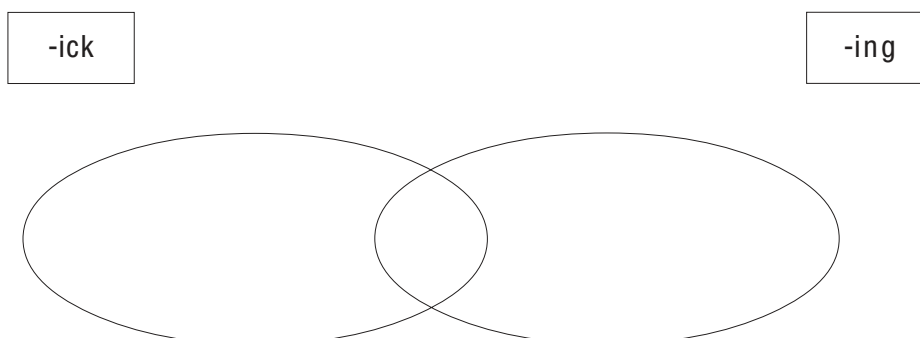
## Identifying common patterns

Explain to students that they are going to sort the words on cards into groups, e.g. *-ick* words, *-ing* words.

Place two hoops on the floor. Students read and spell each word, explain what the spelling pattern is and place the card in the appropriate hoop.

If the word doesn't follow either spelling pattern, students place the card outside the hoop.

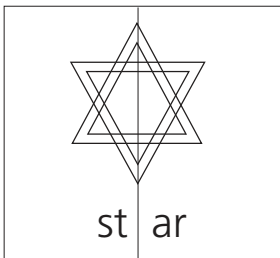
Increase the level of challenge for students by including words such as *licking* which go into the intersected section.



**Sixth cluster of markers:**

- Segments sounds in consonant clusters to spell unfamiliar words.
- Uses familiar words and letter clusters to decode words when reading.

Use picture cards to assist students to segment words, e.g.



Use this strategy to consolidate learning about the differences between words and letters by:

- cutting a sentence into single words. Separate the words so that there is a small space between them. Ask individual students to read the sentence, pointing to the words as they read, using blending where possible
- cutting up selected words, e.g. words containing consonant clusters (segmenting) and putting them back together (blending).

**Computer games**

Interactive computer games are an effective way of consolidating previously taught skills of decoding using letter clusters. They allow for students to progress through a variety of skill levels at an individual pace.

**Seventh cluster of markers:**

- Recognises that common suffixes in words can have different sounds, e.g. *wanted*, *talked*.
- Understands that sounds can be represented in various ways when spelling words, e.g. *meet*, *meat*.

Develop data banks of sounds and letter combinations and display.

**Word web**

Construct a word web around suffixes such as *ed*.

Highlight the ones that sound the same using the same colour, e.g.

**Proofreading**

Write a proofreading passage on an Interactive Whiteboard, overhead transparency or chart paper with a focus on homonyms.

Students take it in turns to underline the mistakes and write the correct spelling above the word, e.g.

Kale ran two meat his friend, Jace. They were going four a swim in the see.

Commonly confused homonyms include:

here/hear	new/knew	see/sea	meat/meet
their/there/they're	wood/would	where/wear	which/witch
to/two/too	threw/through	no/know	passed/past

Note: Students can be individually challenged to do their own proofreading with a given text and then provided with the opportunity to discuss the choices made with, for example, a partner or small group.

**Word sorts**

Provide students with a list of words and ask them to sort the words according to the different ways the phoneme can be represented, e.g. /or/ as in *torn*, *door*, *worn*, *haul*, *law*, *call* and /ee/ as in *sweet*, *heat*, *thief*, *these*.

Give students sets of word cards with words that have a range of letter combinations. Ask them to find words that have the same phoneme represented by different letter or letter combinations. For example, words starting with c that have the /s/ phoneme such as *city*, *cycle*, *centipede* or, words that have different letter combinations (*ship*, *mission*, *chef*) that have the /sh/ phoneme.



### Eighth cluster of markers:

- Knows common sounds for vowel digraphs and uses syllabification when reading/spelling.
- Uses knowledge of word identification strategies including blending, segmenting and letter patterns when reading/spelling.

Play word games which focus on word recognition. These include games such as *Concentration*, matching words to pictures, computer games, *Snap*, *Fish*, *Battleships*, *Word Dominoes*.

Use cloze activities where students fill in appropriate missing letters and letter combinations.

### Phonics word walls

Construct phonics word walls where about 10–15 new words a week are selected and added. A phonics word wall can be used to assist students in their reading and writing. It should be an ongoing construction. The words chosen for a phonics word wall will depend on the teaching focus, e.g. vowel digraphs, words with same phoneme that have different letter combinations.

### Computer games

Interactive computer games are an effective way of consolidating previously taught word identification strategies. They allow for students to progress through a variety of skill levels at an individual pace.

### Word sort concentration

Make a series of cards with words that have been discussed previously when focusing on, for example, blending, segmenting letter patterns.

Place sixteen cards face down. (The number can vary according to student needs.)

Students take it in turn to turn over two cards and attempt to link the words in some way, e.g. letter pattern, consonant blends.

If the student can justify the link and the rest of the class/group accepts it, the student can pick up the two cards, then turn two more over.

If on the next try a link cannot be made, the student replaces the pair face down and another student goes through the procedure.