

Florida Center for Reading Research

What is Phonics for Reading?

Phonics for Reading is a supplementary phonics program designed to teach phonemic decoding to students who have not yet mastered those skills. The program was originally conceived for students in grades 3-6 but may also be used for students in grades 1 and 2, for lower performing students in upper grades, and for adults learning to read English. *Phonics for Reading* may be taught in small groups or one-on-one by a classroom teacher; or following training, by an aide, tutor, or volunteer. Daily lessons require 40-50 minutes to complete, or the teacher may choose to complete a lesson in two sessions. The program is appropriate for flexible use in general and special education classrooms, for tutoring, and for summer-school sessions.

Phonics for Reading includes a clear scope and sequence that enables teachers to see the development of each lesson's objective. The program consists of 3 sequential levels. Within each level students are taught to access pronunciation of phonetically regular, one-syllable and multisyllable words by careful examination of a word's internal structure using letter-sound correspondences, word endings, and units such as prefixes and suffixes. The First Level introduces students to the short vowels, double consonants, digraphs, and consonant blends. The focus of the Second Level is on long vowels, vowel combinations, CVCe words, common endings, and r-controlled vowels. The Third Level continues to develop and expand the previous level with letter and vowel combinations, prefixes and suffixes, and the variant pronunciations of vowel combinations and of c and g.

The first part of a *Phonics for Reading* lesson involves instruction in word recognition. To begin a lesson, a word is introduced initially and either a single letter or letter combination is highlighted. Students practice the sound in isolation and then participate in a discrimination activity with the target sound and other previously learned sounds. This is followed by oral blending or segmenting of words which contain the target sound and the previously learned sounds. Next, students practice reading 15 new words that contain the target sound and finish this activity by matching some of the new words to an illustration. At this point, students are taught 10-18 high frequency words which are defined as irregular words and words that contain phonic elements that have not yet been introduced. After that, students learn a specific strategy to read two syllable or multisyllable words that contain the lesson's target sound. The next three parts of the lesson involve passage reading, spelling, and independent activities. All of these activities are directly related to the lesson's objective and include the target sound or sounds. These activities may vary slightly depending upon whether the focus of the lesson is on letter introduction or practice.

Each level of *Phonics for Reading* includes one Teacher's Guide and one Student Book. The Teacher's Guide is clear and succinct with helpful tips on decoding strategies, sound pronunciation and three procedures for offering corrective feedback. The lesson formats are highly detailed and consistent throughout the program.

Student materials are directly aligned with each lesson's objective. *Phonics for Reading* placement tests are found in the back of the Teacher's Guide to assist in determining student placement in the appropriate level. The various placement tests consist of subtests which may also be used to monitor progress during teaching and as a posttest at the end of a level.

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FCRR Phonics for Reading Report

How is Phonics for Reading aligned with Reading First?

Phonics for Reading addresses phonics, one of the important components of reading instruction cited by the Report of the National Reading Panel (2000). The program's systematic and explicit focus on phonics attempts to help students master the print-to-speech mapping system of our alphabetic language by developing automaticity with letter-sound correspondences and with word reading. Consistent teaching routines featured throughout the program may be beneficial from two standpoints: students are able to focus uniquely on the lesson's content and the teacher has more freedom to concentrate on student responses.

Lessons develop progressively from simpler skills to more complex skills along a continuum of word types. Once a letter has been introduced within a word, the words are first practiced in isolation, then in lists, sentences, and in a story. Students are taught a specific strategy for segmenting and blending single and multisyllable words. Word analysis activities that focus on letter-sounds and letter combinations, prefixes, suffixes and common endings are constructed in such a manner that students' attention is drawn to the word's internal structure in order to assist their ability to read all parts of the word. Spelling is directly linked with each lesson's objective in order to solidly develop the sound to print connection. Activities from *Phonics for Reading* attempt to develop fluency with prereading skills through the program's systematic and cumulative review of previously taught skills and repeated practice opportunities.

The emphasis in *Phonics for Reading* is on phonics instruction, but the program has woven aspects of the other components of reading in daily lesson throughout all levels. Phonemic awareness activities in oral blending and segmenting are found in Levels 1 and 2. In Levels 2 and 3, students practice repeated reading of decodable passages and conclude with a one minute timed reading. All words taught are placed within a meaningful context of sentences and brief passages. After passage reading, students answer literal questions about the passage and match illustrations to parts of the story to ensure understanding.

Before beginning instruction in Level 1 with *Phonics for Reading*, it would be important to note the program's assumption that students must already be able to say the sounds of consonants. Although the program was conceived for the older struggling reader, the program states that it would be also appropriate for 1st and 2nd grade students who experience difficulty with phonics knowledge. In view of this consideration, the program may not provide the level of instruction needed for students in 1st and 2nd grade who have not yet developed automaticity with consonant sounds.

Professional development for *Phonics for Reading* is available through a free, web-based training program. Customers have the possibility to log on as frequently as they wish for this training of approximately 25 minutes. It guides the user through a lesson and offers helpful information about the program's materials. Onsite training is also available for a fee, or, in the case of a large district implementation of the program, the training is free.

Research Support for Phonics for Reading

Phonics for Reading, developed in 1989 and revised in 2002, consists of strategies in phonics instruction consistent with findings from the Report of the National Reading Panel (2000). At the present time, no research studies have been conducted that examine the effectiveness of *Phonics for Reading*.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Phonics for Reading*:

- Instruction is explicit and systematic, and the materials include a detailed scope and sequence and clear objectives.
- Materials are teacher friendly and easy to navigate.
- The program consists of features that may be helpful for struggling readers such as consistent teaching routines, repeated practice, and cumulative review.
- The decoding strategies are taught to automaticity.
- Students learn to pronounce the individual sounds in a blend.
- Students are given immediate corrective feedback.

Weaknesses of *Phonics for Reading*:

- None were noted.

Which Florida districts have schools that implement Phonics for Reading?

Broward	754-321-2600	Leon	850-487-7147
Dade	305-995-1430	St. Johns	904-819-7502
Flagler	386-437-7526	Volusia	386-734-7190

For More Information

www.curriculumassociates.com

References

National Reading Panel (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Washington, D.C.

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Date Posted: September, 2006

Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR. The programs for which reports are available do not constitute an “approved” or “required” list, since many potentially useful programs have not yet been reviewed. For more information about FCRR go to: www.fcrr.org

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