

The teacher begins the lesson by dividing a chart into four columns and heading each column with *bike*, *car*, *van*, and *train*. The students set up the same columns on a piece of paper and write these four words.

The teacher reminds the students that words that rhyme often have the same spelling pattern and that the spelling pattern in a short word begins with the vowel and goes to the end of the word. The teacher and the children underline the spelling patterns *i-k-e*, *a-r*, *a-n*, and *a-i-n*.

The teacher tells the students that they will be shown some words and that they should write them under the word with the same spelling pattern. The teacher then shows them words written on index cards that have one of these patterns. Students write these words on their papers in the correct columns and the teacher chooses a student to write each word on the chart. After each word is written on the chart, students pronounce the word that heads the column and then the new word, making them rhyme.

Next, the teacher explains that thinking of rhyming words also can help you spell. Now, rather than showing the students words, the teacher says words and the students decide which word they rhyme with and use the spelling patterns to spell them. Just as in the first step, one child writes each word on the chart in the correct column. Here is the chart with the 20 words students have decoded and spelled:

bike	car	van	train
hike	jar	pan	Spain
spike	star	Fran	sprain
Mike	far	than	stain
strike	scar	clan	strain
pike	tar	bran	brain

To make the lesson more multilevel and to show all students that thinking of rhyming patterns can help them read and spell longer words, too, we end the lesson by showing them some longer words and having them use the known words to read them, and by saying some longer words and having them use the rhyming words to spell them. Here is what the chart might look like with these longer words added:

bike	car	van	train
hike	jar	pan	Spain
spike	star	Fran	sprain

Mike	far	than	stain
strike	scar	clan	strain
pike	tar	bran	brain
hitchhike	guitar	trashcan	maintain
motorbike	boxcar		complain
			entertain

When doing Using Words You Know lessons, we always choose the words students will read and spell. We do not ask students for rhyming words, because, especially for the long vowels, there is often another pattern. *Jane* and *rein* also rhyme with *train*, but we only use words that both rhyme and have the same pattern. Later, when students are accustomed to reading and spelling by pattern, we do lessons that help them determine which of two or more patterns to use.

Using Words You Know develops cognitive clarity as students see how paying attention to the patterns in words helps you decode and spell many words. Students become more successful in choosing the right word and that success, plus the completed chart with lots of words, develops their confidence that the words they already know can help them learn to read and spell many other words—including longer words.

There are several things students can learn about words in a Using Words You Know lesson. All the initial letter patterns get reviewed as students blend them with patterns in rhyming words to read and spell new words. Blending the beginning letters with the pattern and determining rhyming words are important phonemic awareness components. Common rhyming patterns are learned and students practice the analogy decoding strategy by deciding which words they know will help them read and spell other words. Including some multisyllabic words makes the activity more multilevel for children who already know many words and patterns.

Reading/Writing Rhymes. Reading/Writing Rhymes (Cunningham, 2000) is an activity that gives students practice using patterns to decode and spell hundreds of words. Once all the rhyming words are generated on a chart, students write rhymes using these words and then read one another's rhymes. Because writing and reading are connected to every lesson, students learn how you use these patterns as you actually read

and write. Here is an example of how one Reading/Writing Rhymes lesson might be carried out.

The teacher distributes an entire set of beginning letter cards to the children. The beginning letter deck contains 50 index letter cards, including

- single consonants: *b c d f g h j k l m n p r s t v w y z*
- digraphs (two letters, one sound): *sh ch wh th*
- other two-letter, one-sound combinations: *ph wr kn qu*
- blends (beginning letters blended together, sometimes called clusters): *bl br cl cr dr fl fr gl gr pl pr sc scr sk sl sm sn sp spr st str sw tr*

Once all the cards are distributed, the teacher writes a spelling pattern eight times on a piece of chart paper. Next, the teacher invites children who have cards that they think make a word to come up and place their card next to one of the written spelling patterns and pronounce the resulting word. If the word is indeed a real word, we use the word in a sentence and write that word on the chart. If the word is not a real word, we explain why we cannot write it on the chart. (If a word is a real word and does rhyme but has a different spelling pattern, such as *planned* to rhyme with *and*, we explain that it rhymes but has a different pattern and include the correct spelling on the bottom of the chart with an asterisk next to it.) We write names with capital letters and if a word can be a name and not a name, such as *Jack* and *jack*, we write it both ways. When all the children who think they can spell words with their beginning letters and the spelling pattern have come up, we call up children to make the words not yet there by saying something like, “I think the person with the *wh* card could come up here and add *wh* to *ack* to make a word we know.”

We try to include all the words that any of the children would have in his or her listening vocabulary, but we avoid obscure words. If the eight patterns we wrote to begin our chart get made into complete words, we add as many more as needed. Finally, if we can think of some good longer words that rhyme and have that spelling pattern, we add them. Of course, because the children do not have all the letters to spell these longer words, the teacher just writes these on the list. Here is what the *ack* chart might look like:

<i>ack</i>			
back	Mack	snack	backpack
jack	pack	shack	fullback

Jack	black	tack	attack
quack	crack	rack	hijack
track	knack	Zack	racetrack
sack	stack	whack	

Once the chart of rhyming words is written, we work together in a shared writing format to write a silly sentence using lots of the rhyming words. Then, the children write a rhyme of their own. Many teachers put the children in small groups or have them work with partners to write these rhymes and then let different children read their rhymes to the class.

To make Reading/Writing Rhymes charts for the patterns with two common spellings, we write both patterns on the same chart. Students come up and tell us the word their beginning letters will make and we write it with the correct pattern. In many cases, there are two homophones, words that are spelled differently and have different meanings but the same pronunciation. We write both of these and talk about what each one means. Here is the chart for the *ail/ale* long vowel spelling pattern:

<i>ail</i>			<i>ale</i>	
bail	nail	trail	Dale	stale
fail	pail	wail	gale	tale
frail	quail	detail	male	whale
Gail	rail	monorail	pale	Yale
hail	sail	toenail	sale	female
jail	snail	cottontail	scale	tattletale
mail	tail			

Cognitive clarity is developed as children combine patterns to create words and see how phonics helps them read and spell words. Using these words to write and read silly sentences is a direct application of phonics knowledge. Because the children are actively engaged in combining their beginning letters to create words and figuring out which beginning letters will make words, children find the activity pleasurable. They also enjoy writing and reading the silly sentences that result from trying to use as many rhyming words as possible.

Reading/Writing Rhymes is a multilevel activity. All beginning letters, including the common single consonants and the less common, more complex digraphs and blends, are reviewed each time the teacher

distributes the beginning letter cards. Phonemic awareness is developed as children say all the rhyming words and blend the vowel pattern with the beginning letters. Children whose word awareness is more sophisticated learn that there are often two spellings for the long vowel patterns and develop their visual checking sense as they see the rhyming words with the different patterns written on the same chart. The addition of some longer rhyming words helps them learn how to decode and spell longer words and allows them to write more interesting rhymes.

Conclusion

How we should teach phonics is not a simple question. The most effective phonics instruction must reflect what we know about teaching and learning as well as what we know about how children decode and spell words. Debate about how to teach phonics can help us provide better instruction for all children, but only if the debaters consider all that is known and avoid simplistic solutions.

There are general instructional principles that apply to everything we teach. All instruction, including phonics instruction, must help learners develop cognitive clarity and become engaged with what they are learning. All instruction, including phonics instruction, must also be as multifaceted and multilevel as possible. Guided reading, self-selected reading, and writing instruction are the methods and components of a complete reading program that best follow these general principles of teaching. Furthermore, we believe that phonics instruction must not take more than one fourth of reading/language arts time or many children's literacy learning ultimately will suffer.

There have been few instructional studies comparing different types of phonics instruction, and those that have been done have usually compared one kind of systematic phonics instruction with hit-or-miss phonics instruction. In trying to determine what type of phonics instruction is most effective, we must look at research findings about how children learn phonics.

Research indicates that children need to develop phonemic awareness and sequential decoding and have regular opportunities to apply their phonics skills. The research, however, does not support a narrow reliance on isolated phonemic awareness and synthetic phonics instruction with highly decodable text as the only or even the best way to teach phonics, let alone reading.

Research also supports teaching children orthographic patterns and analogy decoding, as well as morpheme patterns common in multisyllabic words. Children also learn phonics better when a variety of activities that emphasize transfer are used.

In this chapter, we have presented three such activities—Making Words, Using Words You Know, and Reading/Writing Rhymes—that we have found to be successful in teaching phonics during the one fourth of reading/language arts time we devote to such activities.

Questions for Discussion

1. Examine the National Reading Panel report (2000a, 2000b) or a summary of its findings relative to teaching phonemic awareness and phonics. How did the Panel deal with issues of how children learn in general, or did it? How did it deal with issues of learning to decode by patterns and analogy? What do you think of the Panel's approach to determining what the research base is for decoding instruction versus the approach we took in this chapter?
2. Examine the National Research Council report titled *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) or a summary of its findings relative to teaching phonemic awareness and phonics. How did the authors deal with issues of how children learn in general, or did they? How did they deal with issues of learning to decode by patterns and analogy? What do you think of their approach to determining what the research base is for decoding instruction versus the approach we took in this chapter?
3. A number of commercial phonics instructional programs are available. Considering the ones you know or can access, determine what research base(s) they seem to have. Do they consider research on both learning phonics and how children learn in general? If you have access to such programs from 25 or more years ago, compare the newer with the older programs to determine the impact, if any, of the research on learning and phonics published in the last two decades or so.
4. Consider how reading is usually assessed in the schools in your area. Because assessment always plays a major role in how we teach, consider to what extent there is a match among the reading assessments used, the phonics instruction provided, and how children learn.

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