



From phonological awareness to fluency in each lesson

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Many beginning readers struggle with decoding a text. Lack of appropriate instruction; reading text at the frustration level; difficulty with phonological awareness, including the inability to segment phonemes (i.e., unable to divide a word into its individual sounds); and ineffective phonemic synthesis (i.e., unable to connect the sounds to form words) are a few ways that some readers get off to a rough start. Whatever the reason, many of these readers struggle to learn to read in first grade, and they arrive in second grade able to identify only a few sight words and initial sounds. The current trend is to directly teach them decoding skills in repeated but isolated lessons; however, we would like to propose an alternative.

Second-grade struggling readers need more than a specific program designed to directly teach phonics. They need instruction that focuses on their constructing meaning while learning word-identification strategies (Allington, 2001; Knapp, 1995). In addition, it has been suggested that reading instruction move from the meaningful whole to the parts and back to the whole (Mazzoni & Gambrell, 2003). This means that phonic instruction should start with a whole story then move to individual words and the sounds and patterns found within those words, all the while continuing to focus on context and meaning of the whole. Therefore, we propose that struggling second graders would benefit from instruction that both moves them through the development of phonic knowledge and focuses on meaning.

The following procedure was designed to do just that. It begins with a meaningful whole, proceeds to the phonetic elements, and ends with a

new, student-written story. The phonetic elements we focused on were onsets and rimes. Onset-rime theory (Walton & Walton, 2001) states that the units of the English syllable are the onset (any consonant that may come before the vowel) and the rime (the vowel and any consonants that may come after it). For example, the onset and rime for the word *test* would be *t-est*, the *t* being the onset and *est* being the rime. Words with a common rime (e.g., *-est*) will typically rhyme (e.g., *rest, best*). Using onset and rime knowledge, readers can create an analogy between the shared rime spellings of words. Several researchers have found that children with reading difficulty profit from instruction in rime analogy, which directs attention to onsets and rimes in words (Greaney, Tunmer, & Chapman, 1997; Qi & O'Connor, 2000).

Further review of how phonic knowledge develops suggested that children analyze spoken words into onsets and rimes naturally, before they learn to read (Goswami, 2000; Moustafa, 1995). Walton and Walton (2001) demonstrated that young readers can be assisted in using their knowledge of onsets and rimes to figure out unfamiliar words. He found that teaching rime analogies increased use of letters to sound out words and use of rime analogies. Other studies have demonstrated that children can use rime analogies more frequently if taught the strategy (I.W. Gaskins, Ehri, Cress, O'Hara, & Donnelly, 1996/1997; Hiebert, 1994). On the basis of this information, we developed an instructional procedure to provide phonics instruction that starts with the whole processes of reading and then focuses on onsets and rimes in words. This knowledge is used to write rimes and

rhymes in personal stories, and finally the new story is read several times (Smith & Walker, 2004). We chose books with patterned language and predictable rhyming phrases because they contain rhyming patterns with repeated refrains or events. These rhyming texts (see Sidebar) contain target words as well as other words using the targeted rime patterns to provide practice with the strategy. The first author planned a three-day instructional sequence of 45 minutes per day (Smith, 2002).

1. Hold a shared reading

The teacher selects a rhyming and predictable book, like *Sheep in a Jeep* (Shaw, 1986), that the students would enjoy and that contains the intended rimes for word study like *-eep* for *sheep, jeep*, and *steep*. The first reading of the selected text focuses on constructing meaning and provides a vehicle for learning word-identification strategies in context. Following discussion of the story, the teacher reads the book a second and third time, asking children to chime in when they can. Shared reading, in which teacher and children read in unison, offers an opportunity for children to participate in the reading experience in a highly supportive way. Through shared reading, they read and understand a complete story while learning the words in context.

2. Highlight rhyming words

Following the shared reading of the selected book, the teacher goes back through the story and has the students help to identify the rhyming words. These words are placed on a chart. Attention is drawn to the common spelling patterns in these rhyming words and to the sound similarities. In *Sheep in a Jeep*, the rime patterns identified include *-eep* (*jeep, steep*), *-ud* (*thud, mud*), *-ug* (*tug, shrug*), *-elp* (*help, yelp*), *-out* (*out, shout*), and *-eer* (*cheer, steer*). This stage increases phonological awareness by focusing on the sounds in words. Phonological awareness has been shown to be an important aspect of beginning reading (Goswami, 2000; Metsala & Ehri, 1998).

3. List rime words

Research suggests that successful use of the analogy strategy depends on knowledge of key or target words with high-frequency spelling patterns (R. Gaskins, Gaskins, Cunningham, Anderson, & Schommer, 1995). There are 37 rimes that account for nearly 500 primary-grade words (Stahl, 1998). Goswami (2000) demonstrated that beginning readers use their knowledge of onsets, rimes, and rhymes to figure out how to say other print words. The following task was developed using this research. For each predictable rhyming book, target rime patterns or word families (i.e., a group of words that end in the same rime and rhyme) are identified. The target words are taught using a whole-word approach. Once a target word is introduced, it is written by students on individual intro cards, organized by vowel sounds and rime patterns (with the rime pattern underlined in red), and placed into individual flip card word banks (attached by one or two loose-leaf rings). The students are taught to compare a new word to an already known word that shares the same rime pattern in order to help them decode the new word. Knowledge of the target words represents a basic knowledge of frequent spelling-sound patterns, and it is the basis for successful application of the analogy strategy. This task focuses student attention on the strategy of decoding by analogy.

4. Read the predictable book

After the students add the target rime patterns to their rime flip card word bank, another shared reading of the story is conducted. The students are directed to identify the specific rhyme pattern in their word banks and hold flip cards up when the words are read in the story. This activity provides practice and reinforcement with the rhyme- and rime-pattern recognition strategies in the context of authentic rhyming stories.

5. Write rhyme and rime innovations

Using the rhyming-book pattern to focus on sentence meaning, the students create new rhymes and rimes to fit the repeated predictable patterns. This rhyming innovations approach involves the rewriting of a predictable rhyming book using a structured frame (Walker, 2004), and it provides a “scaffolded” writing experience for beginning

RHYMING TRADE BOOKS

- Alda, A. (1992). *Sheep, sheep, sheep, help me fall asleep*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell.
- Cameron, P. (1961). *I can't said the ant*. New York: Coward-McCann.
- Carle, E. (1974). *All about Arthur*. New York: Franklin-Watts.
- Cole, J. (1989). *Anna Banana: 101 jump rope rhymes*. New York: Morrow.
- de Regniers, B., Moore, E., White, M., & Carr, J. (1988). *Sing a song of popcorn*. New York: Scholastic.
- Degen, B. (1983). *Jamberry*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Fleming, D. (1994). *Barnyard banter*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Florian, D. (1994). *The beast feast*. New York: Scholastic.
- Fox, M. (1993). *Time for bed*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Guarino, D. (1989). *Is your mamma a llama?* New York: Scholastic.
- Hague, K. (1984). *Alphabears*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Hague, M. (1993). *Teddy bear, teddy bear: A classic action rhyme*. New York: Morrow.
- Hawkins, C., & Hawkins, J. (1983). *Pat the cat*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Hawkins, C., & Hawkins, J. (1984). *Mig the pig*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Hawkins, C., & Hawkins, J. (1985). *Jen the hen*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Hawkins, C., & Hawkins, J. (1986). *Tog the dog*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Hoberman, M. (2001). *Seven silly eaters*. New York: Scholastic.
- Hutchins, P. (1976). *Don't forget the bacon*. New York: Mulberry.
- Hymes, L., & Hymes, J. (1964). *Oodles of noodles*. New York: Young Scott.
- Komaiko, L. (1987). *Annie Bananie*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Krauss, R. (1985). *I can fly*. New York: Golden Press.
- Lewison, W. (1992). *Buzz said the bee*. New York: Scholastic.
- Martin, B. (1970). *The happy hippopotami*. San Diego: Harcourt.
- Martin, B., & Archambault, J. (1986). *Barn dance!* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Martin, B., & Archambault, J. (1988). *Up and down the merry-go-round*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Martin, B., & Archambault, J. (1989). *Chicka chicka boom boom*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Martin, B., & Carle E. (1991). *Polar bear, polar bear, what do you hear?* New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Martin, L. (1993). *When dinosaurs go visiting*. New York: Scholastic.
- Ochs, C.P. (1991). *Moose on the loose*. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda.
- Oppenheimer, J. (1989). *Not now! said the cow*. New York: Bantam.

(continued)

readers and writers. The first innovation for each story is conducted as a whole-group activity. The teacher models rewriting the predictable frame by changing key words; the students provide the key rhyming words. The second innovation is done in student pairs assigned by the teacher. Following this step, students compose individual innovations, which are illustrated and placed into a book.

For example, the teacher selects a familiar and predictable book that can be easily rewritten and that has rhyme. *Here Are My Hands* by Bill Martin Jr and John Archambault (1998, Henry Holt) is one such book. First the teacher prepares a frame for rewriting the predictable book. The following is an example for *Here Are My Hands*:

Frame from the book

Here are my eyes
For seeing and crying.
Here are my ears
For washing and drying.

Frame for innovation

Here are my _____
For _____ and _____.
Here are my _____
For _____ and _____.

Then the teacher prompts the students for each blank in the innovation frame saying something like, "Let's brainstorm ideas of things that you have." The students suggest *feet*, and the teacher writes that word in the blank. The students then generate a list of action words describing what feet do. They must select two words to go in the provided blanks. After doing that, students brainstorm and decide on another body part (or like object) to write on the third line. They must then think of two more action words describing that item. The second action word in the last sentence must rhyme with the second action word in the first sentence. For instance, one student wrote,

Here are my feet
for jumping and walking.
Here is my mouth
For snoring and talking.

6. Reread the newly generated book in small groups

Following the completion of each rewritten book, it is shared with the group in an author's chair format. The teacher reads the generated page, and then each pair and individual reads their own pages. Afterward, the teacher rereads the entire book with the group in a shared-reading format while the students read along. Once the book is placed in the classroom library, students are encouraged to read it individually or with partners during free reading opportunities.

We used this procedure with second-grade classrooms in low socioeconomic schools in the United States where small groups of children were taught to use rime analogies in the context of predictable stories. Using this method, 72 students enrolled in four second-grade classrooms in two urban elementary schools were randomly assigned to this rime analogy procedure or regular classroom reading instruction (Smith, 2002). The major findings of the study confirm that this rime analogy procedure resulted in significant improvement ($p < .01$) on standardized reading performance measures (2000, The Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation). The Combined School analysis determined that there was clearly significant improvement for the rime analogy group in Word Reading ($p < .001$). Potential effects were noted for Sentence Comprehension ($p = .027$). The Low Socioeconomic Status School analysis showed potentially significant improvement for the rime analogy group on Rhyme Recognition ($p = .014$), Word Reading ($p = .016$), and Word Meaning ($p = .027$). The Middle-Income School analysis revealed clearly significant improvement for Sentence Comprehension ($p < .009$), and potential effects were noted for Passage Comprehension ($p = .05$). These results support the importance of providing students with specific word-recognition strategies in the context of authentic reading and writing experiences.

RHYMING TRADE BOOKS (CONTINUED)

- Patz, N. (1983). *Moses supposes his toeses are roses*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Pilkey, D. (1990). *'Twas the night before Thanksgiving*. New York: Orchard.
- Raffi. (1987). *Down by the bay*. New York: Crown.
- Seuss, Dr. (1960). *One fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish*. New York: Beginner Books.
- Seuss, Dr. (1965). *Fox in socks*. New York: Random House.
- Seuss, Dr. (1972). *In a people house*. New York: Random House.
- Seuss, Dr. (1974). *There's a wocket in my pocket*. New York: Random House.
- Shaw, N. (1986). *Sheep in a jeep*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Shaw, N. (1989). *Sheep on a ship*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Shumaker, W. (1996). *Dance*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace.
- Silverstein, S. (1964). *A giraffe and a half*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Van Rynbach, I. (1995). *Five little pumpkins*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mill Press.
- Walton, R. (2002). *Bunny days*. New York: Scholastic.
- Wells, R. (1973). *Noisy Nora*. New York: The Dial Press.
- Westcott, N.B. (1988). *The lady with the alligator purse*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Wood, A. (1992). *Silly Sally*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Yolen, J. (1987). *The three bears rhyme book*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Yolen, J., & Teague, M. (2000). *How do dinosaurs say good night?* New York: Scholastic.

As we analyzed the tasks, we realized that the steps of the rime analogy procedure matched the development of phonic knowledge. In the first step, we focused on understanding the meaningful whole and learning words in the context of a whole story. This focused the children's attention on constructing meaning with text while learning words. Because many of these second graders had not developed an understanding of phonological awareness, they needed to see and hear words in the context of a story. Researchers suggest that young children should "learn to think of words as having both meaning and sound" (Stahl, Hester, & Stahl, 1998, p. 340). Therefore, we started with understanding the whole story, and then in the second step we focused on developing phonological awareness by discussing the rhyming words and pointing out the onset and the rime within the context of the predictable story.

In the third step, we developed knowledge of onset and rime by writing word families and discussing how word parts work. In other words, during this step we focused on phonemic segmentation and phonemic synthesis, which are sophisticated aspects of phonological awareness (Stahl et al., 1988). As children wrote and discussed the word patterns, they slowly said the words and emphasized the sounds that matched the patterns.

In the fourth step, the children wrote rime innovations using the trade book pattern, focusing on how the words made sense in the sentence. The new words had to rhyme and make sense, with the children using the patterned language of the rhyming predictable book. Because student pairs (and then individual students) wrote a new page of the group book, they had a purpose for using rime analogies. It also gave them practice in using their emerging knowledge of phonemic segmentation and phonemic synthesis with word patterns and individual letter sounds.

For the final step, when each student had finished writing his or her page, the entire book was assembled and read. Just as they had at the beginning, the children reread this book again to develop fluency. Using these procedures, we took the children from phonological awareness to fluent reading (the stages of word reading) in only three days. This worked on multiple levels of phonics development in the second-grade classrooms. Students all advanced during the lesson from whatever point they were before. Even students who were more advanced in phonic knowledge profited from writing words and sentences in the context of a whole story so that it would make sense.

As Knapp (1995) and Allington (2001) suggested, the second graders focused on constructing meaning while learning the process of decoding. Their literacy process was led from thinking about the whole-passage meaning to the process of decoding by analogy and then back to a new whole story that was read fluently. In each new lesson, the children were taken through this procedure step by step, developing phonics knowledge, comprehension, and fluency in a logical flow.

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