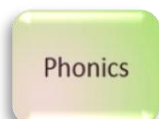


Making choices about interventions: Embedded Phonics

Achievement Coaches, School Champions and Year 6 staff can use the information on this page to help them decide whether this intervention can be used to meet the needs of their target pupils. It highlights key information from a study which aimed to help pupils improve their word reading skills through reading and writing meaningful texts. The [Using the intervention](#) resource provides more detailed information if you decide to use the intervention with your pupils.

What is the focus of this intervention?



In this intervention, pupils are taught methods and strategies to help improve their use of phonics to read words whilst being provided with extensive opportunities to read and write meaningful text.

What was the age of the pupils involved?

The pupils involved are aged 8-10 years (Year 3-5)

Which tiers could this intervention be applied to?



This was designed as one-on-one (tier 3 intervention), but could be adapted for a small group (tier 2) situation.

What is the likely impact?

The study found that pupils made progress in:

- word attack skills;
- word identification;
- word decoding;
- accuracy of phonemic decoding (sounding out words); and
- spelling.

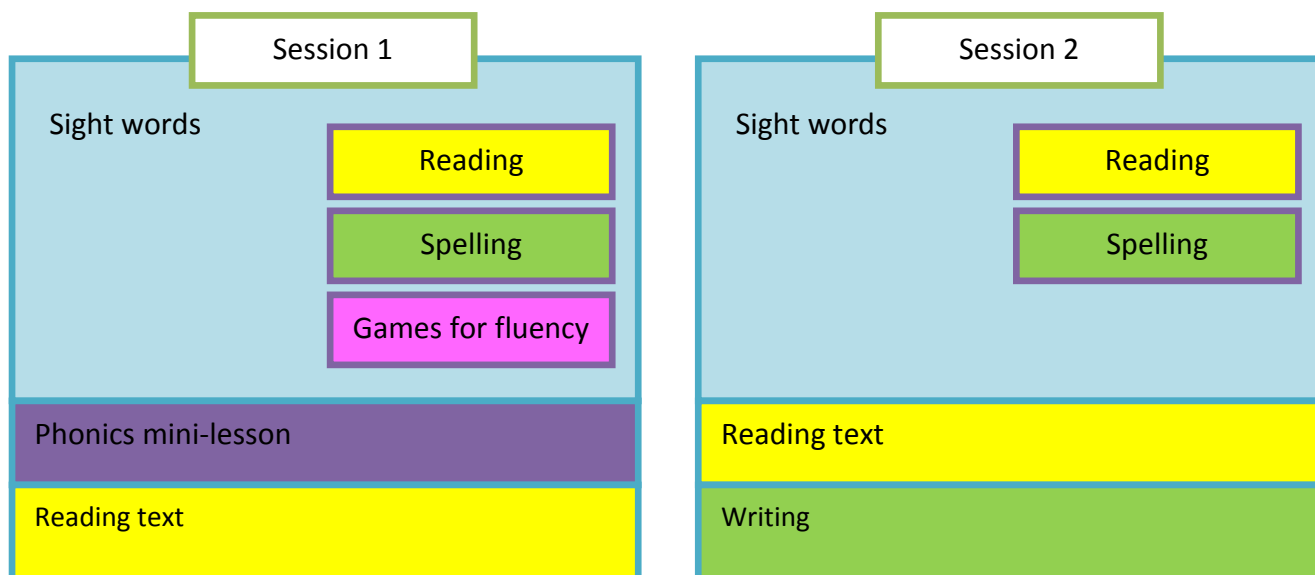
Those with particularly weak reading skills are likely to make the most progress. The study found that the pupils showed large improvements in their generalised reading skills, with an effect size of 3.9 on average. Effect size refers to how much pupils have improved from pre-intervention testing.

Using the intervention: Embedded Phonics

What do teachers and learners do?

Overview of the intervention

The intervention involves structured sessions to use phonic strategies in reading and writing activities. Two sessions are held during the day.



First Session

- **Introduction and practice in reading high-frequency sight words (10 minutes).** The pupils are given a short list of words (e.g. him, with, that, don't, into...) to decode and are encouraged to identify the parts that 'play fair' (follow phonemic rules) and those that don't. To begin with, the children are provided with a phonemic guide underneath each word (splitting the word into phonemes) which is removed as the pupil learns to identify each word. The words are practised repeatedly over three consecutive days until the pupil can pronounce each word correctly within one second.
- **Spelling newly introduced sight words (5 minutes).** Pupils are encouraged to stretch words out when speaking in order to hear all their constituent sounds when spelling them. Any words that contain irregularities in sound-symbol correspondence are identified as parts of the word that just need to be memorised.
- **Word games for fluency in sight words (10 minutes).** Teachers use a variety of games in order to provide pupils with repeated practice in correctly identifying words from the sight list.
- **Phonics mini lesson (10 minutes).** The teacher directly provides information on phonemic decoding and spelling, teaching the most common spelling variations of all consonant phonemes and vowel phonemes. If necessary, teachers can provide direct assistance in helping pupils develop their skills of blending sounds together to form words. Pupils practise basic phonemic decoding skills through word chains e.g. through the teacher asking the pupil what needs to change to make 'pot' into 'pop' and 'pop' into 'top' etc.

- **Oral reading of a passage or short story (15 minutes).** Pupils are given a text and encouraged to read words accurately while focusing on their meaning. Any errors are corrected in one of two ways:
 1. If the error involves a phonemic decoding principle, pupils are helped to correct their error through the teacher questioning them about their choices, e.g. asking them to identify the phonemes in the word they said and how they differed from the word on the page.
 2. If the error involves an incorrect interpretation of the passage's context, the teacher will ask the pupil to think about whether the word they used made sense within the sentence. The teacher then encourages the pupil to sound out as much of the word as they can and find another word that sounds similar and would make sense within the sentence.

As pupils read from passages and stories, the teacher uses questions in order to emphasise meaning. This includes asking them to summarise what was read into a single sentence or paragraph and asking them to predict what might happen next.

Second Session

- **Sight word practice (10 minutes).** The pupil practises pronouncing words, using word games or word cards. This could involve a short list of new words, or a longer list of words the pupil has already seen.
- **Spelling (5 minutes).** Pupils practise spelling both sight words and words that can be spelled phonemically.
- **Reading of a passage or short story (20 minutes).** This is similar to the activity in the first session. This time the pupil reads silently while identifying and discussing any difficult words. The pupil then reads it again out loud demonstrating their fluency and accuracy.
- **Writing activities using sight words (15 minutes).** The teachers ask the pupils to compose and write full sentences that contain words from their list of sight words. The emphasis is on understanding the meaning of the word, using the word appropriately within the sentence, and spelling it accurately.

What planning is involved?

Teachers will need to prepare a list of sight words appropriate and relevant to the pupil(s) and create card games based on the list. They will also need to identify the aspects of phonics which the target pupil(s) particularly need to focus on in the 'phonics mini-lesson' section and identify short passages of an appropriate reading level.

What are the challenges?

To use the intervention effectively, teachers will need to have sufficient knowledge of phonemic rules as well as an understanding of phoneme chains. Staff will also need to be skilled in asking questions about text that reveal pupils' understanding of the text.

Implications for Achievement Coaches and School Champions

School champions

- The intervention was designed as a one-to-one (i.e. a tier 3 intervention), but the intervention could be adapted to be used with small groups (tier 2). Could the [Close Case Analysis tool](#) help you and your colleagues to decide whether the target pupils' needs would be best met by a tier 2 (small group) or tier 3 delivery of this approach?
- The teachers in this study provided their pupils with twice daily sessions over 8 weeks. You may want to use the [Determining Frequency/Duration of Interventions tool](#) to help you decide how many sessions your pupils should experience.
- The activities in this intervention enable pupils to understand and use phonic skills in their reading and writing. Can you work with Y6 teachers to plan activities which encourage pupils to make connections with other aspects of their literacy learning? For example, they could look for examples of where they can apply their phonic strategies when reading the key quality text (such as Kensuke's kingdom).

• Achievement Coaches

- The intervention focuses on teaching pupils phonemic rules and patterns. Could you work with the School Champion to identify specialist expertise in this area (e.g. KS1 teachers) and use this to decide who is best placed to deliver the intervention and how they can be trained? You may want to use the [Bringing in specialist expertise tool](#).
- The intervention involves using games to practice sight words. Could you work with the School Champion to identify ideas within school (for example in KS1) of games that could be adapted to be used with Y6 pupils?
- Observing teachers delivering an intervention is likely to help ensure they deliver it as effectively as they can. Could you work with the School Champion to decide who could best provide supportive observation and feedback?

Implications for Year 6 staff

- Achievement for All 3As and CUREE are keen to work in collaboration with Achievement Coaches (AC) and School Champions (SC) to make this project as successful as possible. We invite School Champions and Achievement Coaches to add implications for Year 6 staff (and additional implications for AC and SC) that emerge as you work on the project. These will be captured and used in future resources. Please email Rebecca at rebecca.raybould@curee.co.uk with your responses.

Reference

Torgesen, J.K., Alexander, A.W., Wagner, R.K., Rashotte, C.A., Voeller, K.K.S. and Conway, T. (2001) Intensive remedial instruction for children with severe reading disabilities: Immediate and long-term outcomes from two instructional approaches. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 34(1): 33-58