It is not uncommon for beginning readers to exhibit challenges in the areas of phonemic awareness and/or phonics. Reading Recovery, based on Dr. Marie Clay’s literacy processing theory, incorporates teaching phonemic and orthographic relationships in every individually designed daily lesson.

Phonemic awareness is defined as the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words. Phonics instruction teaches children the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language.

Phonemic awareness and phonics are explicitly taught throughout each daily Reading Recovery lesson within the context of reading and writing continuous, authentic text and only in isolation when necessary. In addition, the writing part of the lesson and initial and ongoing assessments used in Reading Recovery devote special attention to these two critical components of reading instruction.

Phonics and phonemic awareness support the decoding component of the reading and writing processes. While it is necessary to value decoding skills as an important piece of literacy learning, it is equally important to understand that the terms decoding and reading are not synonymous. Decoding in isolation leaves out the critical component of comprehending the meaning in text.

Reading Recovery does not follow a pre-packaged, scripted, one-size-fits-all approach to literacy learning. Instead, as with all components of the Reading Recovery lesson, phonemic awareness and phonics instruction are systematic in nature and based on close observation by the skilled teacher and the strengths and needs of the child.

Standardized assessment and individualized daily lessons

An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2016) provides a standardized, systematic way of capturing early reading and writing behaviors and is the primary assessment tool used in Reading Recovery. It has been awarded the highest possible ratings as an evidence-based screening tool to identify children at risk for literacy failure (National Center on Intensive Intervention, 2019). The six tasks of the Observation Survey measure phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, and word recognition in reading and writing. Daily running records and lesson records inform daily teaching.
Phonemic awareness and phonics are important components of learning to read. If you have further questions or would like to see how these components are taught, contact your Reading Recovery teacher or teacher leader.

Resources

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Learn more at ReadingRecoveryWorks.org