



**POPEY** 

Provincial Outreach Program  
for the Early Years

[www.popey.ca](http://www.popey.ca)

## The Foundations of Literacy Learning:

Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness & Phonics

Presenters:

Lisa Thomas & Jen Kelly

Friday, May 19th

9:00 – 11:00am

\* Workshop handout & resources available at [padlet.com/POPEY](http://padlet.com/POPEY)

# Outcomes for Today



- ★ definitions and scope and sequence for foundational literacy skills:
  - phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and phonics
- ★ mini-lessons, activities, and routines to:
  - **explicitly** and **systematically support** our students as they learn letter/sound relationships in reading and writing
  - **provide** students with the **time, opportunity,** and **practice** to make meaning **in** and out of texts and **expand** their word solving **skills**

# Learning to buckle yourself in...



# How did you learn to...



ride a bike?



swim?



drive a car?

Please choose ONE activity and take ONE minute to reflect individually  
– take some notes on how you learned to do it.

Please share your thoughts in the Chatbox as the music ends ...

To: [Everyone](#) ▾  
|Type message here...

# HOW do we learn?



- \* observation of someone skilled modelling/demonstrating
- \* direct instruction
- \* gradual release of responsibility
- \* practice / repetition
- \* time / opportunity
- \* encouragement / feedback
- \* safety to take risks and try new things
- \* relationships, motivation, engagement...

Learning is:

- \* social
- \* constructive
- \* experiential
- \* inquiry-based

With this in mind, how can we provide our students with the comprehensive learning experiences needed to build their foundational literacy skills?

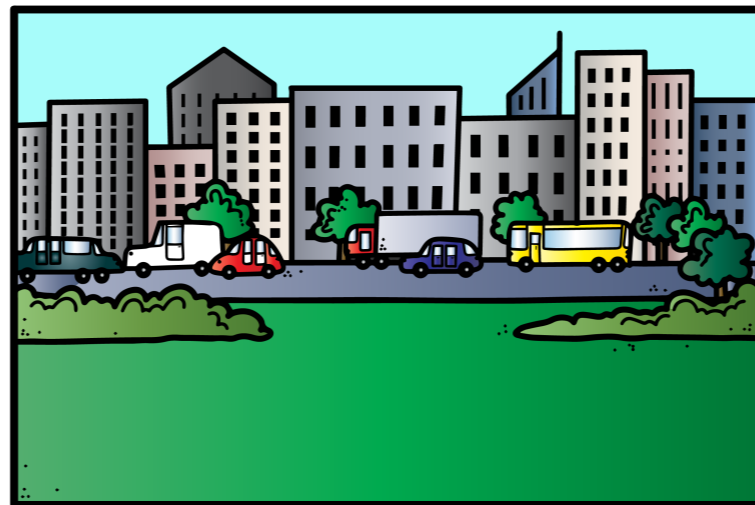
# What is a Word? A Visual Metaphor...

Processes  
Sounds

## Sound City

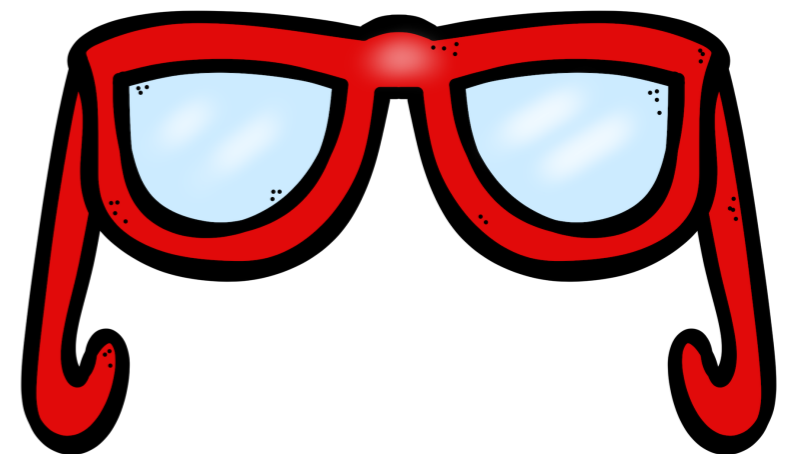
Memories

## Meaning Mountain



Recognizes objects  
& faces

## Visual Village





# Phonological Awareness

–refers to the ability to recognize and manipulate the spoken parts of **sentences** and **words**, and involves a continuum of skills that develop over time and are crucial for **reading & spelling success**:

- \* *rhyme, alliteration, syllables, blending/segmenting, and...*
- \* *the most sophisticated – and last to develop – is **phonemic awareness***

## Phonemic Awareness

–refers to oral language and is the understanding that **spoken words** are made up of individual **sounds** called **phonemes**



## Phonics

–refers to **print**, and is the knowledge of **letter/sound relationships** and the ability to **apply** that knowledge to **decoding** unfamiliar **printed words**



## **Phonics Instruction** The Connection Between Decoding & Comprehension

Phonics instruction helps the reader to map sounds onto spellings. This ability enables readers to decode words. **Decoding** words aids in the development of and improvement in **word recognition**. The more words one recognizes, the easier the reading task. Therefore, phonics instruction aids in the development of word recognition by providing children with an important and useful way to figure out unfamiliar words while reading.

When children begin to be able to recognize a large amount of words quickly and accurately, **reading fluency** improves. As more and more words become firmly stored in a child's memory (that is, the child recognizes more and more words on sight) they gain fluency and **automaticity** in word recognition. Having **many opportunities to decode words in text** is critical to learning words by sight...and to avoid making reading errors.

Reading fluency improves **reading comprehension**. Since children are no longer struggling with decoding words, they can devote their full attention (mental energies) to **making meaning from the text**.

As the **vocabulary and concept demands** increase in text, children need to be able to devote more of their **attention** to making meaning from text, and increasingly **less attention to decoding**.

# Emergence of Phonological Awareness



Phonological awareness is the ability to **recognize** and **manipulate** the **spoken parts** of words.

\* Rhyme

\* Alliteration

\* Sentence Segmentation

\* Syllables

\* Onset and Rime

\* Phoneme Matching

\* Phoneme Isolating

\* Phoneme Segmenting

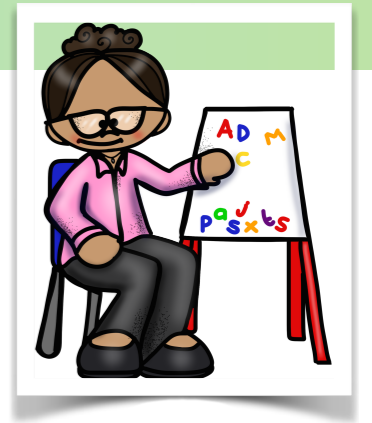
\* Phoneme Segmenting and Blending

\* Phoneme Manipulating

Taught and learned in the order of easiest to most difficult...

# Phonemic Awareness & Phonics

These work in concert to **explicitly** and **systematically** support our students as they navigate the unpredictable, complex alphabetic structure of language & print.



## Phonemic Awareness

- main focus is on **sounds**
- deals with **spoken language**
- lessons are **oral** and **auditory**
- students work with **manipulating sounds in words**
- there are **44 sounds** in the English language

## Phonics

- main focus is on **letters** and their **sounds**  
*there are 26 letters that make 44 sounds*
- deals with **written language** and **print**
- lessons are both **visual** and **auditory**
- students work with **reading** and **writing letters**  
*according to their sounds, spelling patterns, and phonological structure*
- there are **over 200 ways** to **spell** the 44 sounds we hear

Phonemic awareness **instruction** improves phonics **skills**, and phonics **instruction** improves phonemic awareness; the relationship is **reciprocal**.

–Lane & Pullen, 2004

# Readiness Skills



The two best predictors of early reading success are phonemic awareness and alphabet recognition.

## Phonemic Awareness

A range of subskills is taught to develop phonemic awareness, with oral blending and oral segmentation having the **most positive impact** on reading and writing development.

★ These skills are **power skills**.

## Alphabet Recognition

Involves learning the **names, shapes, and sounds** of the **letters** of the alphabet with **fluency**.

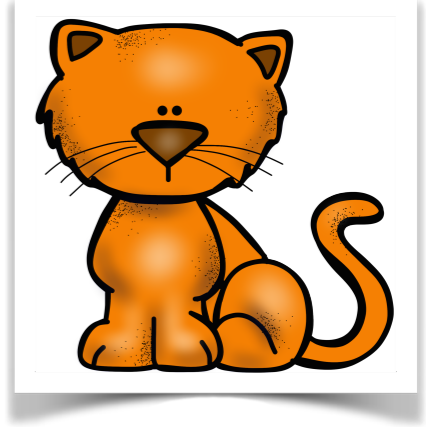
Phonemic awareness and alphabet recognition are focused on primarily in Kindergarten and Grade 1.

# Scope and Sequence of Phonemic Awareness

...the understanding that spoken words are made up of individual sounds

## Examples of Phonemic Awareness Skills

Taught and learned in the order of easiest to most difficult...



### 1. Sound and word discrimination:

*What word doesn't belong with the others? cat, mat, bat, ran*

### 2. Rhyming: *What word rhymes with 'cat'? bat*

### 3. Syllable splitting: *The onset of 'cat' is /k/, the rime is /at/*

### 4. Blending: *What word is made up of the sounds /k/ /a/ /t/? cat*

### 5. Phonemic segmentation: *What are the sounds in 'cat'? /k/ /a/ /t/*

### 6. Phoneme deletion: *What is 'cat' without the /k/? at*

### 7. Phoneme manipulation: *What word would you have if you changed the /t/ in 'cat' to an /n/? can*

# Rhyme Recognition & Repetition

## One minute direct instruction lesson

### Rhyme Repetition

T says word pair,  
Students repeat:

hop/mop ran/fan  
wet/jet mad/dad

### Examples:

go/no  
yes/me  
sad/mad  
out/pig  
run/fun  
in/lap  
rip/bag

### Role of the Educator

- ▶ educator says the word pairs

### Role of the Students

- ▶ Students repeat the word pairs and show thumbs up if the words rhyme, thumbs down if the words don't rhyme.

# Onset Fluency

## One minute direct instruction lesson

### Examples:

baker /b/

puppy /p/

dinner /d/

gentle /j/

happy /h/

### Role of the Educator

- ▶ educator says a word

### Role of the Students

- ▶ Students repeat the word and isolate the onset (first sound)

### Onset Fluency

T says word, Students say word, then isolate the onset

T: funny S: funny /f/

# Segmenting Phonemes

One minute direct instruction lesson

## Examples:

hop  
run  
map  
play  
slug  
grab

## Role of the Educator

- ▶ educator says the word

## Role of the Students

- ▶ Students repeat the word and segment it into phonemes

## Segmenting Phonemes

T says the word,  
Students say word,  
then segment it

T: flip

Ss: flip f-l-i-p

# Blending Phonemes

## One minute direct instruction lesson

### Examples:

r-e-d

p-u-t

b-a-l

f-l-a-g

s-w-i-m

g-l-a-s

### Role of the Educator

- ▶ educator says the phonemes for each word

### Role of the Students

- ▶ Students blend the sounds to say the whole word

### Blending Phonemes

T says the phonemes for each word, Students blend the sounds & say whole word

T: b-l-a-k

Ss: b-l-a-k ... black

# Early Literacy Skill: Letter Naming

## One minute direct instruction lesson

### Letter Naming

T holds up flash cards,  
says 'the letter is T,  
the sound is /t/ (tuh)'  
Ss say the letter name,  
then the letter sound

### Examples:

T

M

B

C

G

### Role of the Educator

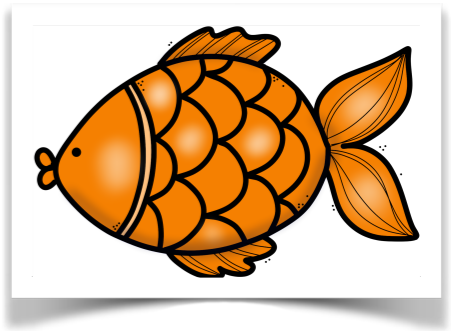
- ▶ educator holds up flash cards one at a time
- ▶ says 'the letter is \_\_\_\_\_, the sound is \_\_\_\_\_'
- ▶ cards are selected based on student need

### Role of the Students

- ▶ Students say the letter name AND sound

# Using Elkonin Boxes to Develop Phonemic Awareness

Phoneme placement within words makes working with them easier or harder



hat

fish

stand

beginning  
phoneme

final  
phoneme

medial vowel  
phoneme

internal consonants in  
blends and clusters

# Segmenting CVC Words Using Toy Cars/Elkonin Boxes

Park Those Sounds!



# Supporting Oral Language & Oral Comprehension

Time spent on this is a **huge** investment in future reading comprehension.

Intentionally supporting oral language development in the classroom is important.

It is important that beginning readers have access to complex ideas through read-aloud, conversation, content area instruction, and other language-developing opportunities.

Reading comprehension is fundamentally the same work as listening comprehension.

Reading comprehension actually involves translating the words on the page into spoken language and “listening to them,” either by saying them aloud or saying them in our heads.

So if children cannot understand enough of the words and sentences when they are spoken, they will not comprehend the same words and sentences when they read them.

This means that opportunities to grow **oral language** – including vocabulary, background knowledge, sentence structure, and more – actually develop the comprehension mechanisms of **reading**.

# Explicit Instruction Both In and Out of Texts

## Making Meaning OUT OF Texts

### Word Study

Early Literacy Concepts  
Phonological Awareness  
Letter-Sound Relationships  
Letter Knowledge  
Spelling Patterns  
High-Frequency Words  
Word Meaning/Vocabulary  
Word Structure  
Word Solving Actions

## Making Meaning IN Texts

### Reading

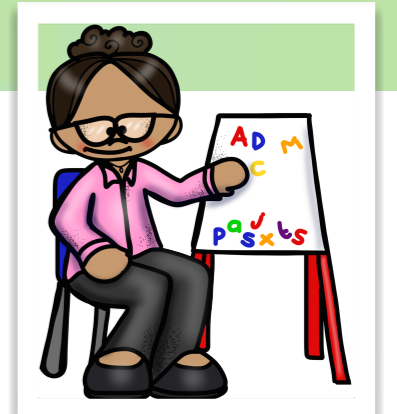
Active Read Aloud  
Reading Mini-Lessons  
Shared Reading  
Guided/Small-Group Reading  
Independent Reading

### Writing

Modelled Writing  
Writing Mini-Lessons  
Shared/Interactive Writing  
Guided/Small-Group Writing  
Independent Writing

Oral Language

# The Art of the Mini-Lesson



## Mini-Lesson Structure

I do



WE do

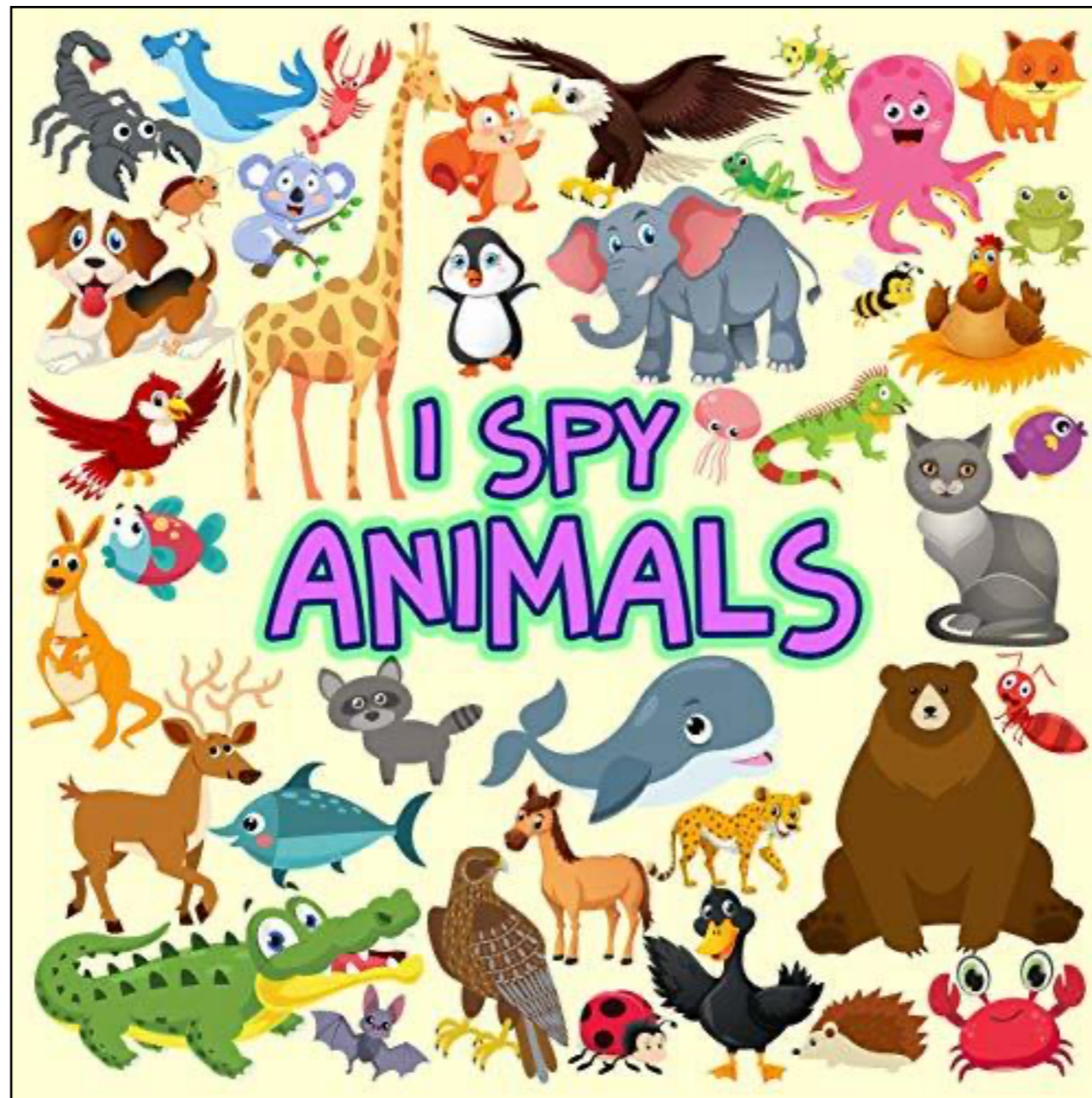


YOU do

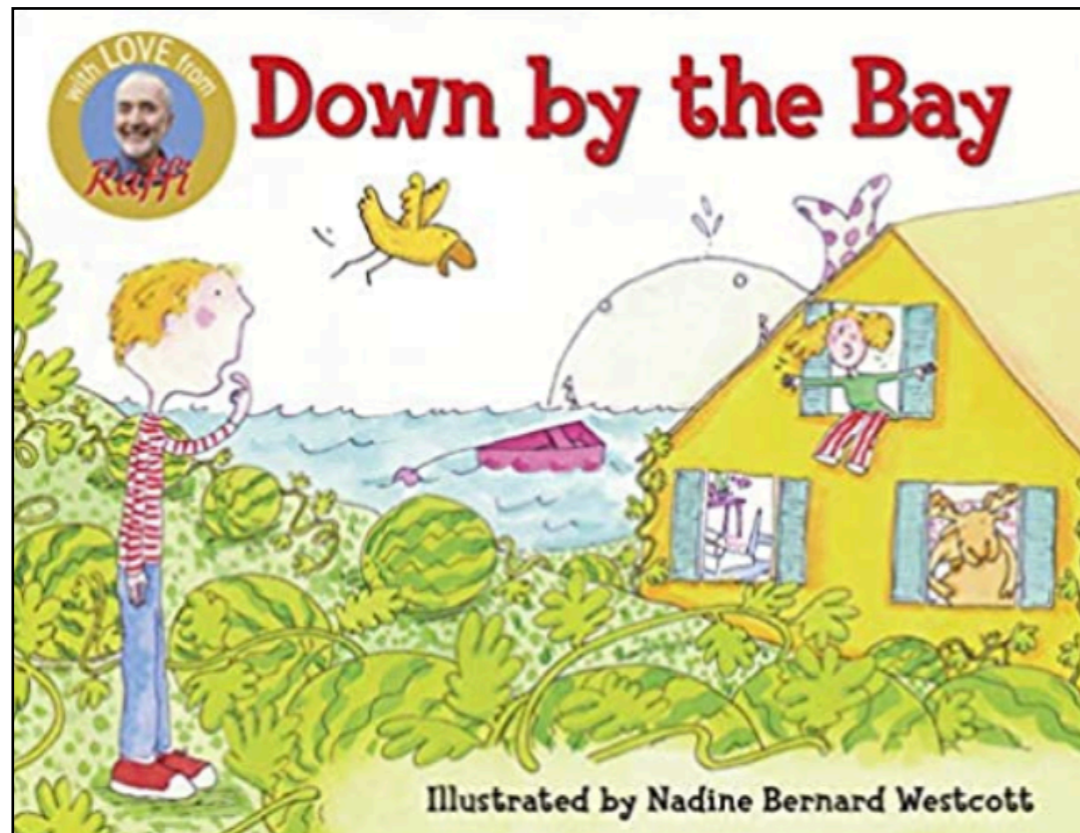
- \* mini, not maxi
- \* strategy-focused
- \* model, model, model
- \* direct and explicit instruction
- \* guided practice in a safe, supportive setting
- \* transfer to independence



I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with ...



# Read Aloud Rhyming Activity - Making Meaning IN Text



Did you ever see  
...a goose kissing a moose  
...a whale with a polka-dot tail  
...a fly wearing a tie  
...a bear combing his hair  
...llamas eating their pajamas  
...down by the bay?

Did you ever see a **frog**...

Did you ever see a **fox**...

Did you ever see a **dragon**...

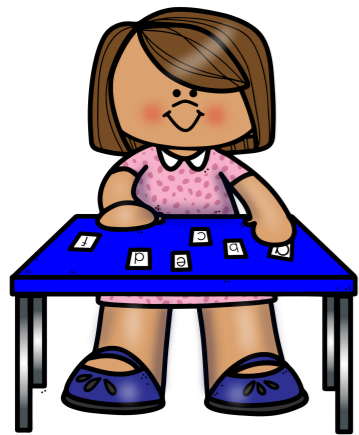
—or choose your own animal and rhyme—



To: **Everyone** ▾  
|Type message here...

# The Name Game

Our name is the first word we loved. We can study our names as an entry point for learning letters and writing other things.



Write down your name on some paper.

See how many words you can make, using the letters in your name, in **one minute**.

## Stefanie

You could also sort them like this:

- ▶ high frequency words – at, as, is, if, in
- ▶ cvc words – fan, tin, tan, set, net, sat
- ▶ cvce words – safe, sane
- ▶ blends or digraphs – nest, fast
- ▶ vowel teams/pairs – feast

# Characteristics of Strong Phonics Instruction



- ✓ **Readiness Skills** – phonemic awareness & alphabet recognition
- ✓ **Scope and sequence** – build student learning from simple to complex
- ✓ **Blending** – must be frequently modelled and applied
- ✓ **Dictation** – guided spelling helps transition growing reading skills to writing
- ✓ **Word Awareness Activities** – word sorts and word building provide opportunities to play with words and experiment with how word parts combine
- ✓ **Teaching High-Frequency Words** – teaching high utility words that are irregular based on common sound-spelling patterns (typically the top 200–300 high frequency words are taught in K–2)
- ✓ **Reading Connected Text** – controlled, decodable text at the beginning level of reading instruction helps students develop a sense of comfort in and control over their reading growth – a key learning tool in early phonics instruction

Active \* Social \* Reflective

# Possible Phonics Scope and Sequence

## 1 Teach short-vowel sounds before long-vowel sounds

- efficiency and ease of learning are critical
- the simplicity of using short-vowel spellings and CVC words is beneficial to struggling readers

## 2 Teach consonants and short vowels in combination so that words can be generated as early as possible

- you can create decodable, connected text so kids can apply their knowledge of learned sound-spelling relationships

## 3 The majority of consonants taught early on should be continuous consonants

- such as f, l, m, n, r, and s – because these consonant sounds can be sustained without distortion; it's easier to model blending

## 4 Use a sequence in which the most words can be generated

- for example, many words can be generated using the letter t; very few using x
- higher-frequency sound-spelling relationships should precede less-frequent ones

## 5 Progress from simple to more complex sound-spellings

- consonant sounds should be taught before digraphs and blends
- short-vowel sound-spellings should be taught before long-vowel sound-spellings

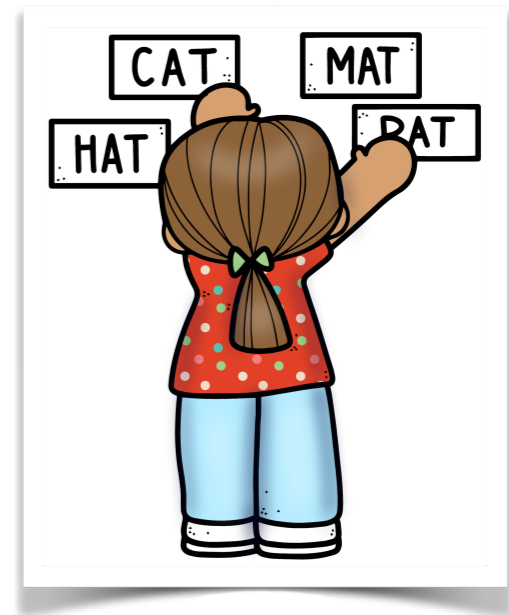
# WHY a Scope and Sequence?

Scope and sequence are created so that many words can be formed as early as possible.

How many words can you potentially read and write with the following letters?

\* s, m, t, d, l

\* s, m, a, t, d

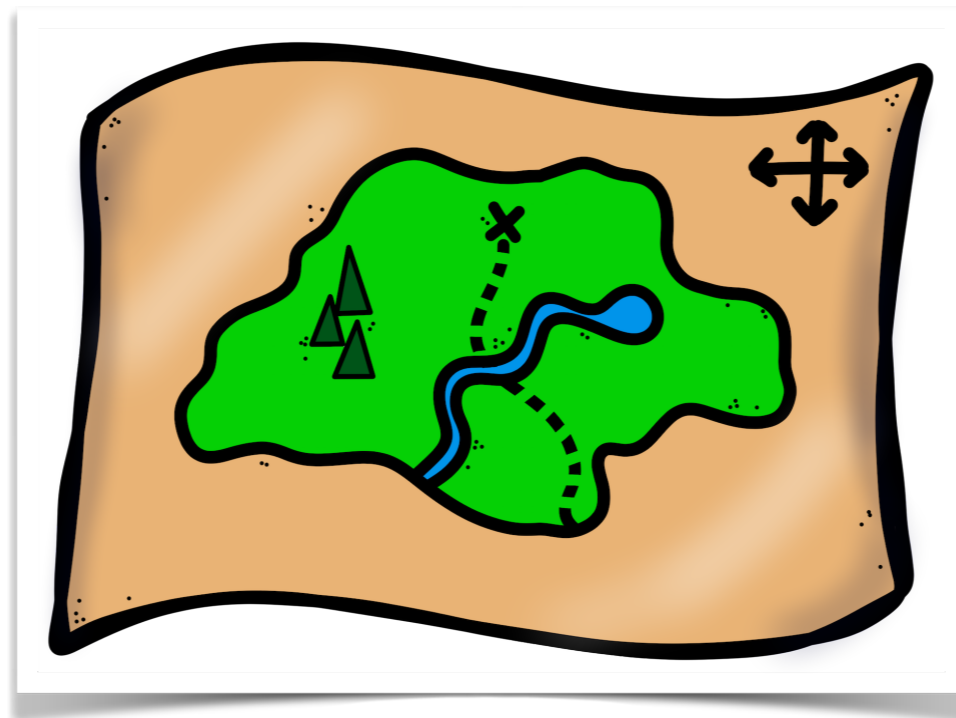


Quick generation of useful words is not only more efficient, but highly motivating!

# A Systematic Plan for Instruction, Practice & Mastery

“When a new skill is introduced, it should be systematically and purposefully reviewed for the next four to six weeks.”

– Wiley Blevins



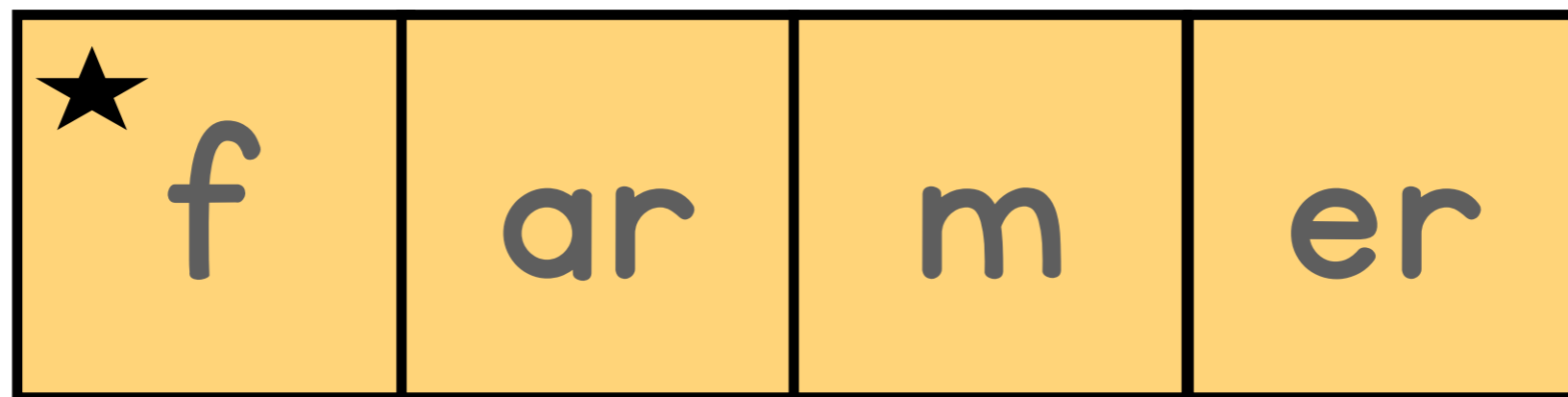
# Using Elkonin boxes to Teach Orthographic Mapping

## Why use Elkonin boxes?

- \*it helps build students' phonemic awareness & phonics
- \*it helps connect letters to sounds
- \*it helps students hear and record all sounds in a word
- \*it helps solidify left to right directionality

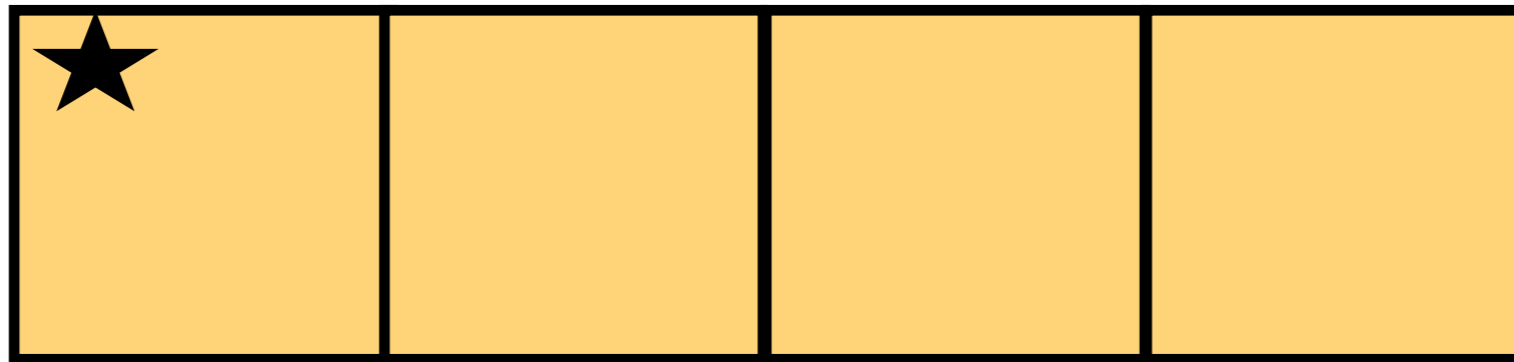
## Once students are proficient with phonemic awareness:

- \*You can transition to teaching **letter** boxes (this helps with spelling)
- \*Students gain independence with this problem-solving strategy



# The process of using Elkonin boxes during Writing

- \* Give the student a 'practice page' or white board
  - \* When the student is writing and they come to a word they need to problem solve, model the use of Elkonin boxes on the practice page
- \* Model the task for the student
  - \* Say the word slowly and touch the boxes (or push objects into the boxes) as you say the word
- \* Have the student try it themselves
  - \* You may do the task together until the student can take over



# Orthographic Mapping

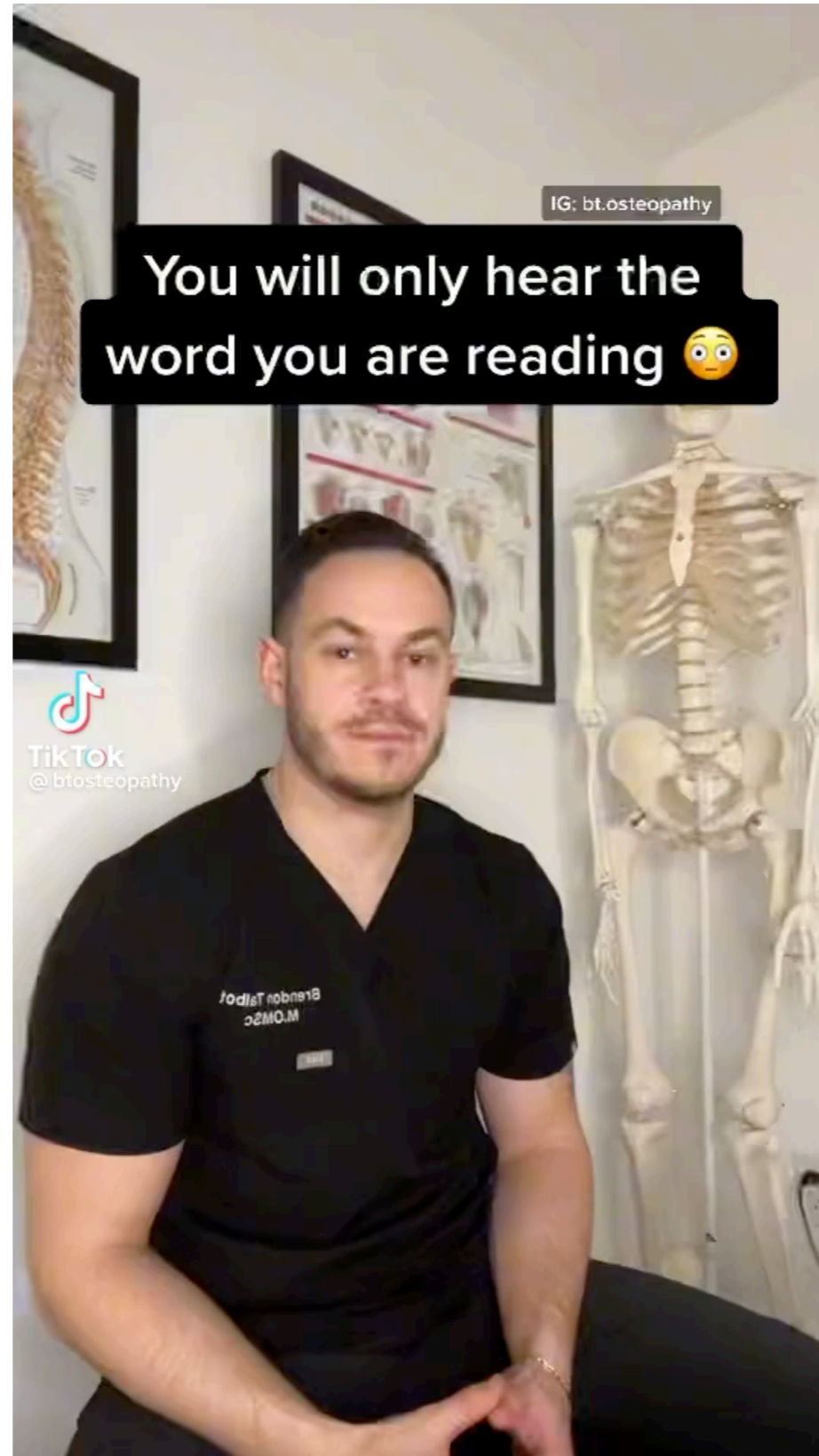
Orthographic mapping proposes that we use the pronunciations of words that are already stored in long-term memory as the anchoring points for the orthographic sequences (letters) used to represent those pronunciations.

*Let's Explore an Orthographic Mapping Routine for the word*

*does*



# Tik Tok to Explain Orthographic Mapping



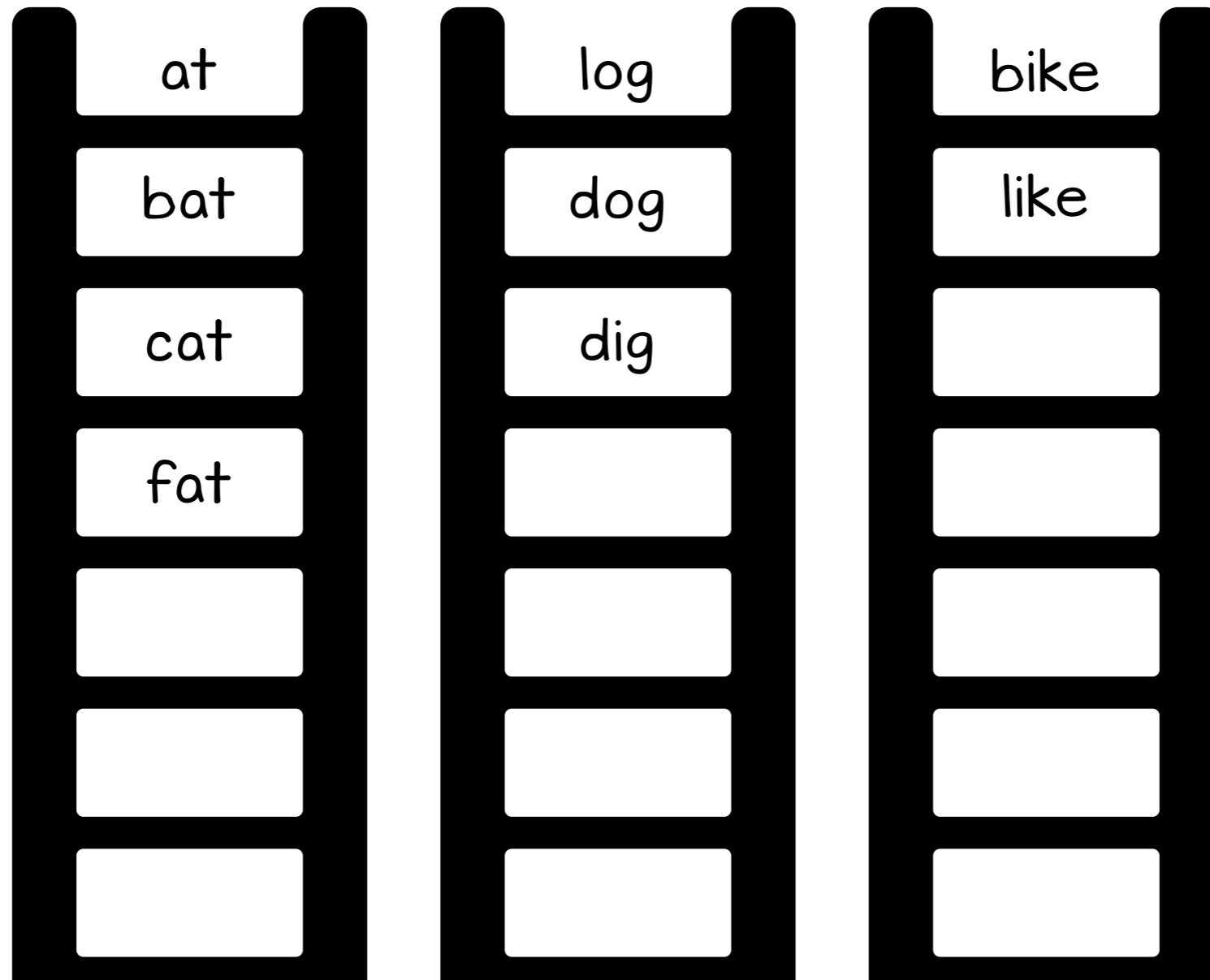
# The Power of Word Families

Teaching word families is high impact instruction

- \* There are 37 word families that can help kids spell about 500 words
- \* The word families help kids make C-V-C words and also teach children a foundational spelling strategy
- \* One known word can help you spell other unknown words:
  - ✓ hop, mop, chop
  - ✓ day, say, play
  - ✓ bat, cat, flat
  - ✓ fin, pin, grin
  - ✓ bit, fit, split
- \* Once writers understand a word family, sometimes they can then begin to recognize that short vowel sound in other words, too.



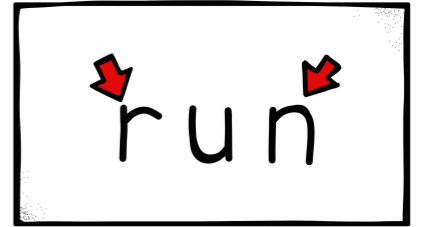
## Word Ladders - Playing With Sounds, Letters, Words



Easily differentiated to be responsive to your students' varied abilities & needs, and can be extended to a literacy centre/ station for additional engagement & practice.

# Vowel Charts

Can help with the middles of words:



- ▶ At first, most of the sounds children hear are **consonants**.
- ▶ Tell them that every word has at least **one vowel**.
- ▶ When the middle of a word is hard, it is often because **vowels are tricky**.
- ▶ Even if their vowel guess is incorrect, it makes the word they are writing **more readable**.
- ▶ Show students how to **use the vowel chart** to help decide which **vowel to use**.

a - e - i - o - u

# Word Wall I Spy

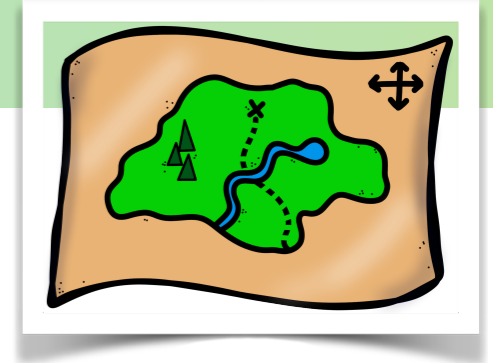
- ▶ the word starts with 'm'
- ▶ the word has 3 letters
- ▶ the word has 2 syllables
- ▶ the word has a long 'e' sound
- ▶ it's a compound word
- ▶ it's a word that means the opposite of **last**

and	animal	because	another
ball	big	crash	community
can	friend	eating	discover
day	have	make	everybody
fun	look	outside	first
like	night	really	question
play	said	school	recycle
see	talk	sometimes	terrible
the	thing	truck	usually
up	your	writing	weather

Easily differentiated to be responsive to your students' varied abilities & needs.

Can be adapted to use with vocabulary words from across the curriculum, and extended to a literacy centre/station – Portable Personalized Word Wall Folders.

# The Building Blocks of Literacy Learning



The goal is for students to...

- be enthusiastic explorers of words:
  - ★ puzzle out letter–sound relationships
  - ★ see patterns
  - ★ take words apart
  - ★ investigate meanings
- connect to words in an active way
- expand their reading and writing powers

Students learn **HOW TO LEARN** aspects of words, and develop efficient and powerful word–solving strategies

# Sources

## Resource Books

A Fresh Look at Phonics, Grade K-2 – Blevins

Phonics Activities & Games Kit – Blevins & Sadler School

Phonics From A-Z – Blevins

Shifting the Balance – Burkins & Yates

Units of Study in Phonics – Calkins

Units of Study in Writing – Calkins

Literacy Lessons Part Two – Clay

Comprehension Skill, Will & Thrill of Reading – Fisher & Frey

The Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study System – Fountas & Pinnell

When Readers Struggle: Teaching That Works – Fountas & Pinnell

Word Matters: Teaching Phonics and Spelling in the Reading/Writing Classroom – Fountas & Pinnell

Lesley University Institute: Word Study: Teaching Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling in Grades K-3

Phonemic Awareness: The skills that they need to help them succeed! – Heggerty

Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum

Comprehensive Literacy Resource – Trehearne

# Sources

## Blogposts & Presentations

[Carolyn Strom – Presentation: Refining Professional Knowledge to Build Capacity in Reading Instruction, Learning & the Brain Conference, April 2022](#)

[The Big Five: Phonics–Orthographic Mapping – Wooldridge](#)

[Reading Rockets – Phonological and Phonemic Awareness: Introduction](#)

Shifting the Balance Presentation for POPEY by Burkins & Yates, April 21, 2023

## Videos

[Worry About Yourself](#)

[TED Talk – Birth of a Word](#)

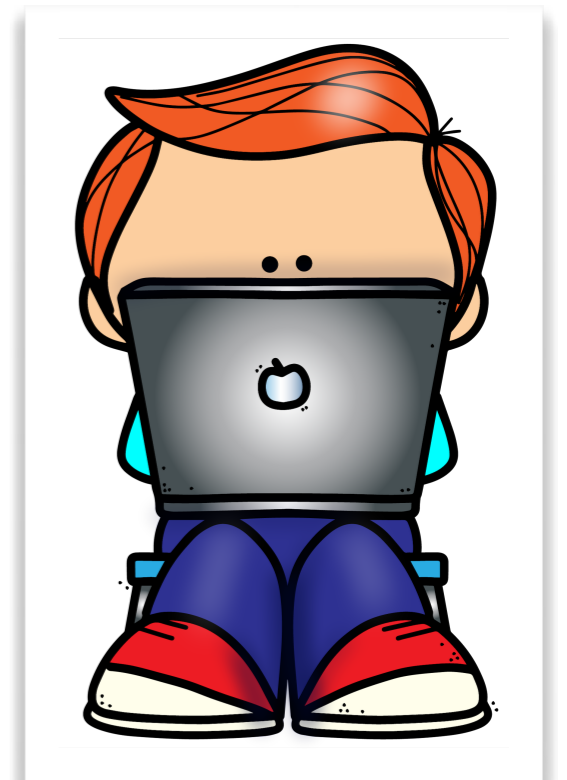
[Balanced Literacy Diet – Park Those Sounds](#)

[Twitter: Child reading a story](#)

[Tik Tok Word Reading](#)

[POPEY – Word Ladders](#)

[Balanced Literacy Diet – Word Wall I Spy](#)





Lisa Thomas    Jen Kelly  
[lisa@popey.ca](mailto:lisa@popey.ca)    [jen@popey.ca](mailto:jen@popey.ca)



**POPEY** 

[www.popey.ca](http://www.popey.ca)

*Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years*