

Balanced Literacy



Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognize that words are made up of sounds. It also includes the ability to manipulate those sounds. Phonemic awareness develops through a series of stages during which children first become aware that language is made up of individual words, that words are made up of syllables, and that syllables are made up of *phonemes*.

Phonics

Phonics is the set of complex relationships between phonology (the sound system of an oral language) and orthography (the system of spellings and punctuation of written language). Phonic relationships in English are between patterns of sounds and patterns of spelling.

Text comprehension

Comprehension is the ability of readers to make meaning from writing. Strong readers use the following strategies:

- ✎ Think about prior knowledge (schema) before, during and after reading text
- ✎ Create visual and other sensory images from text during and after reading
- ✎ Ask questions of themselves, the authors and the texts they read
- ✎ Draw inferences from text to form conclusions, make critical judgments and create unique interpretations
- ✎ Determine the most important ideas and themes in a text
- ✎ Summarize and synthesize what they read
- ✎ Self-monitor reading and make corrections as needed

Fluency

A fluent reader uses phrasing and reads smoothly. A fluent reader is flexible, varying his/her speed with the difficulty of the text. Fluent reading means solving problems "on the run", something all readers must do if they are to gain understanding.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is integral to reading. An important part of comprehending is quick access to word meanings. When readers truly know a word, they are able to use it in many ways. Encountering words again and again in text builds a fabric of meaning that makes it easier to learn new words.