

# Reading First and Phonics Pathways

*An Analysis of Curriculum  
and State Standards  
for the 9th edition of  
Phonics Pathways*



# Reading First and Phonics Pathways

*Phonics Pathways* is grounded in scientifically-based reading research, as analyzed by the National Reading Panel, published in 2000, and required by schools receiving Reading First funds. As determined by the National Reading Panel, children who learn to read through a systematic, sequential, and explicit phonics-based approach make more progress than children who learn to read without such instruction. *Phonics Pathways* provides clear steps for systematic and explicit phonetic instruction. Students quickly become decoders; they learn to readily recognize words and, with practice, become fluent readers.

The National Reading Panel emphasizes the need for instruction in the five essential reading components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. *Phonics Pathways* provides a way for all learners to acquire the fundamentals of phonemic awareness while gaining a strong ability to decode.

Lessons begin with single short-vowel sounds, move to two-letter blends, progress to simple three-letter words such as “cat” and “hen,” and gradually advance to challenging words of several syllables such as “formidable” or “outrageous.” Through multiple and repeated readings of words, phrases, sentences and short passages, students quickly become fluent readers. *Phonics Pathways* provides the added bonus of spelling instruction that is tied to the phonics lessons, maximizing the effect of the lesson and making excellent use of instructional time.

*Phonics Pathways* is in alignment with academic content standards across the nation. The format of these standards varies from state to state but the content is similar. For example, the following California Reading Standards for third grade are supported by instruction found on pages 113-114 and 225-239 in *Phonics Pathways*:

1.2 Decode regular multisyllabic words

1.8 Use knowledge of prefixes (e.g. un-, re-, pre-, hi-, mis-, dis-)

and suffixes (e.g. -er, -est, -ful) to determine the meaning of words

Relative academic content standards for reading may be found on the next pages, spanning several grade levels and distilled from a number of different states. In most cases these standards are related to language arts skills and competencies in California, Florida, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Illinois, and Texas. Each state has its own guidelines for suggested curriculum from which a school district can determine its course of study.

Standards are ultimately determined at the state level, with input from people all over the state and from local communities as well. Some areas have a State Board of Education, appointed to oversee the selection and the writing of standards. Committees with representatives from teacher groups, colleges, universities, learned societies, parents, and even student groups have served on many of the committees.

Teachers should consider the following information as suggestions for standards compliance. Ultimately, a teacher's professional judgment is key to making an appropriate standards alignment based upon their own state's guidelines.

## **Reading First: Phonemic Awareness**

*Learner can hear, identify, and manipulate letter sounds (phonemes) individually and in spoken words. Learner can identify and produce rhyming words in response to an oral prompt, and distinguish orally-stated one-syllable words and separate into beginning or ending sounds. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that the sounds of spoken language work together to make words.*

### ***Phonics Pathways Alignment: Phonemic Awareness***

Research indicates that many young children cannot extract an individual sound from hearing it within a word (*Becoming a Nation of Readers, The Report of the Commission on Reading, The National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education, 1985*).

Every letter introduced is illustrated with multiple pictures beginning with that sound, associating that sound with the vowel being learned. After that, students listen for this sound within a word using games and activities and think of other words beginning with that sound. Multiple pictures provide the subtle variation and range comprising each letter sound.

Individual short-vowel sounds with multiple pictures beginning with the sound (pages 3-14)

Consonants and blends (pages 15-36)

Reinforcement provided by repeated practice and auditory discrimination games:

*Short-Vowel Stick* (page 3). Short-Vowel reference

*Short-Vowel Shuffle* (page 4) teaches short-vowel sounds

*Blendit!* (pages 14, 255) reinforces short-vowel sounds

*Lifeboat* (page 250) discriminates short-vowel sound within the word

*Echo* (page 250) listens for and discriminates short-vowel within the word

*Musical Chairs* (page 250) listens for and discriminates sound within the word

## **Reading First: Blending**

*Learner will be able to read letters and track from left to right, moving sequentially from sound to sound by blending letters orally into syllables. Learner will spell blends from dictation, and can identify and produce rhyming words in response to an oral prompt, and understand samenesses and differences when one sound is substituted for another. Learner will be able to match all consonant and short-vowel sounds to appropriate letters.*

### **Phonics Pathways Alignment: Two-Letter Syllables**

Research indicates that teachers who spend more than average time on blending produce larger than average gains on first- and second-grade reading achievement tests. (*Becoming a Nation of Readers, The Report of the Commission on Reading, The National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education, 1985*).

*Phonics Pathways* has seventeen pages of two-letter blends to establish strong eye-tracking skills. Every consonant introduced is illustrated with multiple pictures beginning with that letter. Students orally name each picture and say the beginning sound, associating the consonant with that sound. Then students orally read the two-letter blends, first saying the letters separately and then blending them together into one smooth sound. Now students think of and say other words that begin with this blend, such as “su as in sum, supper,” etc. Students begin to see the connection between letters, words, and meaning; and reading from left to right.

Consonants and two-letter blends (pages 15-36)

Reinforcement is provided by repeated practice and with special games:

*Train Game* (pages 18, 253-254), a manipulative developing blending skills

*Star Search* (pages 35-36, 256) reinforces blending fluency

## **Reading First: Simple Short-Vowel Words**

*Learner will be able to track auditorily each letter in a word and every word in a sentence, and understand that as letters of words change so do the sounds. Learner will be able to decode nonsense words and read text accurately. Learner can distinguish initial, medial, and final sounds in single-syllable short-vowel words, and be able to spell them from dictation. Learner will be able to add, delete, or change target sounds to change words (e.g. pan, an, can)*

### **Phonics Pathways Alignment: Simple Short-Vowel Words**

Three-Letter Words (pages 37-73)

*Reading Pathways* (page 50, 248-249) Develops fluency by predictable text of gradually increasing length (begins with a single word, adding a word at a time to make long sentences)

K = C, K, -CK (pages 51-55)

Two-Consonant Endings (pages 56-67)

Twin-Consonant Endings (page 72)

Consonant Digraph Endings (pages 74-79)

Fluency Reality Check (real and nonsense words)

Reinforcement is provided by repeated practice and with a wide variety of special games and activities:

*Bag the Bugs* (pages 46-47, 257)

*All In a Row* (page 250)

*You're On the Air* (page 250)

*Shoo-Fly Shuffle* (page 252)

*The Train Game* (page 253)

*Blendit!* (page 255)

*StarSearch* (page 256)

(Note: Any of the above games and activities can be played with any lesson in *Phonics Pathways* from this point on)

## **Reading First: Complex Short-Vowel Spelling Patterns**

*Learner will be able to identify and read words with complex short vowel representation in isolation, text, and from dictation, including dictated sentences. Learner will be able to read text accurately and fluently, select phonetic letter patterns, and blend these sounds into recognizable words. They will know how to translate them into oral and silent reading.*

## ***Phonics Pathways Alignment: Short-Vowel Spelling Patterns***

### **Special Short-Vowel Spellings**

OO = moon, oo = took, O = aw, au, al, all, o (pages 183-189)

E = ea, ai; I = y, ui; O = a, U = o, ou, oo, a, schwa (pages 194-200)

### **Diphthongs**

Oi, oy, ou, ow (pages 169-176)

## **Reading First: Long-Vowel Spelling Patterns**

*Learner will be able to identify and read words with long vowel representation in isolation, text, and from dictation; and be able to read text accurately and fluently, distinguishing between long and short vowel sounds in words. Learner will know and use complex word families when reading (e.g., -igh) to decode unfamiliar words. Learner will be able to spell and apply various phonetic patterns for words with long-vowel sounds, including dictated sentences.*

## ***Phonics Pathways Alignment: Long-Vowel Spelling Patterns***

Simple long-vowel sounds (pages 87-105)

Special long and short vowel discrimination exercise (pages 103-104)

E = ei (page 170)

Long-vowel digraphs (pages 155-168)

ai, ay, ie, oa, oe, ow, oo, ew, ue, ui, ou

I = igh (page 208)

O = ough (page 209)

Long-A spelling patterns (pages 211-213)

ei, eigh, ey, ea

## **Reading First: R-Controlled Words**

*Learner will be able to identify, read, and spell words beginning with two or three r-controlled vowels in isolation and in text, including dictated sentences.*

## ***Phonics Pathways Alignment: R-Controlled Words***

-ar, -or, -oor, -ore, -our, -oar, -er, -ir, -ur, -ear (pages 145-154)

-are, -air, -er, -ere (pages 219-220)



## **Reading First: Initial Consonant Blends**

*Learner will be able to identify, read, and spell words beginning with two or three consonant blends in isolation and in text, including dictated sentences.*

### ***Phonics Pathways Alignment: Initial Consonant Blends***

**Two-consonant beginnings** (pages 129-144)

bl-, fl-, pl-, cl-, gl-, sl-, sm-, sn-, st-, sp-, sc-, sk

**Three-consonant beginnings** (pages 190-193)

str-, spl-, thr-, scr-, spr-

## **Reading First: Plurals and Contractions**

*Learner will be able to identify, read, and spell regular and irregular plurals and possessives in isolation and in text, including dictated sentences. Learner will understand the mechanics of contractions and be able to accurately contract two words.*

### ***Phonics Pathways Alignment: Plurals and Contractions***

-ng, -nk endings (pages 82-85)

Plural, possessive, and X (pages 116-117)

F = -ves (page 181)

Contractions (page 201)

Plural spelling change (page 242)

## **Reading First: Homophones, Homonyms, Homographs**

*Learner will be able to identify simple multiple-meaning words and use them correctly in text, and use knowledge of homonyms, homophones, and homographs to determine the meanings of words.*

### ***Phonics Pathways Alignment: Homophones, Homonyms, Homographs***

Homophones, homonyms, homographs (pages 221-222)

## **Reading First: Prefixes and Suffixes**

*Learner will be able to recognize changes in root/base word meanings when prefixes and suffixes are added as well as read and spell phonetic patterns for these words, including dictated sentences.*

### **Phonics Pathways Alignment: Prefixes and Suffixes**

-y suffix (page 68)

-ng, -nk endings (pages 82-85)

Short and long vowel single-syllable words with suffixes (pages 106-112)

Suffix spelling chart (page 111)

Adding -ic or -ick suffix to multisyllable words (page 114)

-Y, -ie plus suffixes (page 180)

Prefixes (pages 225-227)

pre-, sub-, re-, auto-, un-, dis-, inter-, super-

Suffixes (pages 228-230)

-tion, -sion, -able, -ness, -ful, -less, -ment

Suffix spelling chart (page 243)

## **Reading First: Multisyllable Words**

*Learner will be able to decode regular multisyllabic words and compound words, and know how to syllabicate a word accurately. Learner will be able to read and spell multisyllable words in isolation or in dictated sentences, and use knowledge of individual words in unknown compound words to predict their meaning. Learner will be able to track auditorily each word in a sentence and every syllable in a word.*

### **Phonics Pathways Alignment: Multisyllable Words**

Multisyllable words (page 113)

Syllabication rules (page 115)

Multisyllable words with suffixes (page 223)

-cd, -ge, -able, -ible (page 224)

Prefixes and suffixes (pages 225-230)

Compound words (page 231)

Building blocks (pages 232-236)



## **Reading First: Spelling**

*Learner will be able to spell independently by using knowledge of letter names, spelling rules, and of complex word families.*

### ***Phonics Pathways Alignment: Spelling***

Research reveals that accurate spelling is critical to the reading process, and that skillful readers have internalized precise and detailed spellings of words and in a fraction of a second map them to the speech patterns they represent. Moreover, to the extent that this knowledge is underdeveloped or inaccurate, it is strongly associated with specific reading disability (Adams, *Annals of Dyslexia* Vol. 47, 1997).

Education Research Analysts who evaluate textbooks for Texas state adoption, listed *Phonics Pathways* as their top-ranked program for spelling rules. They found 130 spelling rules, 36 more than the next highest-scoring reading programs.

In *Phonics Pathways* reading and spelling are taught as an integrated unit—each skill reinforces and enhances the other. Spelling rules are taught when the letter or sound is introduced, ranging from simple to complex. Additionally, it offers the following resources:

Spelling strategies (step-by-step directions for teaching spelling) page 238

Index to spelling rules and patterns (page 239)

Spelling and pronunciation chart (pages 240-241)

Plural spelling chart (page 242)

Suffix spelling chart (page 243)

## **Reading First: Fluency**

*Fluency is the ability to read text accurately and quickly. It provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Fluent readers recognize words and comprehend at the same time. Learner will practice, extend, and refine knowledge of letter-sound relationships by controlled and decodable practice reading.*

## ***Phonics Pathways Alignment: Fluency***

Research indicates that in order to read skillfully children need practice in seeing and understanding decodable words in connected text. (Adams, *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About Print*, Center for the Study of Reading, The Reading Research and Education Center, University of Illinois 1990) Research also shows that even students with the most serious reading problems can learn how to read if provided with effective code-based reading instruction. (as reported in the N.Y. Times, July 2003, Shaywitz, etc. *Biological Psychiatry*)

Fluency is developed, taught, and integrated throughout *Phonics Pathways* with multiple examples and completely decodable practice readings in every lesson. Extensive word lists, two-word phrases, and practice sentences using decodable text comprise every lesson, developing the speed, automaticity and accuracy that is a necessary and integral part of fluency and comprehension in reading.

Sometimes instructional methods are tailored to students' perceptual styles or dominant modalities. This view is not supported by research. Eight separate reviews have concluded that matching beginning reading methods to different aptitudes has not proven to be effective. (Adams, *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About Print*, Center for the Study of Reading, The Reading Research and Education Center, University of Illinois, 1990)

*Phonics Pathways* uses a multisensory method of teaching, addressing all learning styles. All children learn whether visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. A multisensory method of teaching has the synergistic effect of addressing the strongest modality while reinforcing the weakest.

Lowell School District in Whittier, CA implemented *Phonics Pathways* with all of their Title I students. At midyear comprehension scores for third grade went up an average of 26 National Percentile points, fourth grade 17 National Percentile points, Fifth grade 8 percentile points, and sixth grade 22 National Percentile points. The reading teacher Bettina Dunne concluded:

*“Phonics Pathways is an invaluable aid to teaching phonics. It requires little or no preparation time and is appropriate for all grade levels. Phonics Pathways does not teach comprehension, but it unlocks the secrets of sound and symbol relationships allowing comprehension to become the focus. Students, now able to read words, can meet reading at its most vital level—they can read for meaning.”*