Alphabetic Knowledge

1. Letters and combinations of letters (graphemes) represent the smallest units of sound (phonemes).
2. Sight word learning depends upon the application of letter sound correspondences providing the glue that holds the words in memory for quick reading.
3. Alphabetic instruction is thought to contribute in helping students learn to read because it teaches them phonemic awareness and use of sound letter knowledge.
4. Primary goal of alphabetic instruction is to teach students to read words in or out of text.
5. Phonemic awareness and letter knowledge are the two best school entry predictors of how well children will learn to read during the first two years of instruction.
6. Sight word learning depends upon the application of letter-sound correspondences.

Phonemic Awareness Instruction

7. Phonemic awareness is the ability to focus on and manipulate phonemes in spoken words.
8. Sounds are short lived and hard to grasp and sound-symbols provide concrete, visual symbols for phonemes. There is greater transfer when PA is taught with sound-symbols (graphemes).
Systematic Phonics Instruction

9. Phonics instruction is systematic when all the major letter-sound correspondences are taught and covered in a clearly defined sequence.

10. Systematic phonics teaches students to read all of the letters as they represent the word’s pronunciation.

11. Systematic phonics instruction helps children learn to read more effectively than do programs with little or no phonics instruction.

12. It is effective across a variety of conditions and characteristics.

13. Phonics instruction facilitates reading acquisition in both younger and older readers however; phonics instruction exerts its greatest impact early.
Implications for Teaching Reading

What does strong systematic phonics instruction look like in classrooms?

Key student capabilities:

1. acquire knowledge of the alphabetic system (alphabetic principle).
2. acquire phonological awareness, particularly in segmentation and blending.
3. learn the shapes and names of capital and lower case letters.
4. learn major grapheme-phoneme correspondences (grapheme sound is the focus).
5. learn left-to-right direction.
6. be taught how to decode the word’s spelling.
7. practice decoding words to help make connections between letters and sounds formed in memory. Students become able to read those words by sight rather than by decoding.
8. practice reading words so that they are able to read words automatically.
9. apply alphabetic knowledge to spell words and write the sounds heard to increase skill in remembering the correct spellings of words.
10. practice reading and writing words to learn about spelling patterns that recur in words. Knowledge of these regularities enhances word reading skills.
Key instructional components:

1. Have a plan for teaching all major letter sound correspondences.
2. Teach students to transform graphemes into phonemes and to blend them to form recognizable words.
3. Begin with two letters and work up to longer sequences. (cv, cvc, ccvc, cvcc, ccvcc)
4. Essential that students are able to apply their alphabetic and word reading skills to the reading of stories and informational text.
5. Stories and information read contain the letter-sound correspondences taught up to that point. (Decodable text)
6. As students' word reading skills increase, text becomes richer conceptually and more interesting.
7. Phonics and phonemic awareness skills are actively taught by explaining and modeling the use of alphabetic principles.
8. Students are provided with regular practice and feedback.
9. Phonics skills are embedded in daily activities and worksheets are not used extensively.
10. Students are taught to recognize spelling patterns by reading and writing words that exhibit spelling generalizations being learned.
11. Phonics program is deliberately integrated with reading and writing instruction and is incorporated throughout the school day.
12. Teachers use ongoing formal and informal assessment to monitor students' progress toward expected learning outcomes.
13. Teachers hold an understanding of what students should know, how to plan and carry out effective lessons.
14. Teachers understand how to enrich instruction for students who don't understand and how to scaffold lessons to eliminate their problems.
15. Systematic **phonics** instruction is included as part of a comprehensive literacy program that includes the teaching of **phonemic awareness**, **fluency**, **vocabulary** and **reading comprehension strategies**.

**McCardle, Peggy, Chhabra, Vinita:** *The Voice of Evidence in Reading Research*, p. 153-187