

PHONICS CURRICULUM

Public schools teach that English is illogical, irregular, and filled with endless exceptions. They flounder teaching spelling and reading.

Here at St. Knox we choose to use a different approach. We teach the children the basics of phonics.

English is the most vital language in the world, the first truly global language. Over half of the people who use English do not speak it as their mother tongue. English has the richest vocabulary on the planet. The modern Chinese dictionary has about 12,000 entries. The French vocabulary has less than 100,000 words. But the Oxford English Dictionary lists 500,000 words!

Eighty percent of students today are taught the whole-word method. Massive academic failure shows we need change, and scientific evidence shows where. The National Council reports, "Since 1911, a total of 124 studies have compared the whole-word approach with the phonics-based approach. Not one study found the whole-word approach to be superior." Yet, since 1955 approximately 85 percent of our 16,000 school districts have been using this whole-word approach.

30% of high school graduates cannot read the warning on a can of Drano®, fill out a job application, interpret a bus schedule, or decipher the menu in a restaurant.

English needs to be taught by component parts with phonics rather than by a whole-word approach. The first step in teaching any language is to isolate the most basic components used to make up that language. In English we have 500,000 words. Trying to learn each word one at a time will restrict the student. Sadly, most elementary teachers, in fact most college professors of education, do not know that there are 70 basic components of English. We call these components or sounds, phonograms.

The next step is to learn the rules that govern the use of these phonograms. There are 28 rules that govern the spelling of the English language. With a working knowledge of the 70 phonograms plus 28 spelling rules we can phonetically explain 99% of the most commonly used words in the language.

Students need to internalize the symbols that form the code for written English. This information must be considered vital, not just an afterthought. For the most effective results, we need to teach early, direct, systematic, intensive phonics.

Correctly taught, phonics replaces the frustration and insecurity of whole-word chaos. Instead of word-by-word memory or random guessing by context, the student has a logical basis for mastering the language. The fog lifts and the student is free to explore independently the wonderful world of print.

PHONICS SAMPLE

At St. Knox Academy, we start by teaching the five short vowel sounds. We do not move on to the consonant sounds until the child has mastered the vowels. We use a simplified vowel sheet to accomplish our first goal.

a	e
i	o
u	

Next we introduce a consonant coupled with the already mastered vowel sounds. It is astounding how quickly children pick up this blending technique.

Ss		
a	s-a	sa
e	s-e	se
i	s-i	si
o	s-o	so
u	s-u	su

Combining these techniques we are able to arm your child with a strong foundation for reading. In a short amount of time they are ready to start sounding out words and reading beginner books.