# Transcript

**For Teachers by Teachers: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics**

Duration 27:43

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Welcome to another Bastow presentation in the series For Teaches By Teachers: Reading F-2. In this presentation, we will look at phonological awareness and phonics and how we can continue to teach these in a balanced literacy program. Remote teaching and learning may be organised and facilitated differently in each school, but the principles of high impact phonics instruction remain the same. Our programs may be adapted, but student achievement, engagement and well-being will remain our focus. This session aims to explore how we can continue to keep these principles uppermost in our mind when planning and teaching phonological awareness and phonics in the virtual environment.

These are challenging times. We are mindful the teaching of phonics in a balanced literacy program is a challenging endeavour in this virtual environment. Our Foundation students had only had about 30 days at school before remote learning began. Classroom routines were being established and teacher-student relationships being developed. Nevertheless, we are hearing many success stories with teachers reporting that their students are experiencing growth in phonics despite the challenges being faced.

Even though we are teaching remotely, we continue to keep the key messages from DET at the forefront of all our instructional decisions. DET draws on current theory and research-based best practice when providing guidance to schools. A balanced literacy program is informed by data, integrated, authentic, differentiated, engaging, developmental and purposeful. The FISO Improvement Model.

In this presentation, we will be mainly focused on the dimension of curriculum planning and assessment. The FISO Improvement Model provides a common language for school improvement across the Victorian government school system. It is structured around four state-wide priorities that are proven to have a strong bearing on the effectiveness of a school. Excellence in teaching and learning, professional leadership, positive climate for learning, and community engagement in learning.

For the purposes of this session, we will be mainly focused on the curriculum planning and assessment dimension. We will be speaking about phonics and word study in the context of the High Impact Teaching Strategies, and evaluating the impact on learning. The High Impact Teaching Strategies. Strong phonics instruction depends upon all of the High Impact Teaching Strategies. But we will be looking at goal setting, differentiation, explicit teaching, feedback, and multiple exposures in particular. The Literacy Teaching Toolkit. Information about phonological awareness and phonics can be found in the Literacy Teaching Toolkit in the Speaking and Listening, Writing, and Reading and Viewing sections. Phonological awareness.

The Literacy Teaching Toolkit tells us that phonological awareness skills can be conceptualised within a sequence of increasing complexity. These skills are syllable awareness... ..rhyme awareness and production, alliteration, sorting initial and final sounds, onset-rime segmentation... ..initial and final sound segmentation... ..blending sounds into words... ..segmenting words into sounds, and deleting and manipulating sounds. Phonological awareness: The Literacy Teaching Toolkit. Phonological awareness is a crucial skill to develop in children. It is strongly linked to early reading and spelling success through its association with phonics. The Phonological Awareness Learning Progression.

This is a visual of the Phonological Awareness Literacy Learning Progression that can be used as a tool to facilitate a deeper understanding of literacy development. They can be used to support all teachers in Victorian schools in developing a comprehensive view of literacy and how literacy develops over time. They support teachers to understand individual students' literacy development, independent of curriculum area, and they can assist teachers in developing targeted teaching and learning programs. The Learning Progressions can be found on the Victorian Curriculum website. Phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness refers to the specific ability to focus on and manipulate individual sounds, phonemes, in spoken words. Phonemes are the smallest units comprising spoken language. Phonemes combine to form syllables and words.

For example, the word "mat" has three phonemes. M-A-T. There are 44 phonemes in the English language, including sounds represented by the letter combinations, such as "th." Acquiring phonemic awareness is important because it is the foundation for spelling and word recognition skills. Phonemic awareness is one of the best predictors of how well students will learn to read during the first two years of school instruction. Phonics.

Phonics is the mapping of speech sounds, phonemes, to letters or letter patterns, ie, graphemes. Phonics instruction. While the importance of phonics teaching is now universally accepted, the way phonics is best taught continues to be debated. What is agreed, however, is that the teaching of literacy should incorporate evidence-informed practices which include a place for explicit and systematic phonics instruction.

As with all literacy learning, phonics instruction should take place within a meaningful, communicative, rich pedagogy, and within genuine literacy events. The Literacy Teaching Toolkit. The Literacy Teaching Toolkit has sample phonics lessons that outline the lesson overview, the Victorian Curriculum links, the learning intention and success criteria, the lesson sequence, resources, and reference the High Impact Teaching Strategies.

So how can we ensure that our phonics and word study instruction is authentic and meaningful? We can ask ourselves the following questions when planning and teaching phonics and word study. How have I included explicit phonics instruction in my reading and writing workshops? How have I differentiated my phonics instruction? What forms of assessment will I use to differentiate my phonics instruction? How am I using feedback to drive the phonics learning forward? How can I integrate phonics instruction into my reading, writing, spelling, vocabulary, and speaking and listening activities? How can I teach phonics and word study in a variety of ways? Can my student's transfer what they learn about phonics into their own reading and writing? What mentor texts and modelling strategies will I use when teaching phonics?

What independent learning tasks will I facilitate to allow for practise and mastery over newly-acquired phonics learning? So how are schools around Victoria facilitating their phonics instruction? Three examples. We are going to share examples of how three schools in different Victorian locations have adapted to cope with the changes that they have had to make in the delivery of their phonics and word study instruction.

You will notice that even though their programs arrive differently to students' homes, learning is still differentiated, authentic and engaging. The first school we're going to look at is Hamlyn Banks Primary School. Hamlyn Banks Primary School is located in the Barwon South Western region. It has an enrolment of 370 students and 37 staff members.

So how are teachers of F-2 students at Hamlyn Banks Primary School continuing to teach phonics and word study in a meaningful, authentic way? Teachers are timetabled to meet with their professional learning team and a curriculum coach to plan a teaching and learning unit of work which is made available for families each week. The plans are designed to be accessible for all students and are available via Compass, or hard copies can be collected from the school if necessary. Each plan outlines daily essential work.

The weekly learning plan includes reading, writing and word study activities that students can complete with their families during the week at their own pace. Each professional learning team, along with their curriculum coach, plans units of work that are engaging and are able to be accomplished with minimal resources in the home setting. All planning is guided by the Victorian Curriculum. You can see some of the relevant links here.

And student data is able to be followed up during weekly teaching and student Webex conferences. Online phonics and reading program. Identifying that many of our students didn't have access to large, varied home libraries, the leadership team researched and purchased a subscription to an online phonics and reading program for F-2 students and additional 3-6 students who require extra support in this area. An Australian program was ultimately chosen because it included components of our existing phonics and word study program, it is differentiated, engaging and integrated.

It also gives our students access to a wide library with levelled books that are visually appealing, interesting to students and cover a variety of genres. Hamlyn Banks Primary School already used another program with free access to many levelled online books. Teachers' weeks are structured to facilitate teaching and learning as closely as possible to FISO Essential Element 1, having a documented curriculum plan, assessment and shared pedagogical approaches. Daily whole-class meetings allow teachers and students to interact with each other, check in on students' social and emotional well-being, and to teach explicitly.

Our teachers discuss their whole-class phonics instruction. "We teach phonics daily during our whole class meetings. We start with whole words, break them down into their individual sounds, and then talk about the letters using letter names. We introduce words that reinforce letter/sound relationships learned in previous weeks." "During our whole class meetings, I provide explicit instruction on onset and rime using familiar rhyming patterns, application of letter/sound knowledge through CVC word segmenting and blending, handwriting using verbal pathways." "We always use mentor texts to discuss how authors use letters, sounds and words to enrich their writing." "Cued articulation reinforces student knowledge of letters and sounds and how the sounds are produced." Students and their families complete a weekly timetable that allows for flexibility of timing when learning tasks are completed.

Specialist classes are attended via Webex, as are daily class meetings and individual conferences. Individual conferences are goal-based, differentiated, curriculum-aligned, planned, used for continuous assessment, drive future planning, and are feedback driven. The conferences allow teachers and students to address explicit learning needs. These one-on-one conferences are structured around individual student goals.

Teachers gather formative assessment from their students, such as letter and sound identification, high-frequency word acquisition, reading and writing, and use this knowledge to confer and give powerful, individualised feedback to drive learning forward. Teachers can assess students' phonics growth during individual conferences. Teachers are maintaining their previous formative assessment practices and checking in each week with how all of their students are progressing with their phonics and word study growth. They are maintaining concise, explicit records of their students' achievement and growth.

Teachers' weekly plans are differentiated in response to the information they are getting from their students' individual conferences. Teachers at Hamlyn Banks Primary School are celebrating students' remote learning success. At Hamlyn Banks Primary School, we are looking forward to getting back to face-to-face teaching, but we have enjoyed the uninterrupted time we have had with students during their individual student conferences.

- (Woman) Hi, guys, my name's Flick. I'm gonna talk to you about working remotely at Woori Yallock Primary School for Foundation to Year 2 students in the phonics area. So, Woori Yallock is located in the Yarra Valley, with 352 students, 17 grades. There's four Foundation classes and five grade 1-2 composites. So how is Woori Yallock working remotely?

So, this is just an insight into how we're working remotely here at Woori. We're using an asynchronous model where we are having no face-to-face contact with our students. We're using Google Classrooms across the whole school, including Foundation to 2, and we're engaging our students through videos, and then a mix between online tasks and tasks that they can do in a book and take a photo of. It's important for whatever you decide to do online to know your context and what will work best for your students and families. How can we still differentiate during this time of remote learning?

So, this is a hard one. Differentiation is still an important part of our practice through this remote learning time. When thinking about how to differentiate phonics instructions through this time, when we're not face-to-face with our students, it's imperative that we are able to find their point of need. So we need to think outside the box here.

So we have the data from Heidi Mesmer's Letter Lessons And First Words placement test from the start of term one for all of our Foundation to Year 2 students. But we knew this data was now eight weeks old. Although better than nothing, we really wanted to test our preps. So what the prep teachers did is that they created a PowerPoint which the teachers sent to the parents two minutes before a scheduled phone call. The teachers then went through the PowerPoint with the students and parents to gather new data. Whilst we know that this is not something that's perfect, it gave us a baseline to be able to differentiate the next sequence of lessons that we can run online. Knowing that our F-2 students need hands-on material to support them, we also sent home packs for the students to use.

So this included things like letter strips, flashcards, activities to help with onset rime and CVC words, and a set of most common words. This is so that we could use these to base our lessons around, that they had that material there, there was nothing that the families needed to make. So making sure we're using the classroom feed for support. So, each week, a notice is also put on the stream for parents to come and pick up a pack for their children to work on at home for the week ahead. I'm not sure if you can see... ..very clearly in this picture, but you can see there's different packs for different groups of students. This is the information taken from the testing which was done on the phone.

So, although we prioritise a standalone spelling hour, we explicitly move through the curriculum, making sure we have directed the instruction to point a need for the students. We also make sure that we've got some fun games and warm-ups in our reading and writing. So this one's called WordShake game. It's a bit like Boggle. This is a missing letter game.

So you can see, it's that initial sound. This one's called Unscramble, and you can see there's a picture and they're unscrambling the words. When the kids are doing this at home, they're just doing it on a whiteboard. So finally, choosing text to support you in a read aloud or shared read is also really important. So although you may be using them in an online context, and the students are engaged with them on different levels, it is important that we're using these platforms to still focus on different phonemic awareness and phonics instruction.

This is where you're able to expose the students to different parts of words that may not be at their point of need, but it's still important for them to be exposed to. So this is just what we're doing at Woori. And we can go into more detail on this in the webinars. Thanks.

Maffra Primary School is located in Gippsland. There are about 300 children enrolled at the school. Whilst recognising that for all of us, remote learning has brought with it a range of challenges, it's been a timely reminder of the power and benefits of partnering as a school community. The teachers have gone into term two with a clear and flexible plan of what they are aiming to achieve. This has meant having a shared understanding with others in their team of what is important and essential learning for this term.

When planning, the teachers have continued to refer to what they know about each child and where they are in their developmental journey and previously used curriculum planning documents. We value providing our teachers with professional texts which support current research so the teachers are up-to-date with why they teach the way they do, how they teach and what to teach for effective phonic construction. These are some of the professional texts available to the teachers. Many are recommended in the Bastow Literacy Data Assessment Practice course and the Literacy For Local Leaders course.

The teachers aim to provide the students with quality literacy experiences during the literacy block and integrated throughout the day. To assist teachers when making instructional decisions in term two with remote learning, we have referred to the whole school assessment schedule and are using whatever data we have available. Where we have found evidence that students have progressed beyond the data, we are readjusting our goals and our programs. Some of these data sources were collated so, at a glance, teachers could celebrate what the cohort and individual students had in place, and could be used to identify the students' next areas of need. The teachers have made thoughtful decisions about when to explicitly demonstrate a strategy, and when to plant the seeds of an enquiry, or invite or provoke curiosity in a phonic investigation.

We highly value having good quality books in the homes of our families, so the school library is open at designated times each day. Linking learning from school to home, the students created their own home word walls. Familiar classroom charts and cards have been sent home as scaffolds to support word study. We promote and reference department resources designed to support children with early literacy acquisition at home, such as the booklet Literacy And Numeracy Hints And Tips To Help Your Child Every Day.

With the pedagogy and resources in place and data available to assist with planning, the teachers have continued team planning meetings via Webex each week. The school's literacy coach may also participate in these meetings. On the screen is an example of the foundation planner. For the purpose of this presentation, the days chosen have an emphasis on word study, the tasks are open, and the students are given feedback sent through Dojo. Families are messaged when tasks need to be modified and differentiated to particular student goals.

To support literacy development, including learning to decode and encode print, we expect families to read aloud to their children every day. And we expect the children to read every day. This could be their level take-home book, or they could read, browse, re-tell or paraphrase favourite library books. We encourage the children to write every day, and to talk about events, books, words, letters and sounds every day. In this morning message, we see the teacher has shared a piece of student learning and has posed the question, "Can you guess who's done this rhyming today?" The answer to the question was provided in the afternoon message, as well as words of sincere thanks and encouragement to all the families, reinforcing the vital role families are playing in the success of learning from home. This learning task was described in the lesson plan for parents, then presented in the morning message as a challenge for the students, and comes across as an engaging way to generate interest, encouraging the students to participate in the task. The teacher reminded the children to watch the video, where she explicitly demonstrated how the children could generate and record words that rhyme.

Our adored classroom teddy bear is almost guaranteed to get the students interested in the task and learning. Over time, Ted has stimulated many discussions and has set up an assortment of scenarios. On this particular morning, the children wake up on pyjama day to discover Ted is feeling a little bit lazy and does not want to get out of bed. He does, however, arrange the letters of his alphabet cards to create some words. In the next post, the teacher lets the students know that she intends to challenge Ted to keep thinking and make up some more words and reminds the children how to stretch and blend the sounds in words to successfully read them.

When samples of student learning are posted onto Dojo in the students' portfolios, the teachers give feedback to the students, naming the strengths of their writing and adding a consideration for future writing to reinforce or move the student forward in their learning. Student samples continue to be discussed at Webex PLC meetings, where the teachers discuss the evidence they have of student learning, where to next for the student, and how they might consider getting there. The word wall was a valuable classroom resource and the students had been taught how to use the class word wall in term one.

During home learning, the students have made their own home word walls, which contain an assortment of words the students can read and write. The class teacher either directly asks students to put a particular word on their word wall or reminds the students to keep adding words they are learning to their wall. They are encouraged to regularly read the words on their word wall and to refer to these words when they are writing.

As teachers, we are continually reinforcing to families that they are doing a great job, that we love the support they are providing. We urge them to keep doing what they can and encourage them to please ask us when they need help. Despite the challenges of remote learning, we are delighted with some of the artefacts the students are creating to demonstrate their learning. Phonic knowledge is deemed an important and necessary part of learning for our students, and features strongly in daily tasks. So that's a snapshot of some of the phonic and phonemic awareness learning and teaching occurring at Maffra Primary School within a balanced literacy program. Thank you.

We have seen three examples of Victorian schools teaching phonics and word study in the flexible and remote learning context. Although there are many differences, there are also important similarities. All highlight the importance of developing a balanced literacy program which is informed by data, integrated, authentic, differentiated, engaging, developmental and purposeful. Thanks to Carol Hodgson, Felicity Curnow, Cathie Sutton, Kirrily George and Cathy Buchanan-Hagen for contributing to this presentation.

Thank you all for watching For Teachers By Teachers: Reading F-2 Phonics. We hope you gained some insight about maintaining best practice whilst teaching phonics and word study in the flexible and remote learning context. To register for the accompanying webinars on Wednesday 20th May and Thursday 4th June from 4pm to 5pm, visit the Bastow website. Thanks, everybody. Best of luck.