



The Learning Institute

Reading: intervention work

Overview

It is a statutory requirement for all maintained Key Stage 1 settings to teach reading via a systematic synthetic phonics approach. In addition, all settings, other than independent schools, are required to administer the Year 1 Phonic Screening test for all 5/6-year olds. This CPD is therefore based on an assumption that practitioners will in some ways already be familiar with the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics within their setting.

Many teaching assistants, in Key Stage 1 and 2, have the role of supporting learners whose reading is below expected level attainment, and for a minority of these learners a systematic phonic approach has not worked for them. However, if a learner fails the Year 1 phonic test, he/she is required to re-take the test again in Year 2. The dilemma for practitioners then, is do we do more of the same (i.e. teach the phonic programme again)?, or are there alternative routes to teach the skills required to become effective readers?

To make informed professional choices about teaching and learning, practitioners need to be knowledgeable about the subject area. This CPD aims to provide an **introduction** to some of the key issues around reading and the phonics debate.

Target audience

Teaching Assistants in KS1/KS2, adults involved in supporting learners who require reading intervention work

Duration

Approximately 1 hour

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Introduction

Learning to read is an essential skill for today's society and has become a high priority for governments around the world. Many countries have set reading age targets for learners, and there seems to be increasing competitive demands on practitioners. In England this is manifested through the requirement for Year 1 learners to undertake a national phonic screening test, and end of Key Stage 1 reading assessment. The outcomes of these results are formally recorded and used for evaluation of setting success by Ofsted.

Becoming a successful reader is a strong indicator of future academic attainment, so:- *How best can learners be taught to read?* The answer to this question is complex and has been under global scrutiny over past decades. In 2006 the Department for Education and Skills published the Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading, otherwise known as the Rose Review which is available at

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130321055757/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/0201-2006PDF-EN-01.pdf>.

This review recommended the teaching of synthetic phonics, taught systematically, as the primary approach in the teaching of early reading skills. Rose recommended fidelity to this one approach, not to mix methods of teaching reading. Since then this review has strongly influenced the teaching of early reading skills in all schools in England. All practitioners involved in the teaching of reading will have been influenced by recommendations from this review, which also underpinned the statutory requirements for the teaching of reading in the 2014 National Curriculum for England (Department for Education (DfE), 2013).

Task 1 explores underpinning principles involved in the process of teaching early reading. It examines how the current trends in the teaching of early reading skills have emerged and considers alternatives to this approach.

Task 2 explores the notion that for a minority of learners the systematic teaching of synthetic phonics may not work. When this happens, and learners fall below expected level of attainment, intervention work may be provided by settings. It examines how practitioners, who are usually teaching assistants assigned the role of intervention teacher, can enhance learning opportunities for learners.

Task 3 asks for a reflection on this learning experience and for you to consider how this CPD may impact on your future practice.

Objectives

- To gain an understanding of issues around the teaching of early reading skills
- To explore and reflect upon alternative reading strategies

Resources

Pen and paper for note taking

Internet access to following:

- Phonic Debate [video] available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkMCsVCerAU>
- Michael Rosen [video] available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4uocSjKclQ>

Task 1

Within this task you will be expected to:

- Gain an understanding of principles underpinning the current teaching of reading in English schools.
- Reflect upon what you know about how reading skills are acquired.

As previously mentioned, the 2006 Rose Review, available at <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130321055757/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/0201-2006PDF-EN-01.pdf>, has greatly influenced the current teaching of reading in all maintained, academy and free schools (this encompasses the majority of schools in England). Recommendations from this review included the teaching of early reading skills through a synthetic phonics approach and advocating that learners need to be able to decode words to become proficient readers. These recommendations were comprehensively followed through in the majority of schools in England, and were supported by Government funding, free training and resources. In addition to the recommendations in the Rose Review (2006), the Year 1 Phonic Screening test (DfE, 2019) is dependent upon learners being taught via a synthetic phonics approach. So, if settings use alternative strategies to that recommended, will this hamper attainment in the tests? Why does this matter?

Since 2006 academics have argued for and against this one size fits all approach to the teaching of reading. However, the new 2014 National Curriculum for England (NC) (DfE, 2013) adapted the recommendations from Rose and ensured the teaching of reading via a synthetic phonics approach was made statutory for settings required to follow the NC.

However, the acquisition of reading skills has not always relied on a phonic approach. During the 1970s onwards, this approach was dismissed from many primary settings in England. So, how do we learn to read? This is the view of children's author Michael Rosen:

“There’s one thing we know for certain about learning how to read: we do not know exactly how it is that each and every single child does it. What’s more, even when we think we know, it’s quite possible that we don’t. I’ll explain that: it is simply not possible to summate every single relevant language experience that a child has which may lead to that child being able to read. For example, crucial breakthrough in cracking the problem might be achieved by a child reading a crisp packet, playing an older sibling’s computer, reading advertisements, learning stories off by heart and finding them in books, writing thank you letters for birthday presents and so on.”

(Rosen, p.124 cited in Lewis and Ellis, 2007)

- Think back upon your earliest memories of learning to read (if you cannot remember ask family members). What did you read? Did you like or dislike reading? Why?
- As an adult, what reading strategies do you know of or have experience of e.g. Look and Say, analytical phonics... etc.

Now watch Video 1, *Phonic Debate*, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkMCsVCerAU, to discover some of the concerns about Rose's 2006 recommendations. Although this clip is relatively old it is important to recognise the issues that remain current and impact on today's teaching of reading. Reflect on how the teaching of synthetic phonics has moved on since this 2007 debate, and what was once contentious has become the norm.

- Note the key points made by each participant in the video.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of a synthetic phonics approach?

Task 2

Within this task you will:

- Explore and reflect upon alternative reading strategies

In the summary of the Rose Review (DfE, 2006, pp.4-6), available at <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130321055757/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/0201-2006PDF-EN-01.pdf>, quality first teaching is identified as a key feature of successful learning. Rose implies the quality of teaching is as important as the content of what is taught. Page 6 identifies what quality first teaching involves:- imaginative, skilful, engaging, and motivating teaching.

How can intervention sessions engage and motivate learners, especially considering that the individuals concerned are in need of additional support?

There is no single reason why learners struggle to read, or decode words, through a synthetic phonic approach. The Rose Review (DfE, 2006, p. 6) also states that learning should be observed and evaluated to assess individual needs.

If learners' individual needs differ, think about the following points:

- Will giving more of the same (phonics work) be enough?
- How can intervention sessions be engaging, and motivational and skilful for learners who may be struggling with reading?

There are a range of commercially available and online materials to help teach reading. Look and Say, Analytical Phonics and Real Reading are all known approaches that have been applied to teaching and learning over the past century, and theory underpinning these methods can be accessed via search engines such as Google. The 2014 National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) identifies the content of the reading curriculum, and the progressive stages for teaching phonics. Settings

may advocate using a specific teaching approach but, as stated by Rose, it is the teaching and delivery of materials that can make a difference to attainment.

Engagement and motivation to read should be at the forefront of all teaching, or as Wyse (2013, p. 88) states 'Unless someone is motivated to read then learning to read is less likely to happen'.

In the next video, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4uocSjKclQ, Michael Rosen presents his biased view but the message he delivers is the importance of reading high quality literature, enriching learners' language and engagement with reading through the provision of stimulating text.

- How much intervention time is planned for the reading of stories and exploration of text in your setting? Can you influence this? How?

Task 3: Reflection on learning

Note down your responses to the following questions:

- What knowledge did I already have that has been refreshed by this CPD?
- How has this CPD developed my knowledge and understanding?
- How can I apply what I now know to my practice?

Sources

CPD College (2016) *Teachers TV: Phonics*. 24 March. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkMCsVCerAU> (Accessed: 19 April 2020)

Department for Education and Skills (2006) *The Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading*. Available at: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130321055757/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/0201-2006PDF-EN-01.pdf> (Accessed: 19 April 2020)

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Lewis, M. and Ellis, S. (2007) *Phonics: Practice, Research and Policy*. London: Sage.

Wyse, D. et al (2013) *Creating the Curriculum*. Abingdon: Routledge.

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