

# **Psych Ed**

## **Assessment Services**

250 Eglinton Ave. West • Suite 255 • Toronto, On M4R 1A7 • Tel: 416.488.4737 • Fax: 416 488 2913 [www.psych-ed.ca](http://www.psych-ed.ca)

### **Development and Teaching of Phonological Reading Skills**

Phonological processing refers to the process of identifying the sounds which make up words and connecting these sounds to letters, e.g. if you can “read” the following letters, “br,” you have related the correct sounds to these letters.

Between three and four years of age, if the child can say a word that rhymes with another one, e.g. what word can rhyme with “cat”, he/she has the foundation for phonological processing.

Between five and six years of age, if the child can identify the beginning and ending sound of a word he/she hears, phonological development is progressing normally.

Between five and seven years of age, the child learns to relate sounds to letters. This requires auditory and visual processing. Some children can hear the beginning and ending sounds of words, hear/identify the syllables of a longer word, but have difficulties relating what they hear to the written letters/words.

If the child has difficulties with spelling, he/she has weak phonological processing.

If the child misreads words which look similar, e.g. great for greet, this is due to weak phonological processing. The child, therefore, has to make use of whole word recognition, which is dependent on memory. This strategy is more prone to errors than phonological reading.

If spelling problems and misreading of words occur, the child needs “direct instruction” in reading and spelling skills, i.e. explicit teaching of the letter sequences which make up words. This is best done by teaching words which have a similar structure and have frequently used letter combinations, e.g. words ending in -at, -ing or beginning with br- or fr-. The “Empower Reading Program” and the “Direct Instruction” books available from McGraw Hill Publisher are good resources for teaching basic reading skills.

Using a multisensory approach will be also helpful, i.e. teach slowly using more than one sense:

1. adult reads the word out loud – child hears the word
2. adult writes the word, using different colour pencils to high-light the letter combination being taught – child sees the word
3. child reads the word out loud
4. child writes the word using the same colour pencils as the parent.

The “Hop-On-Reading” book of series supports the Orton-Gillingham structured reading program. There are tutors trained in this well-established method.

Another approach successfully used by private tutors is the Barton method.

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### Phonological Reading Skills – Page 2

#### **Letter reversals/mirror writing, e.g. b-d, p-q confusion, writing s in mirror fashion:**

These mistakes, if they occur in a child older than six years of age, are due to a developmental delay in the brain's ability to identify the directionality of certain lines. It occurs rarely after the age of eight. If a child has this difficulty, learning to read is extremely difficult, as bread can be seen as dreab.

Provision of a piece of paper which has these letters written in large font will help.

It will be helpful to practice how to write b, d, j and z correctly using the hand which does not hold the pencil as an orientation tool.

If the child is right handed, then he/she can be taught that the “belly” of the b faces away from the hand which does not have the pencil and d faces the other way (for left handed children it is the other way around).

If the child writes B correctly, he/she could be also taught to always write B and then erase the top bubble if he needs b.