

Updated Pink, Blue, Green Reading Scheme - Introduction

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What is not essential:

- Extensive pre-reading exercises
- Reading comprehension exercises
- Spelling focus in the phonics program

Skills That Must Come First

- Auditory accuracy – I Spy game, Nursery Rhymes & poems; must hear *all* sounds in a word
- Visual acuity and tracking
- Visual memory – essential for spelling
- Confidence: “*Teach by teaching, not by correcting.*” Maria Montessori; Redirect or ignore

Left-right tracking and necessary cognitive development

- Crossing the midline smoothly is essential to fluent reading.
- Cross-pattern movements, such as a cross-pattern march, running, and skipping aid this skill.
- Walking the line, with extension exercises, requires a refined level of this cross-pattern organization and develops it. It should be a daily part of your offering.

Visual memory exercises

- Extensions and games with the Dimensional Materials, such the games using two rugs
- Classic memory game played with a set of matching cards
- Poseable Figure Exercise using a miniature artists’ mannequin and photo cards of poses to reproduce; excellent for children who are no longer in the 3-6 classroom with those materials
- Geoboards and cards with figures to reproduce

Content That Must Come First

- Letters have names and sounds
- Two letter types: vowels & consonants
- Vowels have more than one sound
- Individual letter/sound associations
- Some letter combinations make a new sound

Options to teach the consonant sounds and first vowel sounds (short sound)

- Sandpaper letters displayed out on molding on the wall at the children’s eye level
- Small group with pink cards – first sounds only, lower case only
- Consonant shelf – 4 to 6 exercises to teach and explore the sounds in groups of 4 or 5
- A successful grouping option:
 - bfnz
 - dmrx
 - kptw
 - cjsv
 - ghlqy

Traditional Pink, Blue, Green Scheme

- Pink: 3 letter, short vowel words
- Blue: 4 letter short vowel words, always includes consonant blends (sl, pr, sp, etc.); sometimes includes consonant digraphs (th, sh, wh, ch)
- Green: Rest of the phonograms, introduced individually with those having two sounds presented separately (“ow” in cow, plow separate from “ow” in bowl, row, low)

Problems with that System

- Puzzle Words
- Color-coding not used to its full potential
- Incomplete
- Upside down sound-symbol association
- Content is usually OK, but skills are often slighted

Key Phonics Skills

- Blending
- Educated guess sequence
- Sounding out to hear the right guess

Remedial Montessori?

May not be essential for children in a complete, three year program starting before age 3.5

As long as it is done as demonstrated, children benefit and enjoy it.

Period 2.5 of the Three Period Lesson

- A chance to speak out new information
- Group works best
- Must be kept very, very short
- Attendance is optional – the silliness option below helps if many student choose to skip

The Cards and the Importance

Pink Cards – all the letters: lower case, one sound for each letter (short sound of the vowels)

Blue Cards – all the letters plus consonant digraphs: lower case and capitals, all sounds given

Green Cards – remaining phonograms: all sounds given

Backs of the cards give all the sounds with a sample word. The word is not spoken with the children. It is to help the teacher know the sounds to say in isolation.

If it suits your personality, image cards can be included purely for fun silliness. They are not given letter names unless you are certain every child in the group has mastered that letter strongly enough to correct you. “Snoodforp” (laughter, “no, it’s a rocket!), “What?! Are you sure? I could have sworn it was a snoodforp!”

Most systems focus on all the ways to spell one sound, rather than all the sounds one letter or letter combination may have. This means the information the child needs when doing an educated guess sequence is not readily available. Unless the child is given all the sounds to try out when they encounter a letter or letter combination, the system is upside down.

Complete Program

- Complete set of sounds
- All the sounds of all the consonants
- All consonant sound digraphs, including ti, ci, and si.
- All the vowel phonograms
- All the sounds of individual vowels, including third sound and the schwa sound for a, o, and e.

Useful Collection of Words

- High frequency words should be used in favor of less common words.
- Words that are interesting to children should be chosen when possible.
- Entire program needs to include sample lists of all common word patterns.

Reading English Fluently and Spelling English Accurately

The only way to effectively learn to read English is to apply an educated-guess sequence to any not yet familiar word.

Accurate spelling of English requires a visual strategy.

Example words that make this clear: nickel, pickle, label, able, missile, whistle, freeze, seize, peas, great, late, bait, straight, strait, floor, pour, soar, sore, tough, stuff, playwright (!). For a few hundred more examples in the form of a humorous poem: <http://www.kith.org/logos/words/lower3/ggginger.html>

Only mental pictures can accurately retain spellings with so many silent letters, dual and triple spellings of a single sound, double letters, and homonyms.

Take a cue from excellent spellers. When asked how they know a word is correct, “It just looks right.”

Make the Most of Color-coding

Pink: Always signals the short vowel sound.

Blue: Always signals the long vowel sound; the letter says its name.

Green: Keep sounding.

Make first grammar exercises easier.

Ease the transition to long sounds.

Puzzle Words

One Montessori publication includes the description by the author that these words “follow no rules whatsoever.” Except for a tiny set of words – *eye* and *of* – this is not true. Though most of these words have a tricky vowel sound, a tricky silent letter, or both, they can still be sounded out with some help.

Also called:

Sight words – All words a child has mastered become “sight words”. No word starts out as a sight word.

High Frequency Words – This is a true description but it does not justify teaching the words without the help of the phonetic sounding out process.

“Puzzle Words” – An Easier Way

- Group the words by their vowel sounds. (They are usually short and have only one vowel sound)
- Use color-coding to help the child know which vowel sound is in the word.
- Use hint images to help the child know the vowel sound for all the words on that list or page.
- Cross out silent letters that do not make the previous vowel say its long sound.
- Underline letters that work together to indicate a single sound (th, wh, gh, ou, oi, ew)

Sequence of Instruction

1. First sounds of all the letters
2. Pink cards used in small group exercises
3. Pink shelf exercises and readers
4. Beginning grammar exercises with written words
5. Blue cards used in small group exercises
6. First Keys to Reading booklet and list cards - exercises to master high frequency words
7. Blue shelf exercises and readers
8. Green cards used in small group exercises
9. First Keys to Reading booklet and list pages used in partner exercises to master high frequency words; continue to work though until all are mastered.
10. Continuing grammar exercises with color coding used to make reading the words easier
11. Green shelf exercises and readers

Recommended Readers

Phonics Practice Readers from **Modern Curriculum Press (MCP)**

Flyleaf Press – Great Montessori-based sets; use *with* MCP for a complete sequence

Starfall – Their program is not at all complete, but their cut-apart books are extremely inexpensive and great for send-home readers to use starting when the child has about mastered the Pink level

A Beka Books also has excellent, tiny, paper beginning readers – some have Christian content

Readers to Suggest to Parents for Use at Home

Bob Books by Bobby Lynn Maslen & John R. Maslen, now published by Scholastic

Now I'm Reading, Series for Beginning Readers by Nora Gaydos and B.B. Sams from Innovative Kids –
Level 1 to 4 only, pre-readers are not recommended

If your phonics program is complete, and all the necessary skills are taught, children should not need phonics controlled (or difficulty controlled) readers once they complete the Green portion of your program. Children's books of various lengths on many nonfiction topics, as well as good stories, should be in the classroom. Children moving out of phonetic readers do tend to love "tiny" books – literally hand-size, not just short.

Beginning Reader Shelf Exercises

- Label and object
- Label and picture
- Fill in the blank
- Mix-Ups, Fix-Ups
- Sentences: Give _____ a _____.

- Long Lists
- Little Books

Word List Partner Exercises

- Read my word
- Guess my word
- Found a noun
- Verb blurb
- Partner spelling tests

If you have any questions, or if your school would be interested in offering more in-depth training on the Pink, Blue, Green sequence or other Montessori topics, please email me:
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