Phonics is both knowledge of letter-sound relationships and reading instruction that teaches students to make the connections between phonemes (sounds) and the graphemes (letters).

And the Research says...:

- The ability to decode is NOT strongly linked to intelligence.*

- Working memory (short-term) IS a factor in being able to decode, as is development of phonological awareness. Connors et al. (2001) - "Working memory may be the single most reliable predictor of reading ability among individuals with MR." (Connors, 2003, p. 212)

- Vocabulary knowledge is highly correlated with learning to decode; phonological awareness was also correlated with this but not to the degree that vocabulary knowledge was. (Hulme et al., 2012)
Beginning instruction when students are younger is helpful (Burgyone et al., 2012)
– BUT older individuals can also benefit from phonics instruction (e.g., Moni, Jobling, Morgan, & Lloyd, 2011)

Decoding instruction must be structured and explicit (e.g., Allor et al., 2010; Browder et al., 2012)

Individuals with severe disabilities require intensive and sustained instruction to demonstrate meaningful growth (Allor et al., 2010; Burgoyne et al., 2012)
– Importance of using meaningful and engaging activities (Morgan et al., 2006)

Effective Phonics Instruction

★ Builds on students’ prior knowledge of print functions
★ Is explicit, i.e., clear
★ Is integrated into a comprehensive reading program – focus on reading words and understanding (meaning) (not just drill & practice decoding!)
★ Is integrated with writing
★ Starts with Assessment: determine what letter/sound correspondences a student already knows before beginning instruction

Phonics Instruction

• Analytic (implicit)
  Whole – Part – Whole
  sat /s/ sat

• Synthetic (explicit)
  Part – whole
  s = /s/ /s/ /a/ /t/ sat

• Patterns (word families)

Sequencing Levels of Difficulty

• Begin instruction with sounds in the initial position
  – cat, tan, map
• Then teach sounds in the final position
  – cap, nap
• Then teach sounds in the medial position
  – ca, nap,
One Suggested Sequence of Instruction

1. Letter Names/Phonemic Awareness
2. Initial consonants
3. Short vowels
4. Easy long vowels, Final consonants
5. Initial-consonant clusters (bl)
6. Long vowels: final –e marker
7. Long-vowel diagraphs (th = /th/ and trigraphs (igh = /i/
8. Advanced consonant correspondences
9. R-controlled correspondences (her)
10. Other Vowel correspondences

Format for Explicit Phonics Instruction

1. Bombard students with correct models.
2. Provide structured practice.
3. Assess learning, e.g., using a phonics game (remember, assessment doesn’t have to always be a formal testing situation!)
4. Provide opportunities for students to share what they’ve learned.

Other Instructional Methods for teaching phonics

• picture cues,
• response prompts, modeling,
• computer programs,
• the Nonverbal Reading approach, and
• published reading programs

Some published Reading Programs that Include Phonics Instruction

• Early Literacy Skills Builder (has high quality research that demonstrates its effectiveness with students with severe disabilities)
• Building With Stories (uses shared storybook reading to build concepts about print and early phonological awareness skills.)
• Early Reading Interventions in Reading (research supports it use with young students with ID)
• Reading and Language Intervention for Children with Down Syndrome (has high quality research demonstrating its effectiveness with students with DS)
Examples of Active Phonics Practice

- **Phonics Exploration**
  - Give student (or group) a card with letter on it – practice sound(s) letter makes
  - Tell student/group to find as many things that begin with the sound the letter makes as possible:
    - Make a list
    - Label the items with a sticky note
    - Go around the school and take a digital picture of every item you find that begins with that sound. Create a book with pictures/labels.
    - Or, do this on a field trip or have children bring in pics they took at home or in the community.

Using environmental print to develop letter/sound knowledge and writing

- Venn Diagrams for Vowel Sounds: CVC vs CVCe
  - On a Dry erase board, teachers can work with small groups to teach or review vowel sounds in the context of words. This type of comparison helps readers pay closer attention to the unique differences between words that, on a glance, look the same.

Examples of Active Phonics Practice

Phonics Feelies
• Fill a bag with items that begin with sounds students have studied
  – Ask student to reach into the bag, select an item and without looking, say what it is (label it), what sound it begins with, and what letter it begins with.
  – Make it more challenging by asking about ending sound/letter or medial sound/letter
  – Alternatively, "put your hand in the bag and find something that begins with ______ sound (e.g. /sh/)"

Word Families
*This approach has students break words into onsets (the part of the syllable that comes before the vowel) and rimes (part of the syllable that begins with a vowel); recognize similarities between words based on their rimes

Example: -at family
* bat
* cat
* hat
* sat

Word Families Approach
• Has students break words into onsets (the part of the syllable that comes before the vowel) and rimes (part of the syllable that begins with a vowel); recognize similarities between words based on their rimes

• Example: -at family
  – bat
  – cat
  – hat
  – sat

Closed Word Sort (by rime)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/-ip/</th>
<th>/-ell/</th>
<th>/-op/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>skip</td>
<td>fell</td>
<td>top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lip</td>
<td>tell</td>
<td>lop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sip</td>
<td>well</td>
<td>mop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drip</td>
<td>sell</td>
<td>drop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Remember: Keep instruction active and practice within meaningful contexts

Two Useful Resources:

Systematic sequential phonics they use for beginning readers of all ages. (P. Cunningham, 2000, Greensboro, NC: Carson-Dellosa Publishing Co.)

Published Resources for Making Words Lessons
(All by Patricia M. Cunningham)

• Making Words: Multilevel, Hands-On, Developmentally Appropriate Spelling and Phonics Activities
• Systematic sequential phonics they use for beginning readers of all ages.
• Making More Words
• Month-by-Month Phonics for First Grade: Systematic, Multilevel Instruction for First Grade (Month-By-Month)

Next Week (Week 8):
• Read
  - Morgan et al. (2006) article
  - Allor & Chard (2011) article on fluency
  - Chapter 5 in your text (fluency)
• Finish Discussion of Phonics;
• Discuss fluency and instructional activities to develop fluency
• Turn in Part 2 of the Literacy Project: Comprehensive Assessment & Instructional Plan