

The thinking behind AlphaKids



Literacy is integrated ...

Reading, writing, listening and speaking all work together in early literacy development. When children *write*, they explore how sounds, letters and words are used to make meaning. When they *read* they match their spoken language one-to-one with the written text. When they begin to *read and write* they explore the similarities and differences between spoken and written language. Noticing these similarities and differences helps both forms of language to grow and, in turn, reading acts as a model to extend children's spoken and written language.

Reading is ...

Reading begins in the years before school and continues throughout school. Emergent readers are acquiring conceptual knowledge about the uses of print, and moving to the point where they can read and write independently for purposes that are relevant for them.

Different texts prompt readers to integrate all the *searchlight cues*. Sometimes searching the illustrations will be of prime importance; at other times decoding a word will be central.

Literacy development is cyclical ...

Literacy development is a cyclical process. Development is not a simple linear pattern, and occurs along many dimensions at once. For example, over several weeks a teacher may observe that a child is a fluent reader of early caption books. Then, suddenly, there is a trade-off as fluency slips while the child puzzles over a grammatical rule for past tense or struggles with more complex sentence structures. Next, the child may appear to make a great leap forward as information is integrated.

Learning is a social activity ...

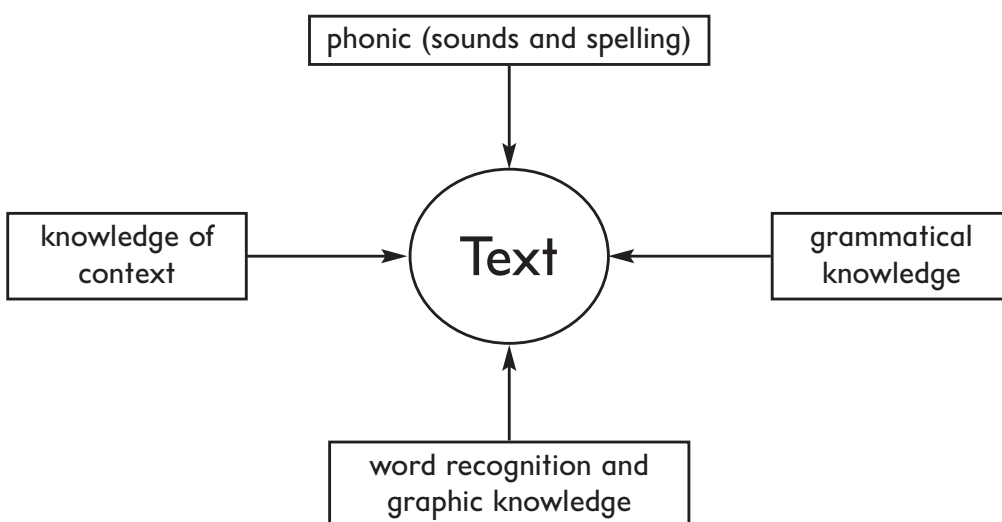
Learning about reading and writing involves learning about the different features and uses of language in particular social situations. Attention to the forms, features and uses of written language is important in emergent reading. Emergent readers learn about how to use fiction and factual texts from their peers and from their teacher.

Learning is supported and scaffolded ...

Teachers can support children learning to read by maintaining the complexity of whole tasks while tailoring the task for the child to participate in easily. This careful planning for support enables children to take control of the learning, and acts as a building system that leads to further learning.

When children engage in social activities designed to support their learning, they learn to gradually take over the process and become independent. When teachers help children to make analogies and integrate information from several sources, children then learn to use these problem-solving strategies alone in the future.

The teacher's role is to help children to become successful readers by learning to use a range of strategies. This principle is at the heart of the National Curriculum for English. Successful readers draw on their knowledge of the world and integrate as many strategies as possible.



The searchlights model of reading strategy (DfEE 1998, p. 4)

The teacher is a mediator ...

The teacher is a mediator between the child and the text. Teachers explain, provide information, challenge, question and explore the ways in which children solve problems. They make connections between the texts and children's worlds; seek out teaching opportunities based on consideration of the texts used and knowledge of the children's reading strategies; observe and interact with children as they read and write; and plan teaching opportunities based on children's responses to the texts.

