Learning to read with AlphaKids

Early reading

Early reading builds on emergent reading and continues on into the first years of school. Early readers are acquiring conceptual knowledge about the uses of print and moving to the point where they can independently read and write for purposes that are relevant to them.

Early readers use, and check against each other, four cueing systems to make meaning from text:
- **semantics** – the text meaning
- **syntax** – the sentence structure
- **phonology** – the sounds
- **visual** – the letters, illustrations, format and layout

Early readers problem solve when reading. They look for meaning cues and ask – *Does that make sense?*; structural cues and ask – *Does that sentence sound right?*; visual cues and ask – *Does that look right?* and phonological cues and ask – *Does that sound right?*

Fluent reading of early texts develops when children integrate cues from the meaning, syntax, sounds and letters. When teachers observe the behaviour of early readers they look and listen for evidence of children's understandings of the concepts of how print works and their use of reading strategies. Teachers then plan for appropriate teaching.

Early reading behaviours

Early reading behaviours include developing concepts of how print works, and thinking strategically about making meaning from texts. Concepts of how print works include understanding what a word is, what a letter is, directionality of print, and the terms *first*, *last*, *top* and *bottom* which are used in explaining print layout and placement. Strategic thinking involves integrating several cue sources, searching for meaning and self-correcting, and changing the type of reading to fit different text genres such as fiction and factual texts.

The listing opposite shows some of the early reading behaviours that may be observed.

CONCEPTS OF HOW PRINT WORKS	STRATEGIC THINKING
• knows where to start	• predicts what makes sense
• knows that the that print records a message	• make links between prior knowledge and texts
• moves through the text from front to back	• integrates several information sources
• moves left-to-right across the page with a return sweep	• searches illustrations, print, structure or memory for meaning
• can point to the title	• understands several text genres
• can point to the author	• uses 'book language'
• can identify top and bottom of a page	• pays close attention to print noticing some features of letters and words
• understands the concept of word	• can map sounds to letters or letter clusters in writing
• knows the concept of first, next and last word / letter	• can map letters or letter clusters to sounds in reading
• understands the concept of upper and lower case letters	• can make one-to-one matching of spoken and written word
• identifies sounds in spoken language	• self-corrects when reading
• can identify first, last, next sound in spoken language	• can make analogies between known words and unfamiliar words
• is aware of punctuation: comma, question mark, exclamation mark, quotation mark, full stop	• notices similarities and differences in words and letters
• can match story and illustration	• locates familiar and new words
• notices and interprets detail in illustration	• persists in problem solving
• can match word-by-word, indicated by precise pointing	• selects appropriate books
• matches initial sound and letter and one-to-one sound and letter	• remembers familiar sentence structures
• makes one-to-one sound and letter matching in written language	• uses knowledge of syntax as a source of information
• can identify letters of the alphabet	• self-monitors by using word-by-word matching
• can identify many high-frequency words	• notices known words in a text, or notices mismatches in meaning or language
	• explores and critiques the author's message in a text