Basic *Early* Reading Skills

1   ORAL LANGUAGE

Oral language is the building block to learning to read. It is where
children learn how language works. Being involved in conversations, children begin to learn the rules of language and are exposed to the sounds that make up words. Speaking with others also allows them to "bump into" many words, growing their vocabulary and building fluency with speech. We are a speech-to-print system; we speak first. We need to build a strong sense of language orally in order to be successful in print. It is our foundation for later reading, vocabulary growth, and comprehension of the written word.

2   PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

This is a broad term that means the ability to play with words in many ways and build automaticity with words: recognizing rhyming words, producing rhyming words, producing words that begin with the same beginning sound, separating words in sentences, blending syllables together, segmenting syllables, and breaking words into sounds.

3   PHONEME AWARENESS

This is the ability to accurately and fluently break words into all their individual spoken sounds. For example, **hat** has three sounds (/h/ /a/ /t/). The word **chin** has three sounds (/ch/ /i/ /n/). Once students can separate words into their individual sounds, they have the foundation to attach each sound to its corresponding letter symbol(s). **This sound-symbol association is vital!**

4   PHONICS

This involves teaching the letter symbols that correspond to sounds in words with increased automaticity. **This essential skill** not only aides reading, but also writing, and spelling.

5   HANDWRITING

Handwriting is also included here because correct letter formation supports the ability to write automatically and fluidly. If students struggle with handwriting, they'll have a more difficult time getting their ideas down on paper.

6   LETTER RECOGNITION

Letter identification instruction includes teaching the name, characteristics, and formation of the 26 uppercase and lowercase letter symbols used in the English language to automaticity. The goal of teaching letter identification is to ensure that students are able to recognize and name letter shapes, as well as discriminate among them. (Adams, 1990)