

## Phonics Inventory

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_/50

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. hat _____    | 26. use _____    |
| 2. man _____    | 27. sail _____   |
| 3. sit _____    | 28. play _____   |
| 4. big _____    | 29. coat _____   |
| 5. can _____    | 30. night _____  |
| 6. top _____    | 31. nurse _____  |
| 7. hen _____    | 32. steer _____  |
| 8. bug _____    | 33. share _____  |
| 9. hot _____    | 34. smart _____  |
| 10. wet _____   | 35. fair _____   |
| 11. stand _____ | 36. shirt _____  |
| 12. clap _____  | 37. clear _____  |
| 13. trick _____ | 38. floor _____  |
| 14. drip _____  | 39. spark _____  |
| 15. spill _____ | 40. torn _____   |
| 16. block _____ | 41. brook _____  |
| 17. step _____  | 42. true _____   |
| 18. trunk _____ | 43. broom _____  |
| 19. must _____  | 44. ground _____ |
| 20. black _____ | 45. yawn _____   |
| 21. make _____  | 46. growl _____  |
| 22. ride _____  | 47. joy _____    |
| 23. place _____ | 48. fault _____  |
| 24. hope _____  | 49. noise _____  |
| 25. sheep _____ | 50. could _____  |

Directions: Explain to the student that he or she will be asked to read a series of words. Say that some of the words might be difficult but that the student is expected to try her or his hardest. Put the words on cards or have them read from the list. Mark each response ✓ (correct) or check with a tail (incorrect) and write the incorrect response in the blanks as time allows. If the student doesn't respond within 5 seconds, supply the word. Stop when the student gets 5 words in a row wrong. The student's level is the highest one at which he or she gets 8 out of 10 correct. Students should be instructed at a level if they get more than 2 out of 10 wrong. Each level has ten items: 1-10, short-vowel patterns; 11-20, short vowels with clusters (blends); 21-30, long vowels; 31-40, *r* vowels; 41-50, other vowels.

## **The Phonics Inventory**

The Phonics Inventory covers the basic word patterns of single-syllable phonics and encompasses a full year's work. The Inventory consists of 50 words that include most of the major word patterns found in single-syllable words. Arranged in five levels of difficulty, the words begin with the simplest phonic pattern, short-vowel words, and progress to *r* vowels and combinations such as *aw* (*paw*) and *oi* (*coin*).

### **Administering the Phonics Inventory**

Put the students at ease. Say to the student, "I want to find out about the way you read words so that I can help you become a better reader. I am going to ask you to read a list of words to me. Some of the words may be hard for you, but read as many as you can." Give one copy of the Phonics Inventory to the student and keep one copy for marking. Mark each response with a check (✓) for correct or with a check with a tail for incorrect. (By using a check with a tail rather than a minus sign or an x or a zero, the student can't tell that their answers are being marked incorrect). If possible, write down each response for later analysis. Start with the first item and continue testing until the student gets five in a row wrong.

### **Establishing an Instructional Level**

Students are placed according to the number of words they get correct at each level. The first ten words assess short-vowel patterns; the second ten assess short-vowel patterns with clusters (blends); the third group of ten, long-vowel patterns; the fourth group, other vowel patterns (*aw*, *oo*, *oi*, *ou*, *ow*); and the fifth group, *r* vowel combinations. The proficiency standard at each level is 80%. Students are placed at the level at which they get more than 20% of the words wrong. Book A encompasses the first 20 words. If students get more than 2 of the first 10 words wrong, they would need to work in Book A. If they get 8 of the first 10 words correct, but have difficulty with the second set of 10 words (words 11-20), they would need to be instructed in clusters (blends). Since they know some vowel patterns, they do not need to be placed in the beginning of the program. They might be placed midway through Book A. (If students got 80% or more of the words correct at levels 1 and 2, but missed most of the long-vowel words, they would be placed in Book B. Students would be placed in Book C if they got 80% or more of the long-vowel words but had difficulty with *r* vowel and other-vowel words.). Noting which items students answered correctly and which they had difficulty with can also help you plan instruction. For instance, students might have gotten short *a* and *i* items correct but missed the other short-vowel patterns. You can then focus instruction on the items that posed problems. If students got only one or two items correct, assess their knowledge of initial consonants. They might need to work at the Beginnings level. If, on the other hand, they got most of the test items correct, assess their knowledge of multisyllabic words. They might need to work in Book D.

## Verifying Placement

As with any other placement measure, the Phonics Inventory is subject to error. Verify students' placement by observing their actual performance in the book in which they are placed. If they are breezing through the exercises, then move them to a higher level. If their performance is labored, try an easier level. Place students conservatively. It is better to be placed in a book that is too easy rather than one that is too hard.

Observation is also a vital source of data. As students are reading from their basals, trade books, or content area texts, note the strategies that they use to decode difficult words. Possible strategies include: using pronounceable word parts, analogy, sound by sound decoding, using context, or using picture clues. Observe whether strategies are used appropriately and whether they are used in integrated fashion.

Also note word attack needs. Jot down words that students have difficulty with. Look for patterns of needs. Based on the results of the Phonics Inventory and other assessment information that you might have, including test and observational data, start with the book and lesson that seem most appropriate.

## Development of the Phonics Inventory

The Phonics Inventory is a revision of the Word Pattern Survey (Gunning, 1997). The Word Pattern Survey was revised in order to reflect the scope and sequence of today's major literacy programs. The scope and sequence of phonics instruction in the first grade programs of Harcourt, Houghton Mifflin, McGraw-Hill, Open Court, and Scott-Foresman were examined. All five programs present short-vowel patterns before long-vowel, r-vowel, and other-vowel (/aw/, /oi/, /ow/, long-oo and short-oo) patterns. Clusters are presented about midway through the introduction of short-vowel patterns. Short-*a* patterns are introduced first, followed by short-*i* patterns. Programs vary somewhat in the sequence in which they introduce short *o*, *e*, and *u*. Final-*e* long vowel patterns precede long-vowel digraphs. Long-vowel patterns are usually followed by other-vowel patterns and *r*-vowel patterns, although the order varies somewhat from program to program.

## Validity

**Content.** Content validity was established by basing the Phonics Inventory on the scope and sequence of the phonics programs of the most widely used reading series. In addition, using the Phonics Inventory, the phonics achievement of five first graders was tracked during the school year 2004-2005. The students were administered the Phonics Inventory in October, January, February, March, and May. Students showed a steady increase in phonics knowledge from testing to testing. In addition, their grasp of phonics generally followed the sequence incorporated in the text. They were

able to read short-vowel words first, then words with clusters, then long vowel patterns, followed by *r*-vowel and other-vowel words, although there was some overlapping at the higher levels.

**Statistical.** To determine statistical validity of the Word Pattern Survey, the scores of 12 students on the Word pattern Survey was compared with scores on the Slosson Oral reading Test. Product moment Correlation was .795 with a standard error of estimate of 8.4 and was significant at the .001 level. The scores of 16 first graders on the Word Pattern Survey were compared with their scores on the Nonword Fluency Subtest of the DIBELS. Product moment Correlation was 70.7, with a standard error of estimate of 9.5, significant at the .001 level. Scores of 18 first graders on the Phonics Inventory were compared with their scores of the Oral Reading Fluency subtest of the DIBELS at midyear. Correlation was .655 with a standard error of measurement of 5, significant at the .001 level.

### **Reliability**

Based on the scores of 11 students, split-half reliability of the Word Pattern Survey is .955. Based on the scores of 14 students, split-half reliability for the Phonics Inventory is .97. Additional validity and reliability data for the Phonics Inventory are being collected.

Source: The Phonics Inventory and information above have been excerpted from Gunning, T. (2008). *Teacher's guide for word building, second edition*. Honesdale, PA: Phoenix Learning Resources.

### **Reference**

Gunning, T. (1997). *Teacher's guide for word building*. Honesdale, PA: Phoenix Learning Resources.