



Classroom Guide Booklet

This guide is intended to make the Souns program clear to anyone who wants to help a child learn to write and read. For questions, you are invited to contact me at souns@counterpane.org.

To order Souns materials, print *Good Practice with Souns* or the student tracking sheets, please go to www.souns.org.

Your questions and experiences guide our work!
We want to hear from you!

Brenda Erickson



Souns for Classrooms

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Souns for Classrooms



These children will read!

Thank You!

to The Rotary Foundation and the initiative of RD6900, RD7000, RD9350, RD6990, and RD9400, individual Rotary Clubs as well as the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, Counterpane School, and Counterpane Interact Club. Souns is making a difference.

Sounds for Classrooms
Children want to know!



This Sounds Guide is for caregivers with groups of children or teachers with classrooms of children. There will be no global peace until every child can read.

Introduction

Souns fits early literacy learning gently alongside the child's early language learning. With Souns, children progress incidentally - more naturally - into reading.

This guide is to help you teach one child or many children fundamental literacy skills. Whether you are a parent at home, a caregiver in a crèche, or a teacher in a classroom, this information will give you logical, effective tools for helping children learn to write and read. While the Souns symbols make literacy come to life in unexpected ways, by implementing the Souns program without the symbols, you can still build early literacy skills for your children. Souns is applicable to any language based on the Latin alphabet and is, therefore, particularly important in our world's growing multi-lingual environments.

A few minutes of Souns play each day is all that is needed. If the tools of print are introduced as described in this guide, the child will encode and decode words on her or his own sooner and far more naturally than imagined. Remember, a child wants to learn to read at least as much as we want to teach him or her to read.

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Designed to ride early print knowledge on the wave of early language development, Souns ensures writing and reading unfold in as natural and timely a way as possible. Research reveals that a child's brain has assimilated the sounds of the languages in his or her environment by 10 to 12 months of age, even before the child has learned to talk. This is a phenomenal accomplishment, and suggests the slow, incidental introduction of print as complementary to learning to speak.

Speaking, writing, and reading are separated in very intentional ways with Souns. For instance, vocabulary lessons

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should parallel the letter-sound lessons. A basic vocabulary combined with letter-sound knowledge is stage (1) and gives a child tools for the second and third stages of Souns - (2) building words by listening to the sounds in spoken words and (3) using letter-sound knowledge combined with a basic vocabulary to sound out words. Such an approach is particularly important if the child is being taught in a language other than his or her home language.



Before You Begin



“the adventure” the title of a story by a 4-year-old

***Letter-sounds only - One sound for one symbol**

A letter framed - /s/- refers to the sound of the letter, sss, not the name of the letter, ess, which is two sounds: eh, sss.

***As the teacher, you must first review and practice the letter-sounds yourself.**

This program focuses only on building letter-sound associations. As the teacher, you must be at ease with letter-sounds. As much as you may be predisposed to refer to the letters of print by their names, it will be counterproductive for that little person’s brain trying so hard to learn the tools of writing and reading.

***Teach only lower case letters.**

Children see a predominance of lower case letters, such as in the books you are reading to them. Souns teaches only lower case letters until after the child is sounding out words.

***Present letters in Souns order: o-m-s-t-p-e-i-h-a-f-u-b-w-n-d-j-c-l-r-g-x-y-z-k-v-q**

Contrast makes remembering easier. The Souns sequence of letters is based on contrast of sound and shape, not alphabetical order. The first 4 letters introduced are /o/m/s/t/, which are very different in sound and shape.

*** Introduce one letter-sound at a time with the Braille (on each letter) facing the child.**

When introducing a letter, have it facing correctly for the child. Check position of letters when introducing a digraph (pg 35).

***Focus on each child's face.**

Whether teaching one child or a small group, focus on each individual child's face.

***Make sure the child is watching your mouth as you form the letter-sound.**

***Say the letter-sound clearly.**

Crisp, careful pronunciation of each isolated sound is important. Speak the sound of each letter clearly and without additional sounds tagged on, such as the “uh” sound often following /t/ or /p/. It is not puh or tuh. It is a crisp /t/ and /p/. The “uh” is another phoneme and will get in the way as the child emerges into building words and sounding out words.

***Encourage but do not demand the child say the sound back to you.**

Sounds is about identification, not production. Very young children should not be expected to repeat the sound, although children 3-4 years old may want to model the sound. This is an excellent opportunity for you to identify potential speech/language issues in a timely way so the family and the school can be watchful or seek professional help.

***Be sure to place Sounds on the floor facing the group, not the teacher - Braille side up!**

***Play games. Be creative.**

Engage in choosing, exchanging, and other activities, always reinforcing letter-sound associations. Fun is the best teacher.

✱ **Ask, “Where is ___?” or “Touch the ___.” Do not ask, “What is this?”**

Sounds never challenges a child by asking, “What is this?” as you point to a letter or draw a letter on the ground. The young child will feel threatened and will stop participating, particularly if there is a possibility of failure. Children want to learn, but they do not want to fail.

✱ **Mark a small circle on the floor.**

Locate your group teaching spot and mark a small circle on the floor with very good tape. This makes regular group lessons begin so much more smoothly.



***Sing the alphabet song without making associations with the symbols.**

Although using letter names is not helpful to a child who wants to read, singing the Alphabet Song with children daily is a great practice. However, when singing the song, do not make associations with the actual letters. It is a song and the words will be remembered, readying the child for alphabetizing.

***Sight words are not used until after the child is sounding out words.**

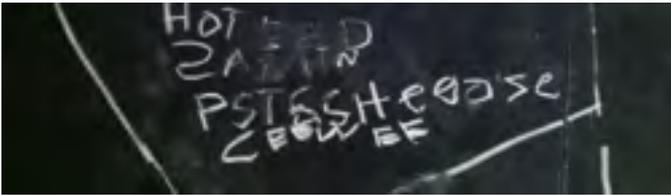
Sight words should not be used until after the child is sounding out words. (For Souns, a sight word is a word that cannot be decoded using normal rules of a language.) Most words on “Frequently Used” lists are phonetic and can be easily sounded out or decoded by a child who knows letter-sounds well and who is not distracted by letter-names. Importantly, decoding exercises the child’s developing analytical brain.

***b/d/p/q are identified by the Braille. They are not interchangeable.**

The Braille is on each letter at the place where the letter sits on the writing line. The children love such details.

***When writing begins, personal expression, not spelling, is what matters.**

For example, phone and ball can be written phonetically - fon and bal. This will not create spelling issues later. Research confirms early invented spelling leads to better spelling in school.



Above is an excerpt from a lengthy shopping list by a 4-year-old. Imagine the confidence to attack a word like pistachios. Such fun: hot bred, samin (salmon), pstasheeose (pistachios), ceewee (kiwi). Souns empowers a child.

***Children should be encouraged to work together and help each other.**

When children work together and help each other, it is a wonderful confirmation of both their kindness and their growing knowledge. Celebrate!

***Group lessons should occur daily in the classroom, lasting no longer than 15-20 fun-filled minutes. High-fives are the best sounds.**

Pre-Cautions



Helping a child learn letter-sound associations begins with learning the specifics of that child. Has he or she been taught letter names? If so, support his accomplishment, adding that now it is time for him or her to learn to write and read. "Therefore," as you say to the child, "from now on, we focus ONLY on letter sounds to help you learn to write and read."

No doubt, the child will err by answering with letter names. Usher the child gently back to letter sounds until his "default button" goes directly to sounds rather than the names of letters. This can add as much as six months to the learning of letter sounds, the result of giving untimely information to a developing brain.

Sounds for Classrooms

A few traps get in the way of a child's progress. Adding images or stories when you are teaching the letter-sound associations only complicates the movement into reading. Stories like "m for mama," and "s for snake," become tremendous obstacles when the child is ready to sound out words.

Also, repeating the sound several times, such as t-t-t, is confusing. The /t/ says its sound only once. It is very difficult to hear the word in a chain of sounds as in the simple word t-o-p when you have been taught t-t-t - o-o-o - p-p-p. Keeping it simple is best.



Vocabulary Lesson



This is a lesson for one child or a small group of 4 to 8 children. You need an assortment of cards with isolated images of objects with which the child is familiar in the home environment... 25-50 cards will do (no drawings and no text on the cards). Using these pictures as a start, the child will build a vocabulary of words that will come into play later in the Souns program. Again, no printed words on or with the cards. This is a spoken language exercise, only.

*Choose from your assortment of pictures (one for each child and one for you).

*Collect your group of children and sit with them in a circle on the floor.

*Introduce one picture, looking directly into the eyes of each child as you carefully say the name of the object. Encourage (but do not demand) the child say the word back to you.

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*Once you have made the round with one picture - identifying it personally for each child, hand the picture to a random child to place on the floor. Follow this same process with the remaining pictures.

*With pictures on the floor in front of and facing the children, you point to each of the pictures and re-state each name, inviting the group to join you saying the name together.

*Next, ask the children - no specific child - to hand you the pictures as you randomly call out, one-at-a-time, the objects in the pictures. Children are encouraged to help one another. Any child can hand you the correct picture, as long as you protect that every child is given a chance to succeed.

*When you have collected all the pictures, spread them out once again in front of the children and direct, "Touch the orange." Probably many hands will race to the appropriate picture, which is the kind of enthusiasm you want to see.

*To conclude, ask a student, "Jon, may I have the snail?" Ask more successful learners first and the most fragile last, as by then the field will be limited to just a few pictures, ensuring success.

Letter-Sound Lesson



Parallel to your building a vocabulary for the learners will be the teaching of letter sounds. The first letters to be introduced are /o/m/s/t. The phonemes (sounds) you will associate with the graphemes (letters) are for the language the child will be reading in school. For most languages, the common sounds of the first four letters are: ohh, mmm, sss, and a crisp /t/.

✳Collect a group of 4-8 children and the letters. Note: When giving a letter-sound lesson and you have 4 children, you only need to have one each of the four letters. If your group has 8 children, it is best to have two of each letter during the lesson. Children should have the letters in their hands as much of the time as possible.

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*Look intentionally at each child as you introduce a letter and model the specific letter sound. This personal moment gives a child individual attention and allows you to watch as she or he may attempt to say the sound you are forming for him or her.

*Do the same for each child, concluding the round by handing a child the /m/, asking him to place it on the floor in the circle, Braille up and facing the children.

*Follow the same process for the next letter, introducing it to each child and inviting a random child to place the letter correctly in the center of the circle.

*With all the letters on the floor in the center of the group, you can now play a bit by asking the children (whether outside or inside, using o/m/s/t/ as examples) to touch the /m/ and then the /o/, etc. Invite a child to find the /t/ and hand it to a friend in the circle, repeating until all have had a chance to handle the letters.

*To end the lesson and return the letters to their container, ask a specific child to hand you a specific sound. Continue collecting the letters this way, considering the ability of each child. Leave the most fragile child to the end so failure is avoided.

Follow -Up Lessons



The second week is a review of the same letter-sounds or vocabulary, but will differ in the activity.

Hold up each picture or letter being reviewed, saying the name of the object or the sound to the group. One at a time, place the pictures or letters on the floor in the middle of the group. Now play games!

Then, if you feel the children are confident enough, you can invite a child in the group to have a private, uninterrupted moment to touch each of the pictures or letters as you give the name or sound.

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Remember to ask, "Will you touch" Do not ask, "What is this?"

Mix the pictures or letters up and ask if other children want to play that game as well. If you demonstrate a gentle and inviting demeanor, you will get a burst of activity where even the quietest child will eventually want to try. This review is fun, unthreatening, and tells the teacher much about how to regroup the children for the next week. However, such a review is not recommended unless you are sure the group or the child is ready.

You will quickly become comfortable with this process and will enjoy creating your own group "play" activities.

Group lessons should occur daily, with a different group each day. The learners should be re-grouped every two to three weeks to assure group members are alike in ability. Re-grouping ensures learner progress and creates a more dynamic classroom.

It is quite possible to have letter-sound learning, building words, and sounding-out words going on at the same time in a classroom by the end of the year.

Souns for Classrooms
Whole-Class Teaching



Small groups are not always possible. When this is the case, do the presentation as a whole group each day, engaging in as many short activities as possible. Proceed with vocabulary and letter-sound lessons progressing through the material at a reasonable rate, but probably not as fast

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as you would if you were able to split into ability groups. Your learners will still succeed. You must be sure to schedule several short opportunities each day to teach or review vocabulary and letter-sounds. When you have taught 12-15 letter-sounds to the class, begin building words as the class below is doing. Every child is engaged. The minds are learning.



Souns for Classrooms

Create engaging activities to reinforce learning, knowing that those involving movement are going to be more effective. Be alert to the presence of vocabulary words and print in the environment so fun can be the teacher. Besides your scheduled lessons, start each day by holding up an assortment of pictures or letters being learned in front of the entire class, re-associating the names or sounds. Don't ask what they are, just hold up the picture or letter for a long second, inviting an answer, but not asking for one. State the object name or letter sound (which has likely been shouted out by an eager learner).

To see how the class is doing, occasionally randomly choose a child and privately evaluate with the tracking sheet, seeing if the child can touch the sounds you are working on at the time. Do this with several children. You will have the information you need as to whether to go on to the next sound or continue longer with the sounds you are currently teaching. You will have learners who move more quickly than others, so it is good to mix up some of the lessons so each level is experiencing work relevant to their readiness. The class will always be learning, even if all are not at the level you are teaching at the moment.



Another whole group opportunity is when you are reading a story to the class. At the conclusion of the story, ask a few children to come to the book, search for, point to, and say a specifically requested sound. Allow children to help one another and celebrate the fun of it. Above is the result of a teacher with over 50 children in her class with no assistant. This is a 6-year-old.

Take An Object



Your most difficult learning curve in preparing to implement Souns is accepting that something apparently so simple can produce such profound results. The Jasper Johns quote, "Take an object, do something to it. Do something else to it," is the simplest way of implementing Souns. Let that quote lead you in this work. Have fun! Be creative! Play is the best teacher.

✱ Learners find and touch pictures of objects on the wall that begin with a specific sound.

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- ✱ Paint or finger paint with, "Draw or paint a picture of your favorite sound(s)."
- ✱ Bake cookies in shapes of letters. Child chooses which sound cookie they want.
- ✱ Place a different letter on each table and ask a learner to sit at /s/ table, etc.
- ✱ Invite learners, "Build your sounds with clay."



- ✱ Have children find all the picture cards that begin or end with a particular letter sound.

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- ✳ Draw letters in the dirt outside. "Touch the mmm," etc.



- ✳ Go on a search for a particular sound in books. "Look, I found /h/!"
- ✳ Call learners by their initials, "/m/t/, you may get in line."
- ✳ If the child says it is OK to do so, write letters (letters face the child) on his or her hands to reinforce and cross-fertilize room.
- ✳ Point out particular letter-sound associations in a book you are reading to class.
- ✳ Do a letter-sound hunt by finding objects in room beginning with sss!
- ✳ Get old newspapers and have child circle all the mmm's on a page.

Sounds for Classrooms

- ✿ Invite learners to think of words that begin with a particular letter sound.
- ✿ Have a special “Souns spot” where pictures or objects are displayed that focus on a particular sound. Change weekly.
- ✿ Have small pans for washing and rinsing letters. Choose specific sounds each day. “Would you invite a friend to help you wash /o/m/s/t/p/e/?”



Make up your own great activity and share: everychildwillread@gmail.com. Letter-sounds can be such an exciting part of your environment. Print is everywhere.

Souns Tracking Sheet

On the following pages are a timeline and a classroom tracking sheet. The tracking sheet is important for classroom management. Responsible use of this tool is one of the few critical requirements of this program. After each group lesson, record any updates via the legend for each child.

Proper use of this tracking sheet includes following the Souns sequence of letters, even when compelled to do otherwise. This order has been developed with much guidance and has been scrutinized by speech/language pathologists. There is nothing arbitrary or happenstance about the Souns program, including the order of introduction of the letters.

ONLY as one sound is mastered may you add one new sound. That means there will not be more than 4 letter-sounds being learned by a child at one time. Do not, however, stop including the sounds mastered by the child in future lessons. In this way, the child will work across the rows of the tracking sheet and through the digraphs, starting with o/m/s/t and adding one new sound for each one mastered. Digraphs will be specific to the language being taught.

Sounds for Classrooms

With this classroom overview, you can group and re-group the learners as they progress through letter-sound associations. Children should be re-grouped regularly according to their abilities. This will keep the groups and the entire classroom more dynamic and will cross-fertilize the environment with a variety of letter sounds.

It is important to group children by ability. This classroom tracking sheet helps you re-organize at a glance.

No Knowledge = letter not introduced yet

Introduced = letter has been introduced

Mastered = child volunteers the sound for a letter without being asked (from print in the classroom or as the letters are being taken out of a container for a lesson). Be sure to record month and year in appropriate box as shown for each letter mastered.

For each **Mastered** sound, the child is introduced to the next new sound in the Sounds sequence of letters.

The Sounds timeline is a simple picture of time and progress for a typically developing preschool child if the program is followed as designed. Real time will be determined by the individual child.

Souns Timeline For Preschoolers

letter-sound associations learned

0 months

24 months in the program

building words by listening to sounds in them

8 months into the program (12-15 letter-sound associations mastered)

decoding (sounding out words)

18 months into program (competent building words)

This timeline shows conservative progress with Souns over time (not age) for typically developing children of preschool age.

The Critical Bits

o m **S** t p e i h a f u b w n d

Success relies on critical management details:

- ✱ Teach sounds of letters only! No names of letters are taught until after child is reading.

- ✱ Stay true to the Souns order of introduction of the letters.

- ✱ Use the tracking sheet to record the letter-sounds you have introduced and the progress each child has made.

- ✱ Re-group the children as needed when progress is demonstrated. Groups should be similar in ability.

- ✱ Be consistent with daily activities.

- ✱ Mastery of a sound is reached when a child volunteers the sound upon seeing the letter in the environment. "Look mommy, there is /m/!"

- ✱ For each letter-sound association mastered, introduce a new letter-sound association, the next one in the Souns sequence.

Sounds for Classrooms

✳️ Continue adding one sound at a time through the Sounds sequence of letters.

✳️ A child should never be learning more than four letter-sound associations at a time; however, ensure the learner reviews regularly those mastered.

✳️ A digraph is a combination of letters that together create a NEW sound, such as the sh in shop. Digraphs will differ by language.

✳️ Teach digraphs only after child has learned 15-20 letter-sound associations.

1. Have letters that make up the digraph behind you, out of sight.

2. Right hand brings out first letter of digraph and child identifies it.

3. Put letter back behind you.

4. Left hand brings out second letter in digraph, as child confirms they know the letter-sound.

5. Put letter back behind you.

6. Now bring out the letters together saying, "Guess what happens when they get together? A new sound!!" as you introduce the sound.

Building Words

Writing comes before reading. Hearing the sounds in words and building from those sounds is extremely important. When 12-15 letter-sound associations have been mastered, select a few very simple phonetic words that are familiar to the child (using only the sounds mastered) and do the following:

- *Carefully set out an assortment of Souns letters or write the letters the child knows well and invite the child by saying, "Let's build a word."

- *Choose a picture or an object with a very simple name that can be phonetically written (without concern for spelling, as ball = bol or bal, and phone = fon).

- *Say the word slowly to the child and have the child say the word slowly back to you, stretching it out so each sound can be heard.

- *Have the child repeat the word, listening for the first sound, which he or she will then fetch from the letters set out earlier by the teacher.

- *The child places the letter to the right of the image or object.

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- *Again, have the child stretch the word out to hear the next sound in the chain of sounds that make up the word, and fetch it, placing it next to the first sound.
- *Continue until the sounds in the word have been heard and the word built. Remember sounds, not spelling!



Building words is the most important activity for a child who knows 12 to 15 or more letter-sound associations. This work is individual or in a “lab” situation with 2-3 children. With more, the quiet child will be overshadowed by the more boisterous child.

The value of having a “lab” approach is that no child is put on the spot to hear or find the next sound. The team is saying, listening, identifying, and building the word with their collective knowledge. It is fun and successful for everyone.

Early Written Expression



Whether in the sand, on the refrigerator with magnetic letters, or on napkins in restaurants, the personal need for written expression is a compelling force within the young child. Give a child the tools of print, space, and the confidence to write, then watch the miracle of literacy unfold.



Souns for Classrooms

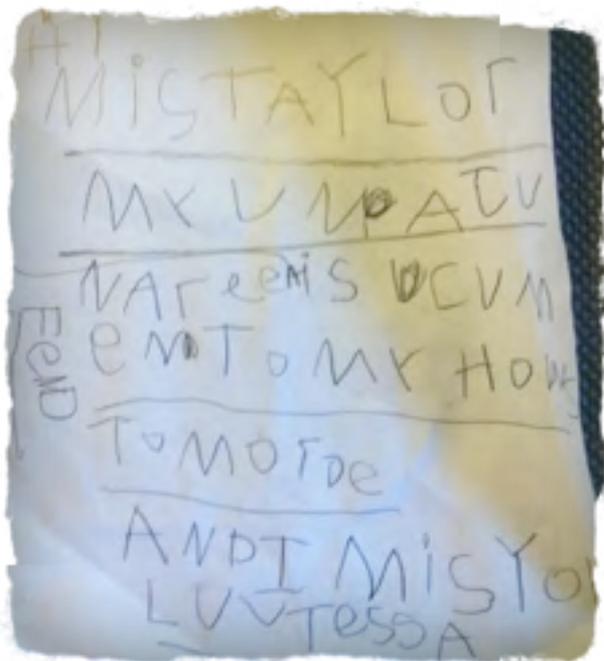
When a child writes, notice what is correct as opposed to what is incorrect. Never criticize the child's work. His or her heart is on that paper. Below is a note written by a 4 year old to her teacher.

Hi Mis Taylor

My umajinaree [imaginary] frend is cumen to my hows tomoroe

And I Mis You

Luv Tessa



Sounding Out Words

After a child has built words both with the teacher and independently for at least several weeks or longer, and the ear is developmentally ready (able to distinguish sounds), it is a natural step to move to sounding out simple, phonetic words.

Initially, the child sees a simple chain of sounds, each of which he or she recognizes. Because the child has experience building words, there is an expectation of a word lingering in that chain of sounds. Your work with vocabulary and building words sets the child up to seamlessly move into emergent reading.

The first reading is done with print on paper without pictures. Pictures are distracting and invite guessing. The analytical brain needs to be trusted to apply the knowledge of print the child has learned. Give the opportunity, time, and encouragement to decode the letters into sounds, and the sounds into a word.

Regular, consistent, short, daily activities involving sounding out words is all that is needed. The excitement of a new reader elevates the energy in a classroom, spreading throughout every child as a promise of what is ahead for them as well.

Souns for Classrooms

Be patient! Go slowly! Provide simple, phonetic, reading material, making certain it can be easily accessed by the children - low on the walls, in containers on the shelves, always available to the children to "read" when their minds are ready. Let them lead, but ensure decoding happens to some extent each day. A child may only read one or two words on one day and will overwhelm you with the desire to read everything in sight on another. It is their lead...not yours. Ensure the love of reading by walking in their footsteps clearly seeing over their little heads where the path is leading. Your work is to be ready for their next turn with appropriate material.



Good Practice with **Sounds**®

Introduce letter-sounds ONLY!
Use short vowel and hard consonant sounds.

Focus on identification, not production.
"Please hand me the 'ah'!"

Keep this DAILY activity short and fun.

Have the child watch your mouth as you say the sound.

Focus ONLY on the lower case letters.
Capital letters are learned naturally, after the child decodes words.

Do not forget this is a hands-on activity.
Hand and brain work together to build letter-sound knowledge..

Play sound games to help the child 'hear' the sounds.
"I hear an 'eh' when I say egg. Can you hear the 'eh' in egg?"

NEVER refer to a letter and ask, "What is this?"

Enjoy singing *The Alphabet Song!*
However, do not make associations between names and symbols.

Be patient! There is so much time!
5-30 months - Letter-Sound Knowledge
30-36 months - "Writing" with Sounds Letters
36-48 months - Decoding Words, Writing
48-60 months - Letter-Name Knowledge

Sounds at www.sounds.org or call 770-335-2743

This is Sounds reduced to its simplest form. Without Good Practice as defined on this page, the program will likely not work. It is good to educate families by sending this sheet to each of them to post in their home for a daily reminder. Each teacher should have it in her room and should review it daily to build good habits.

Vowels Are Complicated

It takes much repeated work building simple phonetic words for a child to become comfortable with the subtle differences between vowels. Learning the difference between /e/ and /a/ takes time and experience. When building words, be sure to choose words that have clear vowel sounds so the child can hear the best examples. Focus on one vowel or two very contrasting vowels at once, such as /i/ and /o/. Do not build words with similar sounding vowels at the same time. It is in this experience that the child learns to distinguish the one from the other. The sounding out of phonetic words that follows will cement the knowledge.



Intervention - Sound Check

Step One: Establish Baseline

If the child is a struggling reader, ask the child to read aloud a passage appropriate for his/her age (Rasinski & Padak, 2005). If possible, record this process on video. Complete a running record of the reading passage using the recording for the child's electronic portfolio (Olmstead, 1994).

Step Two: Diagnostic Assessment

When working with an older child using Souns, it is important to begin by determining exactly which sounds he/she knows. If the child does not know letter sounds, he/she will not be able to sound out words (Souns, 2010). This will give you the information of what sounds are missing for decoding.

- ✱ Place 6-7 Souns symbols at a time in front of the child following the order of the Tracking Sheet.

- ✱ Say to the child, "Please hand me any of these letters as you tell me the sound it represents."

- ✱ If the child knows the sound, mark an "x" on the Souns Tracking Sheet. If the child is unsure or calls it by the wrong sound, leave

the space blank by that letter on the tracking sheet.

✳ Write anecdotal notes that may be useful for further instruction. (For example, "He knows c sounds like /s/ but did not identify the /k/ sound.") It is important to evaluate digraph knowledge, as well.

This following Sound-Check document was designed by Della Palacios of SensAble Learning, LLC, in Orlando, FLA, USA.

References:

Olmstead, P. (1996). Using electronic portfolios to archive student performance. Retrieved December 15, 2011, from University of Central Florida Catalog Dissertations and Theses Database. (AA)

Rasinski, V. & Padak, N. (2005). Three-minute reading assessments, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension.

Souns (2010). Souns for literacy, Language and literacy develop hand in hand. (White Paper) Retrieved October 24, 2011.

Sounds for Classrooms

Diagnostic assessment date _____

Results of assessment: Student knows
_____/26 sounds _____/6 digraphs

After working with student:

26 sounds mastery date _____

Digraph mastery date _____

Phonetic writing mastery date _____

Sounding-out mastery date _____

Observations/Comments:

Souns for Classrooms

Sound Check with Anecdotal Notes

o		i	
m		h	
s		a	
t		f	
p		u	
e		b	

w		r	
n		x	
d		y	
j		z	
c		k	
l		v	
g		q	

Digraphs (English) / Writing / Reading

oo		Phonetic Writing	
ee		Sounding out words	
th		3-letter words	
ch		4-letter words	
sh		Reading	
wh		Consonant Blends	

Souns for Classrooms



Souns began in 2005. Each letter was lovingly handcrafted in maple, taking four processes, several people, and well over an hour each. Although beautiful to touch, the wooden letters can break, do not have Braille, and absorb moisture in the mouths of children, (therefore harboring germs in classroom conditions).

For individual families - our original purpose in designing the program - the wood was lovely. But as interest grew, it was clear classroom situations presented different needs. Researching our options we found Durden Enterprises, Inc., in Auburn, GA. They guided us, built the molds, and accommodated short orders for our fledgling dream. We are forever indebted to people like those at Durden Enterprises and PrintCrafters, Inc., in Riverdale, GA, for

Souns for Classrooms

supporting this work with patience and superb standards. They are guardians of excellence.

Children will read because one good idea was wrapped by the commitment, trust, and energy of so many extraordinary people, extending well past any one person's reach.



Souns for Classrooms



Souns® has become
a global literacy initiative
for languages
based on the Latin alphabet.

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Souns for Classrooms

Souns for Literacy

Language and Literacy begin Hand in Hand



EVERY CHILD WANTS TO READ AND WRITE

building a literate world

White Paper
(Revised 2012)

Every Child Wants To Read

Every child wants to write and read. The handprint on the cave wall was only the beginning of the human story. That primordial urge has not dwindled, yet millions remain illiterate. What can we do to ensure that all can leave their message and that their message can be read?

Research data across continents and cultures suggests that if a child is not reading at grade level by grade 3, he or she probably will never read at grade level. Enormous investments in time, resources, and intellect have been directed toward a solution. However, the problem persists, exacerbated by growing immigrant populations and a challenging global economy. How can we reach children in a way and at a time that can help build a literate world?



If you do not know letter-sounds, you cannot sound out words. If you cannot sound out words, you cannot read. If you cannot read, you will become another statistic in the list of drop outs or broken dreams.

Brain research confirms that infants and toddlers have a natural window during which the tools of printed language are most easily learned. It is also known that the hand and brain work together to learn. Therefore, learning letter-sound associations early and through informal, hands-on activities is the natural and timely way to make a measurable difference in reading readiness for preschool children.

Further research indicates the best predictor of end-of-kindergarten literacy skill is the beginning of kindergarten literacy skill (Walpole, Chow, & Justice, 2004). Clearly, it is critical to provide literacy tools for infants and toddlers in this window of learning to discover, interact with, and explore through play. The right information (letter-sound knowledge) at the right time (birth to three years), and in the right way (kinesthetically and incidentally) makes a powerful difference in building literacy skills.

Souns for Classrooms

The wealth of material on how the brain learns offers the promise of simple, effective, and measurable new strategies for the work of building literacy. One such strategy is demonstrated through Souns, a literacy program designed primarily for infants and toddlers. Souns is an evidence-based program demonstrating that early language skills and early literacy skills are complementary, best experienced hand-in-hand.

Souns places specifically designed and sequenced letters of the Latin alphabet into the hands of young children at their most language and shape-sensitive period, between 5 months and 36 months. The hand reaches out to hold, play with, and explore the letters, providing an alternate way of learning: a concrete, touchable concept of printed language rather than an abstract one.

Whether children are typically developing or have special needs, the collaboration between the hand and the brain is fundamental to learning. The work of Maria Montessori and Jean Piaget confirms that what the hand experiences, the mind remembers.

Sounds for Classrooms

As children work to sort out the individual sounds of their language, Sounds is particularly relevant. An isolated sound introduced with the respective symbol dramatizes the uniqueness of each sound, helping a child to distinguish differences between the letters. Sounds is a powerful tool for children with a history of ear infections or learning disabilities such as dyslexia who often have difficulty sorting out sound-symbol relationships. Sounds better prepares children for later success in reading and writing.



Letter-sound associations are effortlessly learned by a child if the timing is right, the experience is fun, and the child's hands are involved. Labeling objects is central to natural development for the infant and toddler.

Sounds for Classrooms

The child is driven to adapt to his or her environment and needs to know the labels of things to communicate successfully. Young children have an object “ball” to connect to the word “ball.” The Sounds program provides objects - letters - for the individual sounds of his or her language. Each letter is an object that a child can see, hold, smell, and even taste while hearing the sound associated with that letter. Engaging with the tools of print as physical objects in association with their most common sounds.

Providing one label for one object allows the child to construct well-defined categories. Letter-sounds are the most direct link to reading and writing and are, therefore, the most useful to the child. We speak in sounds. Writing is the recording of sounds, and reading is the decoding of letters into sounds. One label for one object - in this case the most common letter-sound association for each letter - is the best way to ensure success for early reading and writing. As the child demonstrates confidence in individual letter-sounds, new information can be added incrementally, one small piece at a time. Allow each letter-sound association to be fully explored and assimilated before

proceeding to new information. Keeping it simple makes a difference.

Beginning early and continuing incrementally is the best way to build a foundation of learning for children. Children cannot learn the multiplication tables at the same time they are being introduced to algebra. Their cognitive resources are too busy negotiating the numbers to consider the algebraic concepts. Being strategic with cognitive resources makes a difference in learning to read and write as well, which are the most difficult skills a child will ever learn. Building literacy needs to begin early, progressing slowly and with certainty.

A child who is certain about letter-sound associations will eagerly explore language as he or she moves into the early stages of writing and reading. For instance, you may hear children stretching out words as they speak. They listen intently to the sequence of sounds as they say the words. Armed with the tools of their language, many young children demonstrate a voracity for writing. By three to four years of age, paper, cardboard, whatever they can find, becomes a promising surface for personal expression.

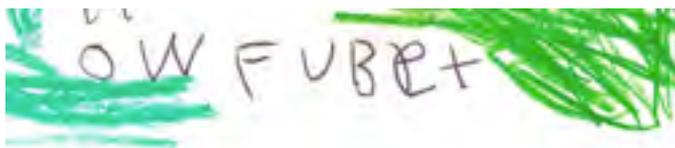
Sounds for Classrooms

Writing often comes before reading with Souns - first by manipulating the Souns letters and then writing with his or her hand. Inventive spelling is what you will see. If you observe the process, you will see that the child is literally recording on paper the sounds she is speaking as she writes. The focus is on expression, not spelling. The more a child listens, writes, is read to, and progresses as an independent reader, the more he will learn about spelling. No error in letter formation or not writing all the sounds in a word is as important as the child's self-confidence.

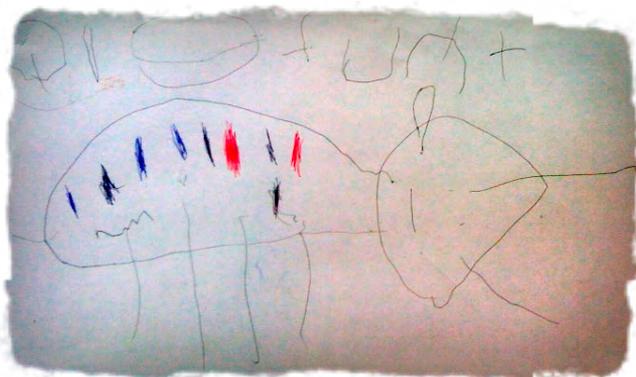


A 3-year-old wanted to write:
" b a c e d l d r " (back-end loader)
" b l " (ball) " t u c " (truck)

Celebrate with, "Yes! Those are sounds in back-end loader."



"o w f u b e t" (alphabet) by a 3-year-old



"e l e f u n t" (elephant) by a 3-year-old

Parallel to this explosion in writing is the beginning stage of reading, the slow sounding out of simple words. This is a natural step of exploration for a child who is confident with letter-sound associations.

Souns for Classrooms

The Souns early childhood literacy program is based on research:

- * Exploring prototypes of print links letters with corresponding phonetic sounds. (6)

- * Language and reading requires getting the sounds sorted out correctly. (7)

- * The greatest results come from interventions with children younger than 3 years. (2)

- * Consistent labels for objects, not variable ones, promotes categorization. (4)

- * Children encounter the world incrementally; the ordering of experiences matters. (5)

- * Neural networks can fail when too much information is introduced at one time. (5)

- * Letter-sound knowledge leads to greater success with reading and writing. (2,3)

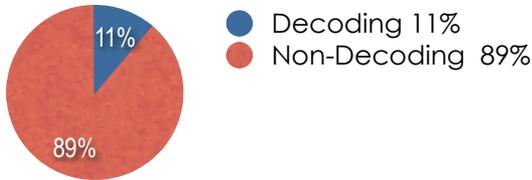
- * Early inventive spelling leads to greater success with spelling in school. (2)

Souns for Classrooms

Preliminary data from parent observation surveys in 2009 (n=33) compared to national statistics from the U.S. Department of Education (D.O.E.) in 2000

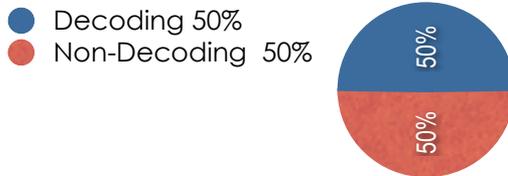
Chart 1. Data from U.S. D.O.E. National Center for Educational Statistics Report in 2000 (1).

1. 5 year old children entering kindergarten demonstrating decoding skills

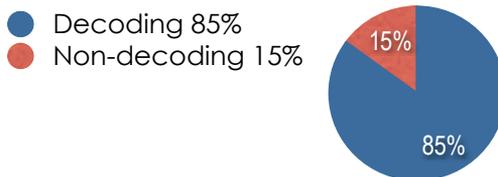


Charts 2 and 3. Percentage of children age 2 (24-36 months) and age 3 (36-48 months) using Souns for at least 1 month that can decode written words.

2. Souns children 24-36 months of age demonstrating decoding skills



3. Souns children 36-48 months of age demonstrating decoding skills



Souns users experience success in decoding.

Souns for Classrooms

All proceeds from Souns go to further literacy work through Counterpane, a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to all children being able to read. Souns was first introduced to infant/toddler programs in public libraries and childcare centers through the Rotary Club of Peachtree City in Rotary District 6900. The Souns program is currently in participating centers in the United States and, through combined efforts of organizations such as the Peace Corps, University of Pretoria, the Knysna Education Trust, and Rotary Districts 6900, 9350, and 9400, the program is impacting thousands of children in South Africa. A collaborative effort between Rotary Districts 6990 and 7000 have funded work with Head Start in San Juan Municipality in Puerto Rico reaching 4000 children. Souns has received major funding from United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta. Souns projects have been supported by grants from community foundations as well as Rotary Clubs and Districts.

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Thanks to the little people who continue
to teach us how they learn best!