

GRADES  
**PreK–8**

The Fountas & Pinnell

# Comprehensive Phonics, Spelling, and **Word Study** Guide



Fountas & Pinnell  
**LITERACY™**

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*Acknowledgments*

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# Introduction

*The Fountas & Pinnell Comprehensive Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study Guide* is a description of the essential understandings related to the alphabetic system that characterizes English. This volume represents a comprehensive picture of understandings that teachers need to know to understand literacy learners from Prek to middle school. Your teaching may be directed at students of a certain age; however, increasingly we find that it is helpful to a community of teachers to have a “big picture” view of phonics, spelling, and word study.

For one thing, the achievement of this complex set of understandings is very diverse even within one classroom. As you observe your students, you are likely to find that many students need to develop understandings that others in the same class have fully established; some students will be advanced beyond their current grade level, yet almost all students may have missed a key understanding and found themselves confused in the challenges your curriculum poses. Secondly, lifting the literacy abilities of students in your school cannot be fully achieved until teachers work as a collaborative community to take collective responsibility for each cohort. It is valuable to have a view of the complex learning that even very young students take on as they enter school, as well as a view of the high expectations they encounter as they move into middle or high school. At each grade level, you would want an understanding of what went before and what will be coming for your students.

It's important to recognize that, while important, phonics, spelling, word analysis, and grammar and usage strategies are not the end goal of literacy education. Their importance lies in their contribution to reading and writing continuous text. The more that students can solve words, derive the meaning of words, spell words, and parse language syntax rapidly, fluently, and unconsciously, the more likely they are to read and write with competence and ease.

This volume serves as a reference for your work in phonics, spelling, and word study. In it, you will find a series of statements that clearly describe principles related to nine areas of learning (see Figure I-1).

These nine areas offer an approximation of typical learning over time. In interpreting this document, it's important to realize that learners do not change in exactly the same way, but they do build complex learning toward this picture of proficiency.

As you look at the continuum, you will notice that each area is organized into subcategories and that principles (as embodied in student behaviors) are listed in “teacher language” within each subcategory. Along with the statement of the principle, when applicable, you will find examples that will be helpful to you in teaching. (Sometimes it's hard to call to mind specific examples of exactly what you are teaching.) All of this information will help you plan



FIGURE 1-1 Developing Word-Solving Systems: Nine Areas of Learning

Early Literacy Concepts	Early literacy concepts include understandings such as knowing to read from left to right and voice-to-print matching. Many children enter kindergarten with good knowledge of early literacy concepts. If they do not, then explicit and systematic instruction can help them become oriented quickly. While most of these early literacy concepts are not “phonics,” they are basic to the child’s understanding of print and should be mastered early.
Phonological Awareness	A key to becoming literate is the ability to hear the sounds in words. Hearing individual sounds allows the learner to connect sounds and letters. A general response to the sounds of language is called <i>phonological awareness</i> . As learners become more aware of language, they notice sounds in a more detailed way. <i>Phonemic awareness</i> involves recognizing the individual sounds in words and, eventually, being able to identify, isolate, and manipulate them. Children who can hear sounds in words have an advantage in that they can connect specific sounds with the letters that represent them.
Letter Knowledge	Letter knowledge refers to what children need to learn about the graphic characters—how they look, how to distinguish them one from another, how to detect them within continuous text, how to use them in words. A finite set of twenty-six letters, two forms of each, is related to all of the sounds of the English language (forty-four phonemes). The sounds in the language change as dialect, articulation, and other speech factors vary. Children will also encounter alternative forms of some letters—for example, <i>a</i> and <i>æ</i> —and will eventually learn to recognize letters in cursive writing. Children need to learn the names and purposes of letters, as well as the distinguishing features (the small differences that help them separate a <i>d</i> from an <i>a</i> , for example). When children can identify letters, they can associate them with sounds, and the alphabetic principle is mastered.
Letter-Sound Relationships	The sounds of oral language are related in both simple and complex ways to the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. Learning the connections between letters and sounds is basic to understanding written language. Children tend to learn the “regular” connections between letters and sounds ( <i>b</i> for the first sound in <i>bat</i> ) first. But they also must learn that often letters appear together—for example, it is efficient to think of the two sounds at the beginning of <i>black</i> together. Sometimes a single sound (like /ch/) is connected to two letters; sometimes a cluster of letters represents one sound, for example, <i>igh</i> for long <i>a</i> . Children learn to look for and recognize these letter combinations as units, which makes their word solving more efficient.
Spelling Patterns	Efficient word solvers look for and find patterns in the way words are constructed. Knowing spelling patterns or word parts helps children notice and use larger parts of words, thus making word solving faster and easier. Patterns are also helpful to children in writing words, because they can quickly write down the patterns rather than laboriously working with individual sounds and letters.
High-Frequency Words	A core of high-frequency words is a valuable resource as children build their reading and writing processing systems. We can also call these <i>high-utility</i> words because they appear often and can sometimes be used to help in solving other words. Recognizing high-frequency words automatically frees attention for understanding as well as for solving other new words. In general, children first learn simple high-frequency words and in the process develop efficient systems for learning more words; the process accelerates. They continuously add to the core of high-frequency words they know. Lessons on high-frequency words can develop automaticity and help children look more carefully at the features of words.

FIGURE I-1 (continued)

Word Meaning/ Vocabulary	Vocabulary refers to the words one knows as part of language. For comprehension and coherence, students need to know the meaning of the words in the texts they read and write. It is important for them to constantly expand their listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabularies and to develop more complex understandings of words they already know (for example, words may have multiple meanings or be used figuratively).
Word Structure	Words are built according to rules. Looking at the structure of words will help students learn how words are related to each other and how they can be changed by adding letters, letter clusters, and larger word parts. Readers who can break down words into syllables and can notice categories of word parts can apply their word-solving strategies efficiently.
Word-Solving Actions	Word solving is related to all of the categories of learning previously described, but we have created an additional category that focuses on the strategic moves readers and writers make when they use their knowledge of the language system while reading and writing continuous text. These strategies are “in-the-head” actions that are invisible, although we can often infer them from overt behaviors.

for teaching. You can match up these principles with the curriculum in your school. They also are a match for our minilessons in *Phonics Lessons: Letters, Words, and How They Work* (Grades K, 1, 2) and *Word Study Lessons: Phonics, Spelling, and Vocabulary* (Grade 3), as well as for the grade-by-grade Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study continuum in *The Fountas & Pinnell Literacy Continuum* (2017).

Early in schooling, and many times before they begin schooling, students learn critical concepts about how print works. There are particular conventions in print that must be brought under control—for example, word-by-word matching and left-to-right directionality. As well, students live in a world of print and soon begin to notice letters and to connect them to the sounds of language. They move from these broad areas to the complexities of the various parts of speech and their functions and to details of word structure. Students learn to take multisyllable words apart and to use prefixes, suffixes, and base words not only to decode words but also to help them derive meaning. They learn to use word roots and historical information to understand word meaning.

### Learning over Time

Curriculum plans sometimes give the impression that learning takes place at one point in time. Once “taught,” it should be learned. That may be true for some single facts, but complex learning takes time over many examples and a great deal of use. Each one of the nine areas requires several years for a student to achieve a high level of learning, one that assures the student is not learning a narrow definition but is developing deep, internalized understanding that allows him to apply the understanding constantly and usually without conscious effort. That means that students are working across each of these areas in a



PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS (continued)													
BEHAVIOR	INSTRUCTIONAL LANGUAGE	GRADE LEVEL											
		PreK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6-8				
		E	M	L	E	M	L	E	M	L	E	M	L
Syllables													
6	Hear, say, and clap syllables: e.g., farm, be/fore, a/ni/mal.			*	*	*	*	*	*				
7	Blend syllables: e.g., let/ter, letter.			*	*	*	*	*					
8	Divide words into syllables: e.g., never, new/er.			*	*	*	*	*					
9	Delete a syllable from a word: e.g., a/round, round; be/hind, be.			*	*	*	*	*					
Onsets and Rimes													
10	Hear and divide onsets and rimes: e.g., m-on, bl-ack.					*	*	*	*				
11	Blend onsets with rimes: e.g., d-og, dog.					*	*	*	*				
Phonemes													
12	Hear and say two phonemes (sounds) in a word: e.g., /a/ /t/.			*	*	*	*	*					
13	Divide a word into phonemes: e.g., no, /n/ /o/.			*	*	*	*	*					
14	Hear and say three phonemes in a word: e.g., /t/ /u/ /t/.			*	*	*	*	*					
15	Hear and say the beginning phoneme in a word: e.g., sun, /s/.			*	*	*	*	*					
16	Hear and say the ending phoneme in a word: e.g., bed, /d/.			*	*	*	*	*					
17	Hear and say the same beginning phoneme in words: e.g., run, red, /r/.			*	*	*	*	*					
18	Hear and say the same ending phoneme in words: e.g., win, fun, /n/.			*	*	*	*	*					
19	Blend two or three phonemes in a word: e.g., /t/ /o/ /t/, lot.			*	*	*	*	*					
20	Add a phoneme to the beginning of a word: e.g., /s/ + it = sit.			*	*	*	*	*					

SPELLING PATTERNS (continued)																				
BEHAVIOR	INSTRUCTIONAL LANGUAGE	GRADE LEVEL																		
		PreK		K		1		2		3		4		5		6-8				
		C	M	L	E	M	L	E	M	L	E	M	L	E	M	L	E	M	L	
Phonogram Patterns (continued)																				
5	Recognize and use phonograms with a vowel-consonant-silent e (VCe) pattern: -ace, -ade, -ake, -ale, -ame, -ane, -ape, -ate, -ave, -ice, -ide, -ile, -ine, -ite, -ive, -oke, -ose.																			
6	Recognize and use phonograms that end with a double consonant (VCC): e.g., -all, -ass, -ell, -ess, -ill, -uff.																			
7	Recognize and use phonograms with a double vowel (VVC): -eed, -eek, -eel, -eem, -een, -eep, -eer, -eet, -ood, -oof, -ook, -ool, -oom, -oon, -oop, -oor, -oot.																			
8	Recognize and use phonograms with ending consonant clusters (VCC): e.g., -ack*, -act, -aft, -amp, -and, -ang, -ank*, -ant, -ash*, -ask, -ast, -eth, -eck, -elt, -end, -ent, -ept, -est*, -ick*, -ift, -imp, -ing*, -ink*, -int, -ish, -isk, -ist, -ock*, -omp, -ond, -uck*, -umb, -ump*, -ung, -unk*, -unt, -ush, -ust.																			
9	Recognize and use phonograms with vowel combinations (VVC): e.g., -aid, -ail*, -ain*, -ait, -eod, -eak, -eal, -eam, -ean, -eap, -ear, -eat*, -ied, -ief, -ies, -oak, -oat, -oil, -our, -out.																			
10	Recognize and use more difficult phonogram patterns in single-syllable words: • VCC (e.g., paint, fault, reach, beast, speech, tooth, moist, pouch, would, sound, south) • VVCe (e.g., praise, weave, sneeze, noise, loose, mouse) • VCCe (e.g., dance, paste, wedge, judge) • VCCC (e.g., ranch, patch, bench, ditch, lunch) • VCCe (e.g., pounce) • VCCC (e.g., caught, launch, health, weight, sought)																			

WORD MEANING/VOCABULARY (continued)															
BEHAVIOR	INSTRUCTIONAL LANGUAGE	GRADE LEVEL													
		PreK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6-8						
		I	M	L	E	M	L	E	M	L	E	M	L	E	
Figurative Uses of Words															
16	Recognize and use onomatopoeic words: e.g., buzz, hiss, plop, quack, thump, whack, zoom.									*	*	*	*	*	*
17	Recognize and discuss the fact that some words have literal and figurative meanings: e.g., • cold—"less warm than usual"; "unfriendly" • shark—"a large, usually ferocious fish that lives in warm seas"; "a dishonest person who preys on others" • fork—"a tool with a handle and two or more long, pointed parts at one end"; "anything shaped like a fork, or any branching"									*	*	*	*	*	*
18	Recognize and use similes to make a comparison: e.g., • The child's lovely eyes shone like a pair of moons in the evening sky. • The police officer's mood seemed as light as an autumn breeze.									*	*	*	*	*	*
19	Recognize and use metaphors to make a comparison: e.g., • My heart became a block of ice. • He glimpsed the silver lace of frost on the window. • She is a sparkling star.									*	*	*	*	*	*
20	Recognize and discuss the fact that commonly used idioms that have meanings different from the meanings of the separate words: e.g., go fly a kite, hold your tongue, on the fence, hit the nail on the head, hit the road, sweat bullets.									*	*	*	*	*	*
21	Recognize say, and talk about words that are jumbled for humorous effect: e.g., • spoonerisms—a lack of pies for a pack of lies • malapropisms—the very pineapple of politeness for the very pinnacle of politeness													*	*



WORD STRUCTURE (continued)																
BEHAVIOR	INSTRUCTIONAL LANGUAGE	GRADE LEVEL														
		PreK			K			1	2	3	4	5	6-8			
		I	M	L	I	M	L	I	M	L	I	M	L	I	M	L
Plurals																
27	Understand and talk about the fact that a noun can refer to more than one person, place, or thing: e.g., fathers, towns, toys.							*	*	*						
28	Recognize and use plurals that add -s: e.g., books, cars, dogs, farms, mothers, zoos.							*	*	*						
29	Recognize and use plurals that add -es to words that end with the letters ch, sh, s, x, or z: e.g., branches, dishes, classes, boxes, buzzes.							*	*	*	*	*	*			
30	Recognize and use plurals that add -s to words that end with a vowel and y: e.g., boys, chimneys, holidays.							*	*	*	*	*				
31	Recognize and use plurals that add -es to words that end with a consonant and y after changing the y to i: e.g., countries, jellies, rubies.								*	*	*	*	*			
32	Recognize and use plurals that add -es to words after changing the final f or fe to v: e.g., knives, scarves, wolves.									*	*	*	*	*		
33	Recognize and use irregular plurals that change the spelling of the word: e.g., goose/geese, mouse/mice, ox/oxen, woman/women.									*	*	*	*	*	*	*
34	Recognize and use irregular plurals that are the same as the singular form of the word: e.g., deer, moose, salmon, sheep.									*	*	*	*	*	*	*
35	Recognize and use plurals that add -s to words that end with o: e.g., pianos, rodeos.									*	*	*	*	*		
36	Recognize and use plurals that add -es to words that end with a consonant and o: e.g., echoes, heroes.									*	*	*	*	*		

WORD-SOLVING ACTIONS (continued)																			
BEHAVIOR	INSTRUCTIONAL LANGUAGE	GRADE LEVEL																	
		PreK		K	1	2	3	4	5	6-8									
		I	M	L	E	M	L	E	M	L	E	M	L	E	M	L	A	T	E
Using What Is Known to Solve Words (continued)																			
13	Identify words that have the same letter pattern and use them to solve an unknown word: e.g., <i>hat/sat, light/night, crumb/thumb, curious/furious</i> .							*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
14	Use known word parts (some are words) to solve unknown larger words: e.g., <i>in/into, can, canvas, us, crust</i> .							*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Analyzing Words to Solve Them																			
15	Say a word slowly to hear the initial sound in the word.	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
16	Say a word slowly to hear the final sound in the word.	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
17	Say a word slowly to hear the sounds in sequence.					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
18	Recognize the sequence of letters and the sequence of sounds to read a word or word part.					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
19	Recognize and use onsets and rimes to read words: e.g., <i>b-ag, bag; gr-in, grin; pl-ate, plate</i> .					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Changing, Adding, or Removing Parts to Solve Words																			
20	Change the beginning sound or sounds to make and solve a new word: e.g., <i>he/me (change /h/ to /m/), more/shore (change /m/ to /sh/), bright/might (change /b/ to /m/)</i> .					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
21	Change the ending sound or sounds to make and solve a new word: e.g., <i>in/it (change /n/ to /t/), them/then (change /m/ to /n/), rest/red (change /s/ to /d/)</i> .					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*



Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell

In a world rich with language and literacy, each word matters.  
Words give us a way to communicate—to think, talk, read, and write—  
and to activate and enjoy a literate life.

With this new, essential resource, Fountas and Pinnell bring their literacy expertise to a systematic exploration of letters, sounds, and words and learning how oral and written language “work.”

*The Fountas & Pinnell Comprehensive Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study Guide* provides you with a comprehensive map of the knowledge students develop on their journey to becoming expert word solvers and effective readers and writers. The literacy behaviors you know and understand as you make minute-by-minute decisions within the act of teaching will make the biggest impact on student learning.

You will find that this essential guide, presented in an easy-to-use chart form, is a critical companion to *The Fountas & Pinnell Literacy Continuum, Expanded Edition*. You will be able to hone your observations of students’ literacy behaviors with this indispensable tool, which combines the behaviors and understandings from the Phonics continuum with the specific times (early, middle, or late in grades PreK–8) appropriate for each one to be introduced and then to be under students’ control. In addition, instructional language and a multitude of specific examples appear exclusively in this guide. Use this resource to assist your students in an exploration of letter and word learning.

The Fountas & Pinnell

# Comprehensive Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study Guide

*The Fountas & Pinnell Comprehensive Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study Guide* reflects the specific behaviors related to the nine areas of learning for letters, sounds, and words that children develop over time:

- Early Literacy Concepts
- Phonological Awareness
- Letter Knowledge
- Letter-Sound Relationships
- Spelling Patterns
- High-Frequency Words
- Word Meaning/Vocabulary
- Word Structure
- Word-Solving Actions

Further elevate your expertise  
with these companion tools:

- *The Fountas & Pinnell Literacy Continuum, Expanded Edition*
- Digital version of *The Fountas & Pinnell Literacy Continuum*
- *Fountas & Pinnell Phonics & Word Study Lessons*