

## What is Intensive Phonics?

Dear Parents:

You might already be noticing that your child is starting to try to spell words! This is all part of the Intensive Phonics Program that has been implemented in Kindergarten. It is actually very similar to the way phonics was taught in the 1970's. It has been updated to include developmentally appropriate procedures and to engage children in active learning. Our results from the use of this program have been phenomenal. By October, your child will understand why we are learning the letter sounds. They will apply their skills as they are learning them. Here is a brief description of the program:

\*All children will learn letter formation, letter sounds, how to slide sounds together, and how to decode real and nonsense words on a vertical surface. The chalkboard is the best teaching tool for developing the fine motor skills necessary to write neatly. Our occupational therapists love the fact that all of our children spend the first half of the school year doing most of their handwriting on the chalkboard!

\*The program is hands-on. All children must think on their feet as they stand at the board during the lessons. Teachers can see everyone's work at the same time. We can correct letter formation and incorrect sounds.

\*We will do board time once a day for 7-10 minutes, which is perfect for the attention spans of five year old children. We will focus on writing the letters correctly and on the application of letter sounds.

### Step One: Teaching the names and forms of letters

Teacher says: "Write the uppercase letter B, B."

Students respond: They say the letter twice, B, B. They immediately turn to the board and write it. The teacher assists or corrects letter formation. We do this daily until the children know about 6 consonants and one vowel.

### Step Two: Teaching the Phonetic Sounds of Letters

Teacher says: "Write the letter that sounds like B, B. (The teacher states the sound for the letter.)"

Students respond: They repeat the sound for the letter two times, and turn to the board and write the lowercase letter that makes that sound. Knowledge is power! The children are empowered and excited by their knowledge. We do not move on to the slide until most children can write the letters and identify the sounds from memory.

### Step Three: Teaching the Slide

We are now ready to take a consonant and a vowel and slide the two sounds together. Teacher says: Write the two letters that sound like BA, BA. Students respond: They repeat the two sounds twice, BA, BA. They then turn to the board and write the two lower case letters they heard. They must write from left to right and have the sounds in the same order in which they heard them. As they get good at sliding two sounds together, we begin to teach more consonant letters.

### Step Four: Creating Three Letter Words: Adding an Ending Sound

Now that students understand how to slide a consonant and a vowel together, we will begin introducing how to write words. Children will be taught how to add an ending sound to their word. We will only use the sounds we have taught to create real and nonsense words. Once the children become experts with the short "a" sound, we will introduce the other vowels one at a time. Learning letter sounds becomes such a meaningful task with this program. Students will learn right away why we are learning these sounds because they will be actively involved in creating words. We will also learn to decode words and to play with rhyming words to encourage conventional spelling.

\*By the end of Kindergarten, children will be able to spell and decode any three-letter word with a short vowel such as bat, log, red, sit, and sun. We will also introduce some blends, digraphs, and long vowel sounds at the very end of the year.

\*We love the children's response when they are finally asked to write on their own. Most of them will say that writing a journal is just like what we do at board time! What a great way to actively engage children in understanding the reading and writing process. Intensive Phonics makes it so fun to learn and allows children to actively engage in their own learning. When the skills are isolated, then applied in such a meaningful way, all children are successful. If you have any questions about Intensive Phonics, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Kim Massucci and Mrs. Jodi Puhl

