The Essence of Phonics

(Phonics Summary)

The essence of what you need to know to teach phonics instruction can be expressed *"on the back of an envelope"* For parents who may not understand what phonics reading instruction is, this may give them confidence they can teach it.

by Dr. Patrick Groff
NRRF Board Member & Senior Advisor

Dr. Patrick Groff, Professor of Education Emeritus San Diego State University, has published over 325 books, monographs, and journal articles and is a nationally known expert in the field of reading instruction.

1. Letters of the alphabet represent the sounds of speech.
2. The "short" vowel sounds are: a e i o u
   a as in *at*;   e as in elf;   i as in it;   o as in odd;   u as in up
3. Attaching short vowels to consonant sounds makes
   /ab-eb-ib-ob-ub/, or   /ba-be-bi-bo-bu/, or
   /bat-bet-bit-bot-but/, or   /brag-bled-drip-stop-drum/, or
   /fast-rest-fist-cost-must, or   /grand-blend-brisk-frost-crust/
4. The "long" vowel sounds are:
   a as in game; e as in Pete;   I as in pine;   o as in home;   u as in cute
   The long vowels also are spelled with two *joined* letters:
   f*ai*l, pl*ay*; s*ee*n, l*ea*f; d*ie*; b*oa*t
5. The diphthongs are /oi/ as in *oil* or *boy,* and /ou/ as in *howl* or *out.*
6. Two other important vowels sounds are /oo/ in foot, and /▢/ in *boot.*
7. Long vowels, diphthongs, and /oo/ and /▢/ attached to consonant sounds make up many words (the same way short vowels do).
8. Some consonant sounds are spelled with joined letters:
   /ch/ as in *ch*ant;   /kw/ in *qu*ack;   /sh/ in *sh*op;   /th/ in *th*is
9. Some speech sounds in words are not spelled according to the above phonics rules:
   angel; vary, care, hair; be; myth, prince, fence; find, night, by; arm, salt, cough; union; both, know; truth, who, rude, new; put.
   Some words have "silent" letters:
   com*b*, *w*rite, bub*b*le, mid*d*le, cuf*f*, ful*l*, com*m*on, con*n*ect, pop*p*y, tar*r*y, mis*s*, but*t*er, buz*z*.
10. All words are sounded-out *left-to-right* when phonics information is applied to them.