

October 2019

Letter Lessons and First Words: Phonics Foundations that Work

Meghan K. Block
Central Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj>

Recommended Citation

Block, Meghan K. (2019) "Letter Lessons and First Words: Phonics Foundations that Work," *Michigan Reading Journal*: Vol. 52: Iss. 1, Article 12.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj/vol52/iss1/12>

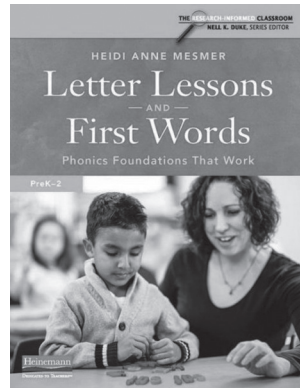
From *The Teachers & Writers Guide to Classic American Literature*, edited by Christopher Edgar and Gary Lenhart, 2001, New York, NY: Teachers & Writers Collaborative. Copyright 2001 by Teachers & Writers Collaborative. Reprinted with permission.

This work is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Michigan Reading Journal by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

Letter Lessons and First Words: Phonics Foundations that Work

by Meghan K. Block, Ph.D.

Mesmer, H. A. (2019).
Letter lessons and first words: Phonics foundations that work.
Portsmouth, NH:
Heinemann.
ISBN 978-0-325-10544-4



Phonics instruction is an important part of literacy instruction—especially in Michigan where our performance on national tests is quite poor as compared to that of other states. Over the years, research has addressed effective ways to support children’s phonics development. The book, *Letter Lessons and First Words: Phonics Foundations that Work* includes the latest research and provides research-based recommendations for phonics instruction in the K-2 classroom. Not only is the book a useful tool for instructional ideas, it also provides a solid and very important foundation of phonics knowledge for all readers.

Throughout the entire book, Heidi Anne Mesmer uses detailed examples to support teachers seeking to implement more effective phonics instruction into their early elementary literacy instruction. In the introduction, Mesmer states that she has written the book to provide a glimpse into how these practices might look inside actual classrooms. She effectively does this through her articulate use of language and detailed explanations; additionally, there are several references to at least 20 short video clips that accompany the instructional recommendations. These videos are definitely an asset to the book and will be most appealing to teachers seeking to implement the practices. Accessing the videos is very easy and highly recommended.

After an informative introduction, and several chapters during which readers gain a better understanding of



Meghan K. Block, Ph.D.

English orthography and the importance of systematic phonics instruction, the book provides assessments to help teachers better individualize phonics instruction. Mesmer argues, and research confirms, that effective phonics instruction should be dynamic, engaging, and individualized. The assessments she provides will be most useful to teachers as they work to differentiate phonics instruction. The final chapters of the book include numerous instructional ideas to address the needs of children at different levels of phonics development.

This book is a must read for all K-2 teachers and those preparing to become early elementary teachers. It’s written with the needs of K-2 students and their teachers in mind. The book will certainly inspire more engaging phonics instruction and thereby foster more effective learning experiences for early elementary students.

Author Biography

Dr. Meghan K. Block is an Associate Professor of Elementary Literacy in the Teacher Education and Professional Development Department at Central Michigan University. Her teaching and research interests focus on early literacy development and instruction. She can be reached at block1m@cmich.edu.