

Units of Study in Phonics, Grades K—2
By Lucy Calkins and TCRWP Colleagues

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***Question:** How does the Units of Study in Phonics curriculum keep pace with students' reading and writing?*

Liz Dunford:

The challenges readers encounter in their books are often steps if not leaps ahead of what they're often studying in phonics. Children will encounter things like contractions as early as level C. They'll encounter compound words as early as level E, long vowel patterns, inflectional endings and multi syllabic words as early as level F. If you're going to keep up with the phonics challenges readers are encountering in their books or keep up with the kinds of words they want to write in their own pieces, a curriculum that moves down an extensive list of items, principle by principle, is not going to keep up with what kids are ready to do or need to be ready to do. We want to offer kids a curriculum that helps them help themselves.

One big thing is that we are helping kids become more curious about words studying how words work, how words tend to go as well as being flexible with the exceptions. It simply doesn't pay off to teach kids a list of rules and then teach them the words that break those rules. Instead, we really want to encourage readers and writers to be flexible using what they know to problem solve. In this curriculum rather than teaching them a long extensive list of consonants that go together to form blends we teach kids strategies to approach words with these features. If they know that S and T often go together and you have to be on the lookout for that part at the beginning of words and blend those sounds, then they can problem solve other words that work in similar ways. It also offers kids moving beyond this work to approach words that begin with three letters like stripe or splash.

For more information on the Units of Study in Phonics from Lucy Calkins and TCRWP colleagues, visit: unitsofstudy.com/phonics