8. Features and Functions

The program relies on the principles of the Expanded Teaching Alphabet (ETA) for its theoretical framework in structuring sound (phoneme) and letter (grapheme) correspondence. As we have seen, this alphabet uses 51 letter combinations to represent the 51 sounds necessary for beginning reading and writing of English. The program then places these sounds in 40 lesson words with real sound/letter correspondence. Next, it places these lesson words into two reading experiences, showing the phonemes, graphemes, and words, in real reading context. Then students create writings using the lesson words with their embedded phonemes and graphemes. The program uses printing to teach handwriting and to review the letters, sounds, and words. Emphasis in the spelling, pronunciation, and reading functions is on decoding. Emphasis in the writing and printing functions is encoding. Once young students can write, they can always read. The functions and features include the Expanded Teaching Alphabet (ETA), the 40 lesson words, and the 51 sounds.

The 40 Lesson Words

The system is constructed around 40 words that students should already know orally or can easily learn orally.   These 40 words contain the 51 sounds used to get students to read and write the words that they use easily when speaking. Of course, children have been using the sounds orally since birth and constructing words with them since their first year. Beginning at an average age of three, they have named the objects common to their world. At an average age of four, they have become masters of the oral syntax of their language. And at an average age of five, they are able to use their language to construct thoughts and speak those thoughts to those around them in very dynamic and exciting ways. In addition, by the fifth or sixth year, children already know that books have words and that words have letters. These students know the difference between writing and drawing and in which way a book is right side up. Many students will easily memorize the lesson words, but it is important that they do not skip any. The lesson words and sounds are the building blocks to reading and writing unknown words.   Now the students capi-talize on this wonderful linguistic versatility and early childhood experience to read and write. The program is integrated in six ways:

- The 40 lesson words are embedded in stories and poems.
- The 51 sounds are embedded in the 40 words.
- Letters (graphemes) represent sounds with the English alphabet letters.
- Students write (handwriting) using these same sounds, letters, and words.
- Students write (compose) using these same sounds, letters, and words.
- Students generate a large and dynamic set of new words which they can read and from which they can construct new writings.

Literature Includes the 40 Lesson Words

Two reading selections introduce each of 40 words in context. You will begin by pointing and reading each word and each line of each selection in its entirety and line by line. Then point and say as the student says the words and the lines with you. Next have the student try to point and say the words and lines. Prompt the student as much as you like, but have the student say the words with you. Focus on the lesson word. The reading follows the spelling and pronunciation lessons; and, therefore, the student should know the lesson word without difficulty.

40 Words Represent 51 Sounds (Phonemes)

The 40 words introduce each of 51 sounds (phonemes) in context. The Tree of Sounds at the beginning of each lesson shows the letters of the sounds, and the student is to point to the sound and say it. The new word just studied goes on the Word Wall, where the student will point to it and say the new word. This program uses 51 sounds; other programs may use some other number of sounds. As new words are introduced, their letters are added to the Tree of Sounds, where they remain and can be reviewed throughout the rest of the program.

Letters (Graphemes) Represent the 51 Sounds

As discussed previously, the program follows the tradition of the Expanded Teaching Alphabet (ETA). This alphabet represents sounds with the same English letters and names that students use in reading and writing. The idea is to avoid the confusion that comes when the phonics system and the alphabet system are different. In some cases, more than one letter will represent a sound—such as, *air*, *th*, *ch*, *oi*, *oo*—to mention only a few. *Ing*, *ang*, *ung*, *ong*, as in *sing*, *sang*, *sung*, and *song* are special cases where hard-to-say sounds are separated. Therefore, the program treats each of them as a single sound: *ing*, *ang*, *ung*, *ong*. The program grouped these sounds and words together.

Lesson Words with the Sounds As Introduced			
cat—c, a, t	sun—s	feather—th	saw—aw (au)
bed—b, e, d	jump—j, m	wheel—wh	dog
pig—p, i, g	lemon—l	moon—oo	chair—air
hot—h, o	volcano—v	book—oo	heart— ar
run—r, u, n	ax—x	oil—oi (oy)	tears—ear
ape—long a	yo-yo—y	turtle—ur	ring—ing
eagle—long e	zipper—z, er	horse—or	sing, sang, song, sung—
kite—k, long i	fish—f, sh	unicorn	ang, ong, ung
window-w, long o	child—ch	house—ou (ow)	
cute—long u	three—th	queen—qu	

The Expanded Teaching Alphabet is ideal for meeting both the "phonemic awareness" and the "common sound-spelling relationships in words." (The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) The system also meets the requirements of "letters, sounds, and reading for meaning."

### *The Student Writes (Composing) Using These Sounds, Letters, and Words*

James Britton of the University of London and a leading expert on the oral and written language of young children has said of writing, "Get the flow going and keep it going." The program integrates the sounds, letters, and words learned into the students' written composition. The program also uses writing to reinforce these letters and words.

The generative nature of composing allows the student to create a repertoire of hundreds of new words by going through the program. The program encourages the student to write words and sentences using words as they sound. Some students may begin by writing only the letters of the sounds they have learned. Teachers and coaches should encourage but not force the writing. Since the writings are in the portfolio, the student can always go back and do more elaborately what was done before. The program reserves spelling and grammar rules for an age-appropriate time after the writing is flowing. However, the program does provide enough of the conventions to get the writing flow going—periods at the end of sentences and capitals at the beginning, for example. In summary, the coach should give as much time as possible to the writing process. Learning to write is a fast track to reading proficiency. Writing always enables reading.

After the writings are in the portfolio, the coach should encourage the student to continue to improve, edit, and proofread each one. Reviewing the previous words on the Word Wall and reviewing the previous writings in the portfolio are excellent introductions to new word lessons. The program encourages age-appropriate writing by showing words, syntax, and punctuation in reading activities, editing and self-editing work, and maintaining a portfolio of progress. This guide deals with assessment of writings in the section called Authentic Assessment.

The Student Writes (Handwriting) Using These Sounds, Letters, and Words

The program integrates the sounds, letters, and words into the student's handwritten composition and into the student's handwriting practice. The coach or teacher is encouraged to have the student write (compose) in order to strengthen composition and writing skills. The handwriting pages have a background like primary printing paper. The student may print on printing paper and look at the page for help. Primary printing tablets may be purchased at discount stores at affordable prices.
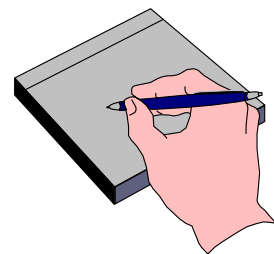
The Student Generates a Large and Dynamic Set of New Words

The student generates a large and dynamic set of new words. From these new words, the student can read new works and construct new writings. In this way, the program integrates the words learned with the general vocabulary growth of the student. The generative nature of the program makes it a vocabulary building program of huge dimensions. As the student does the exercises, new words are created by associating words that sound the same or rhyme. The power of rhyme, which students enjoy, creates the recognition of hundreds of more words. The writing activities encourage creating new words. The readings themselves generate a stream of new words to be added to the student's vocabulary, to be used in the other readings, and to be used in speaking and writing. The writing page uses the same primary printing paper background, allowing the student to use the writing page for support.