**5 Essential Components of Reading**

According to the U.S. Department of Education, reading with children and helping them practice specific reading components can dramatically improve their ability to read. Scientific research shows that there are five essential components of reading that children must be taught in order to learn to read. Adults can help children learn to be good readers by systematically practicing these five components:

**Phonological Awareness**  
Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize that words are made up of a variety of sound units. The term encompasses a number of sound related skills necessary for a person to develop as a reader. As a child develops phonological awareness she not only comes to understand that words are made up of small sound units (phonemes). She also learns that words can be segmented into larger sound “chunks” known as syllables and each syllable begin with a sound (onset) and ends with another sound (rime).  
  
**Phonemic Awareness**  
Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate individual phonemes.   
It is just one aspect of phonological awareness. While phonological awareness encompasses a child’s ability to recognize the many ways sounds function in words, phonemic awareness is only her understanding of the most minute sound units in words. A reader with strong phonemic awareness will demonstrate the ability to hear rhyme and alliteration (the repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of several different words used in a sentence or paragraph), find the different sound in a set of words (ie. “bat”, “ball”, “wet”) and blend and segment phonemes.  
  
**Phonics**  
Understanding the relationships between written letters and spoken sounds, or **phonics**. Children learn the sounds of individual letters first, then the sounds of letters in combination and in simple words. Knowing the relationships between letters and sounds helps children to recognize familiar words accurately and automatically, and "decode" new words.   
  
**Fluency**  
**Fluency**is defined as the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. In order to understand what they read, children must be able to *read fluently* whether they are reading aloud or silently. When reading aloud, fluent readers read in phrases and add intonation appropriately. Their reading is smooth and has expression.

**Vocabulary**  
Learning the meaning and pronunciation of words, or **vocabulary development**. Children need to actively build and expand their knowledge of written and spoken words, what they mean and how they are used.  
  
**Comprehension**  
Acquiring strategies to understand, remember and communicate what is read, or **reading comprehension strategies**. Children need to be taught comprehension strategies, or the steps good readers use to make sure they understand text. Students who are in control of their own reading comprehension become purposeful, active readers.  Comprehension instruction often includes:  making predictions, asking questions, making inferences, making connections, visualizing, summarizing, using schema, and synthesizing.