



Jolly Learning Ltd

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November 2019

Response of Jolly Learning Ltd to the EdReports Review of Jolly Phonics

1. Jolly Phonics Student Books 1, 2 and 3, and Grades for use

Your study reviewed the Jolly Phonics Student Books 1, 2 and 3, on the basis that they applied for three years of study. This is not the case. All three are just for the Kindergarten year.

The corresponding books for Grade 1 are the Grammar 1 Student Book, and the Grammar 1 Teacher's Book. You do refer to these in your Grade 1 review. Similarly your Grade 2 review refers to our Grammar 2 Student Book, and Grammar 2 Teacher's Book.

2. CRITERION 1A-1B. Alphabet, letter sounds, and sequence

Your study was critical of Jolly Phonics for apparently not teaching the 26 letters of the alphabet in Kindergarten. As you noted, these letters of the alphabet, and their names, with upper and lower case, including formation, are taught explicitly in Jolly Phonics Student Books 2 and 3. These books are for use within the Kindergarten year, and so this teaching does take place during that year.

3. INDICATOR 1B. Concepts of print

Your study was critical (Kindergarten, Indicator 1B) of the lack of opportunity for students to follow words from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page in Kindergarten. Such opportunity to see and teach left to right writing is given in the Finger Phonics Big Books provided to you. Towards the end of books 1, 2 and 4 in this series of 7 books, the students are encouraged to take their finger along an illustrated line, 'to take the animal to its home', going left to right, with the reason for this exercise explained.

4. INDICATOR 1C-1E. Phonological awareness

Your review for Kindergarten claimed that 'rhyming, sentence segmenting, syllable segmenting and blending, onset and rime segmenting and blending and phoneme manipulation activities are not included in the materials'. This is simply not true, even for the Phonics Student Book 1. Examples are:

Blending: Each page of Phonics Student Book 1 introducing a new letter sound has a list of four words, with dots under each sound, for blending practice. The letter sounds used are only those taught already.

Phoneme manipulation: Each page introducing a new letter sound has a picture of four objects. Students have to identify the one without the letter sound for the day.

Rhyming: In Finger Phonics Big Book 3, last but one page, the exercise asks students to match a word with a rhyming picture.

Onsets and rimes: Guidance is given to use onsets to assist blending. This advice is given in the Phonics Teacher's Book, p17, last paragraph. Your claim to the contrary is in Kindergarten Indicator 1D, third bullet point.

It can be helpful to make a clear distinction between exercises for blending, and so for reading, as distinct from those for segmenting, which are for writing. The exercises are either for one, or the other, with equal emphasis for both.

5. INDICATOR 1F. Long vowels

Your review for Kindergarten states that 'opportunities are missed for students to associate the long and short sounds with the common spellings (graphemes) for the five major vowels. This is simply not true.

In Phonics Student Book 1, the long 'a' is taught as /ai/ on p20, the long 'o' as /oa/ on p22, the long 'i' as /ie/ on p23, the long 'e' as /ee/ on p24, and finally the long 'u' as /ue/ on p38.

In Phonics Student Book 2, the short vowels are explicitly taught on p6.

6. INDICATOR 1J Encoding

Your study claims that 'the materials provided for Kindergarten do not provide opportunities for students to engage in encoding of phonics within authentic writing activities or tasks'.

Again, this is simply not true. In Phonics Student Book 1, p42 and p44 are exercises for children to encode words that are illustrated.

In the Phonics Teacher's Book, in virtually every lesson, the daily guidance for teaching with Student Book 1, under the heading 'Dictation', the children are expected to listen to words, holding up a finger for each sound, as well as write letters and regular words from dictation. By the end of Student Book 1 the children will have an excellent ability to identify the sounds in words and write corresponding letters for them.

These exercises continue in Books 2 and 3. There are opportunities for doing so with phrases (Book 2, p12, and later) and in whole sentences (Book 2, p14 and later).

7. INDICATOR 1N. Decoding accuracy and automaticity

Your study claims that the 'materials reviewed for Kindergarten do not meet the criteria for materials provide opportunities for students to engage in decoding practice focussed on accuracy and automaticity in K and Grade 1'.

Again, this is simply not true. With the introduction of each letter sound in Phonics Student Book 1 there is a list of four words for decoding. Dots under each word show the number of letter sounds, while the words only use letter sounds already introduced.

In the Phonics Teacher's Book, in the daily guidance for teaching with Phonics Student Book 1, there are extra words for blending in the Word banks on Pages 40 – 74. Teachers are encouraged to do this in the Introduction. In addition, the Jolly Phonics Starter Kit has flash cards for blending practice.

Throughout Jolly Phonics materials the teaching of decoding is embedded. It permeates Phonics Student Books 2 and 3, the teacher guidance, the DVD, while the use of decodable text is the basis of the readers provided in the Starter Kits. Decoding can be seen on the last page of Finger Phonics Big Book 1, and the end of each subsequent book in this series.

8. INDICATOR 1Q. Confirming or correcting errors

Your study claims that the 'materials reviewed for Kindergarten do not meet the criteria for materials provide opportunities for students to engage in decoding practice focussed on accuracy and automaticity in K and Grade 1'.

The concept here is valid and respected. It is that the material will enable students to self-correct errors, giving practice and enabling them to have control over their learning.

It needs to be emphasised that this principle is embedded in Jolly Phonics. In Student Book 1, for instance, in the pages for teaching the letter sounds, there are the four illustrations, with one not including the sound for the day. This enables the students to self-check their selection. Just one illustration has to be selected.

In Student Book 1, p45 at the top, there are 8 words and 8 illustrations. Again, students can self-correct if they are left at the end with a word and picture that do not match. This continues throughout the Jolly Phonics materials, the Student Books, the Finger Phonics Big Books and more, giving students practice and enabling them to achieve the accuracy and automaticity in the skills for reading and writing.

9. INDICATOR 1N Decoding practice focussed on accuracy and automaticity in K and Grade 1

In both K and Grade 1 your review gave no points for this Indicator. This does look like a profound misunderstanding of the range and depth of decoding practice provided.

In Phonics Student Book 1, each page teaching a new letter sound gives four words for decoding, using skills already taught.

In Phonics Student Book 2, decoding practice starts on p2, and continues through the book.

In Phonics Student Book 3, decoding practice starts on p2, and continues through the book.

In the Finger Phonics Big Books, decoding practice starts on the last page of Book 1, and continues on the end pages of the other books in the series.

10. In Conclusion

There have to be concerns that this review has failed on so many occasions to understand, and represent, the features of Jolly Phonics, as measured by the criteria of this study. The examples given are only some of those we expressed to you, none of which have led to any revisions of the scores.

Sadly, this assessment has the potential to undermine, rather than enhance, the teaching of literacy in the US. Jolly Phonics is widely used, with a record of enabling teachers to outperform, compared with using other early literacy programs. Not only would these achievements now be undermined, but so would be publishing environment in the US for early literacy, where Jolly Phonics is providing an innovative competitive challenge. The early teaching of literacy in the US is capable of significant improvement, as the rankings in international studies show. It is our fervent wish to contribute and be part of this process. We do not see this report on Jolly Phonics as giving teachers and educators the effective guide to raising achievement which it should do.

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