



**Strong Start to reading™**  
"Making a difference in the life of a child"

## About the Letters, Sounds and Words™ Program

*Letters, Sounds and Words™* is a highly effective program that supports classroom foundational knowledge of letter names and sounds, the ability to blend sounds, decode words, and build automaticity in word solving.

- Intended for children in Year 2 Kindergarten to Grade 2 who are selected by their teachers as needing additional practice to boost their literacy learning.
- Delivered by dedicated volunteers who receive four hours of training to work one-on-one with children.
- Comprised of four strands that address the skills needed to become successful readers: Letters, Sounds, Words and Building Words. Each child participates in two to three of the strands each week, over the course of 10 weeks. Each strand session is 30 minutes long.
- Pre-assessments allow volunteers to begin exactly where each child is in their literacy journey. Activities have been expressly designed to address different learning styles and offer Variations and Extensions, which provide interest and a challenge for children, when appropriate.
- Created to engage children in fun games and activities that reinforce the skills they are already learning in the classroom. Children build confidence as they experience success along the way.
- Designed as a supplemental program that supports the Kindergarten Program and the Ontario Language Curriculum, not as a replacement for intensive interventions that may be in place for a child.



## Exciting Changes to the Program for Fall 2024

Our program has undergone an in-depth review to ensure maximum alignment with the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Right to Read Report, the Science of Reading and the specific expectations in the Kindergarten Program and the Ontario Language Curriculum.

At the same time, with the help of external subject-matter experts and those with lived experience, we evaluated the program from an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion perspective. Both reviews enabled us to bring some critical and exciting changes to *Letters, Sounds and Words™*.

- **Updated images and relatable themes in the games, activities and books**
- **Newly redesigned books that focus on decodable text**
- **Emphasis on phonological and phonemic awareness**
- **Practise decoding and reading words with regular and irregular spellings**
- **Positive experiences for every child**

# The Four Strands of the Program

## Letters Strand

- Sessions and activities in this strand are designed to help the child identify upper- and lower-case letters of the alphabet\*.
- Children practise identifying letters, both in and out of order, and demonstrating knowledge of alphabetic order.
- **Activities connect to Specific Expectation B2.2 Alphabetic Knowledge in the Ontario Language Curriculum 2023, Grade 1.**

## Sounds Strand

- Sessions and activities in this strand are designed to help the child learn the sounds letters make, as well as the grapheme-phoneme correspondences.
- This strand intentionally focuses on the short vowel sounds and the hard consonant sounds for /c/ and /g/.
- Children practise identifying initial and final consonant sounds and middle vowel sounds in CVC words.
- **Activities connect to Specific Expectations B2.1 Phonemic Awareness and B2.3 Phonics: Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence in the Ontario Language Curriculum 2023, Grade 1.**

## Words Strand Revised

- Sessions and activities in this strand have been redesigned to align with the Science of Reading, the Kindergarten Program, and the Ontario Language Curriculum.
- Books used in this strand have been redesigned to provide decodable text, as well as updated images that are relatable and relevant to young learners.
- Decodable texts have been developed to support children in blending, decoding and reading words with regular and irregular spellings.
- **Activities connect to several specific expectations in the Ontario Language Curriculum 2023, including B2.3 Phonics: Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence, Grade 1, and B2.1 Word Level Reading and Spelling: Using Phonics Knowledge, Grade 2.**

## Building Words Strand

- Sessions and activities in this strand are designed to help children use grapheme-phoneme correspondences to blend sounds to decode words.
- This strand focuses on the short vowel sounds and the hard consonant sounds for /c/ and /g/.
- Many of the activities include an opportunity for children to develop phonemic awareness and practise blending and segmenting sounds by identifying the individual sounds in a word.
- **Activities connect to several specific expectations in the Ontario Language Curriculum 2023, including B2.3 Phonics: Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence, Grade 1, and B2.1 Word Level Reading and Spelling: Using Phonics Knowledge Grade 2.**

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\*The Letters Strand and Sounds Strand complement each other and reinforce the letter-sound relationship. Children are often enrolled in both strands simultaneously, which helps to consolidate the learning.

\*\*At the time of writing, The Kindergarten Curriculum was announced but not yet available. The News Release accompanying the announcement stated: "New and mandatory learning will include the understanding of sound-letter relationships, developing phonics knowledge and using specific vocabulary." Ontario Government News Release, January 23, 2024.

