

**You may write to provincial government about this resolution as a private citizen; you may state you are a CWL member, but you cannot state you are writing on behalf of a CWL council, nor can you write to government using League letterhead.”**

## **Education and Health**

### **Winnipeg/Our Lady of Perpetual Help**

#### **Resolution 2011.02      Early Intensive Intervention in Phonological Awareness**

**Whereas,** Children at risk for reading difficulty require early intensive intervention in phonological awareness to achieve the early years (K-4) learning outcomes in English Language Arts, and

**Whereas,** It has been demonstrated that early identification and intervention for children at risk is beneficial and gave students a solid foundation to build reading skills, and

**Whereas,** Instruction in phonological awareness would benefit all children, but especially those identified at risk, and those who are English second language children who have less exposure to spoken English at home, therefore, be it

**Resolved,** That the Manitoba provincial council of The Catholic Women`s League of Canada, in 2011 annual convention assembled, urge the Government of Manitoba, Manitoba Education, to make phonological awareness compulsory in early years at public, private and independent schools that are publicly funded and:

- develop classroom strategies for phonological awareness to be implemented at these grade levels
- provide for professional development support for phonological awareness for early years educators

#### **BRIEF      Early Intensive Intervention in Phonological Awareness**

Children at risk for reading difficulty require early intensive intervention in phonological awareness to achieve the early years (K-4) learning outcomes in English Language Arts. “Phonological awareness refers to children’s ability to divide sentences into words, break words into syllables, and identify common phonemes (e.g. recognize rhyming words).” “. . . in an alphabetic language such as English, it is essential to attend to the phonology of the language.” (Lipson, Wixson) “Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to notice, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds – phonemes – in spoken words.” (Shaywitz)

The Manitoba Education kindergarten curriculum suggests assessment using phonemic segmentation testing, a component of phonological awareness. (Education Manitoba). The Yopp-Singer Test of Phonemic Segmentation and Phonological Awareness Screening Tool are two known assessment tools for phonological awareness.

A study by Nonie Lesaux found “. . . that such intensive phonological awareness in kindergarten gave students a solid foundation on which to build reading skills in first grade.” (Potier) “. . . by the second grade, some students who spoke no English in kindergarten, were achieving higher reading skills than their native English-speaking peers.” (ibid) The abstract of her study cites: “The findings demonstrate that a model of early identification and intervention for children at risk is beneficial . . . .” (Developmental Psychology)

Instruction in phonological awareness would benefit all children, but especially those identified at risk, and those who are English second language children. Manitoba is a leader in immigration with the influx being felt within the school system. “In 2009/10 Immigration Division contributed to 13,520 immigrants landing in Manitoba in 2009, a 20.5 per cent increase over 2008 and the highest level recorded since 1946, with communities outside of Winnipeg receiving 27 percent of all newcomers; . . .” (Government of Manitoba) The children of these immigrants entering our school systems, who have less exposure to spoken English at home, would benefit from early intensive intervention in phonological awareness.

The Lesaux study provides a model for effectively teaching the growing number of English second language (ESL) students that are a reality for schools. She recommends being guided by really systemic instruction with an understanding that this is another risk factor for these kids. “Providing enough support, intervening early and monitoring development and achievement are key to helping ESL students – as well as English speakers with reading difficulties – learn to read.” (Potier)

Research indicates “. . . that there is a close link between initial phoneme (or phonological) awareness and subsequent reading mastery, as well as the reverse – lack of phoneme awareness leading to reading problems. Those students who are not instructed on phoneme awareness from early on ‘are at risk for developing reading disabilities and need explicit instruction in phoneme awareness if they are to become skilled readers and spellers’.” (Pungur) “By fourth grade there are too many struggling readers who are two full years behind their achieving classmates. It will take greater amounts of reading instruction to ever hope that these struggling readers can catch up.” (Allington)

Making phonological awareness compulsory in early years in all publicly funded schools could lead to better outcomes for students in later grades. Classroom strategies and professional development for educators are crucial to the success of phonological awareness implementation.

## **WORKS CITED      Early Intensive Intervention in Phonological Awareness**

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## **ACTION PLAN      Early Intensive Intervention in Phonological Awareness**

1. Write letters to the Premier and members of the legislative assembly (MLA) in support of this resolution.
2. Encourage chairpersons of Education and Health Standing Committee to bring this topic to the general membership for awareness and discussion.
3. Invite speaker(s) to speak on this topic.