

**Catawba Press  
Puzzle Piece Phonics  
Publisher Background**

**Description:**

Puzzle Piece Phonics is Word Study curriculum written by teachers for teachers. We harnessed our creativity, curricular understanding, and practicality to create Puzzle Piece Phonics for Grades K, 1, and 2. Phonics can easily become the forgotten piece of Balanced Literacy, but by making Word Work the center of literacy instruction, other literacy skills fall into place. Puzzle Piece Phonics is designed to inspire, challenge, and support students—with easy classroom management for teachers.

Through research and our time in the classroom, our Foundational Skills lessons are designed to target the following elements each week / day:

- **Phonemic Awareness:** The ability to focus on and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words
- **Developmental Scope and Sequence:** Effective way to cover all grade-level phonics concepts within one year
- **Clear Weekly Focus:** Related Sound-Spelling Patterns that students practice hearing, reading, and writing for one week at a time
- **Blending:** Stringing together letter sounds to read (decode) a word
- **Dictation:** Guided spelling practice (encoding words)
- **Sorting:** Placing pictures that represent words (sound sorting) or word cards into categories according to their sound-spelling patterns
- **Practice:** Direct application of sound-spelling patterns to decode and encode words in an authentic way
- **Fluency:** The ability to read with ease and accuracy so the reader can focus attention on meaning
- **Assessment:** Evaluation of mastery

Puzzle Piece Phonics includes the elements above within its 4 Instructional Components:

- **Teacher's Guide:** The Teacher's Guide streamlines the instructional routines that are the cornerstone of Puzzle Piece Phonics, and outlines simple directions for implementing the daily lessons. The practice routines ground the instruction in research and quickly become second nature to teachers and students. Each grade level of Puzzle Piece Phonics contains 36 weeks of instruction. Each concept opens in the Teacher's Guide with a "Preparing for Your Week" section to plan weekly instruction. Tips for Management and Differentiation help teachers spin their lesson plans to meet the diverse needs of their students, and daily step-by-step instructions suggest ways to implement each routine. This step-by-step process is repeated each week for each new set of letter-sounds. The Teacher's Guide also includes connections to students' practice, a guide for pacing the scope and sequence of the program, a week-by-week list of the sight words introduced, and a map that outlines the components of each puzzle piece and suggests how they should be displayed in the classroom.
- **Reference Puzzle Pieces:** Teachers introduce new puzzle pieces to students each week, and display the focus pieces prominently in the classroom. Each puzzle piece has a corresponding motion that helps students retain the sounds and spellings, and also gives teachers a way to quickly signal students. The Puzzle Piece Families are taught in successive weeks to allow students to grasp all the concepts of phonics and apply prior learning. With each new concept/family taught, the teacher explicitly states to students that they are learning a new type of pattern. This explicitness helps students organize words into categories and use what they already know to tackle untaught patterns in new words. Children study the focus puzzle pieces throughout the week, including handling them to build words. This fun and interactive use of the puzzle pieces engages their auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic modes of learning. At the end of the week of focused study, the puzzle pieces become part of the classroom reference wall that students can look to for review and reinforcement. Teachers and students build words with the focus and supporting puzzle pieces during the week.

- **Learner’s Notebook:** The bright, colorful pages of the Learner’s Notebook correspond to the phonics concepts for each grade and give young students plenty of room to practice their phonics skills during and after lessons. Great for independent work or take-home practice, each of the tear-out pages of the Learner’s Notebook engages students with language, including word sorts, comprehension checks, spelling practice, and more. This is the place where students rehearse phonics patterns, build their vocabularies, practice breaking words into syllables, and apply knowledge of word structure to decode and encode words. Children can self-check their work so that they—and their teachers—know where they are in developing their understanding of focus patterns. Best of all, Learner’s Notebooks encourage students to have fun with language. Their excitement grows as they understand more and more of what they encounter in print.
- **Fluency Notebook:** Fluency Notebooks reinforce phonics concepts for each grade and provide students with one easy-to-access resource that they can go to again and again throughout the year to practice reading and fluency skills. Designed to be used for choral readings and independent fluency practice, The Kindergarten Fluency Notebook includes chants, couplets, passages, and poems accompanied by whimsical images that support learners as they match picture to text. The First Grade Fluency Notebook, also designed for choral readings and independent fluency practice, collects 140 poems with beautiful, full-color illustrations in the margins of each stanza so students can match picture-to-text. The Second Grade Fluency Notebook contains “Reader’s Theater” stories that feature narrators and a cast of characters that kids will love bringing to life and provides built-in differentiation to support all students.

The routine-based nature of Puzzle Piece Phonics makes teaching foundational skills succinct, explicit, and engaging.

**Evidence of Efficacy:**

As teachers, we saw tremendous growth in all of our students—regardless of academic ability or cultural background—throughout our years developing and implementing Puzzle Piece Phonics. Our students’ success inspired us to make Puzzle Piece Phonics available for all students! The following data points are from schools that piloted Puzzle Piece Phonics.

- During the 2013-2014 school year, Puzzle Piece Phonics was fully implemented into a Public School in North Carolina.
  - o 71% of students achieved more than one year’s growth
  - o 19% of students achieved one year’s growth
- During the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years, Puzzle Piece Phonics was fully implemented into a Private School in North Carolina. After 2 years of instruction with Puzzle Piece Phonics (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade):
  - o 66% of students achieved more than two year’s growth
  - o 34% of students achieved two year’s growth
- During the 2017-2018 school year, Puzzle Piece Phonics was fully implemented into a Public School in Utah.
  - o At the beginning of the year, 74% of students were below or well below the benchmark.
  - o At the end of the year, 60% of students were at or above the benchmark

Current data shows that Puzzle Piece Phonics significantly improved learners' growth in phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension. The high number of students reading at or above grade level demonstrates that using *Puzzle Piece Phonics* achieves the ultimate goal of phonics instruction: children able to read with high levels of proficiency.

**Supplemental Services:**

In addition to the 4 components of Puzzle Piece Phonics, we have a fully functional website ([www.puzzlepiecephonics.com](http://www.puzzlepiecephonics.com)) to guide teachers, students, and parents to be successful with Puzzle Piece Phonics.

Our website’s *For Educators* page provides the following supplements:

- **Puzzle Piece Phonics Component Presentation:** Gives readers an overview of the 4 components of PPP and how to implement them into the classroom.
- **Research Based Alignment:** Provides a summary of research on phonics and description of program alignment. Research is provided for each component of Puzzle Piece Phonics.
- **Comparing Across the Grades:** This document offers educators and facilitators a guide on how PPP builds across the grade levels for K, 1<sup>st</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade to plan instruction and vertical alignment accordingly.
- **Videos:** Puzzle Piece Phonics can be seen in action in the form of videos on the PPP site. Educators can see a clear model on how to implement the various elements of PPP into their day to day routine. Videos are included for: Puzzle Piece Families, Puzzle Piece Review, Phonemic Awareness, and Blending routines.
- **Online Component Resources:** Puzzle Piece Phonics references activities and additional resources that can be found on this website. These resources include: Alignment with State Standards, Author's Favorite Resources, and Ways to Promote Reading, Word Study, and Writing practices. There are many blackline masters available on the site as well for reproducing.

The Puzzle Piece Phonics website, blog, and social media sites are constantly being updated to best suit the needs of Puzzle Piece Phonics. The authors are also available for Professional Development trainings at your school! Please reach out to the PPP Team by phone: **704-761-8343** or email: [puzzlepiecephonics@gmail.com](mailto:puzzlepiecephonics@gmail.com).