



HOLISTIC
LEARNING
INNOVATIONS

THE THREE-LETTER SOUND BOX

Country: Pakistan

Target Age: 10 Years

Learning Areas: Literacy | Critical Thinking |

Collaboration | Self-Awareness | Confidence | Fine

Motor Skills

THE CONTEXT

Government Primary School Khot is located in the remote and mountainous village of Khot in Upper Chitral, a region that experiences extremely cold weather and geographical isolation, making access to resources and facilities very challenging. The school serves approximately 150 households from the surrounding community, with 125 students currently enrolled. Most families depend on small-scale farming and livestock for their livelihood, and many men work abroad to support their families financially.

The literacy rate among parents is low, and many community members do not fully understand the importance of education, particularly in the early years. Due to economic hardship and limited awareness, children often struggle to complete their secondary education — realities that directly affect students' learning outcomes and parental involvement in school.



Govt Primary School Khot Upper Chitral



Crowded class of GPS Khot Upper Chitral



Students are struggling for reading

THE CHALLENGE

How might we build strong foundational reading skills with limited resources?

The first major challenge in our school is the shortage of human resources. Although student enrolment is high, only three teachers are currently working in the school. Each teacher manages 12–13 classes daily, making it extremely difficult to provide individualized attention and deliver high-quality instruction.

The second significant challenge is the lack of parental involvement in children's education. Due to illiteracy and limited awareness, many parents are unable to guide or support their children academically. This weak home-school connection further affects students' motivation and progress.

Academically, I observed that my students were particularly weak in English reading. They struggled to read simple words, showed little interest in lessons, and often did not complete homework. Their reading difficulties were affecting their overall academic performance and confidence.



My traditional way of teaching

Through my participation in Schools2030 and the Human-Centered Design (HCD) training, I had the opportunity to reflect deeply on my teaching practices. I realized that my classroom approach was largely traditional and teacher centered. Only a few students actively participated, while the majority remained passive learners.

After careful observation and reflection, I identified the root cause of poor reading skills: students lacked a clear understanding of letter sounds (phonics). They were unable to connect sounds with letters, which made blending and reading words extremely difficult. Although phonics was not explicitly emphasized in our syllabus, I understood that without strong foundational skills, reading fluency would remain a challenge.



Sounds of letters

THE INNOVATION

THE THREE-LETTER SOUND BOX

To address this issue, I designed and implemented an innovative, low-cost teaching tool called the **Three-Letter Sound Box**.

I began by systematically teaching letter sounds using digital support such as Jolly Phonics through a tablet to make learning more engaging. I also transformed my classroom into a print-rich environment by displaying charts, flashcards, tricky words, high-frequency words, and posters. A special reading corner was established to encourage independent learning.

The Three-Letter Sound Box became the central activity-based learning tool. This simple box allows students to physically arrange and rearrange letters to form three-letter words. Through hands-on practice, students learned that words are made up of individual sounds and that changing the order of letters creates new words.

The box is easy to design using leftover pieces of wood, making it affordable and replicable at home. It supports not only reading development but also fine motor skills, collaboration, and critical thinking.

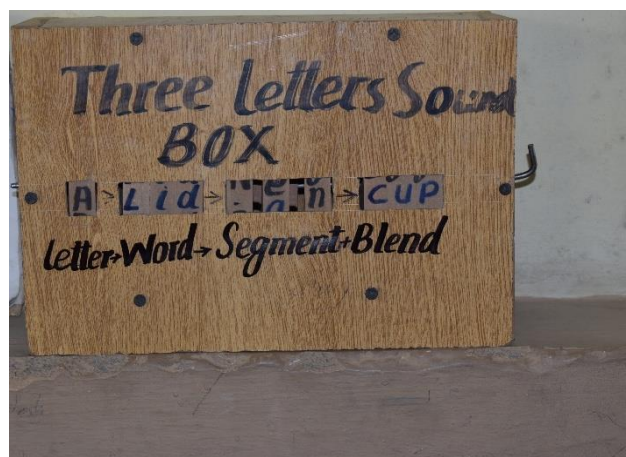
The activities were carefully planned to avoid rote learning and boredom. Students worked in groups, encouraging peer learning and discussion. Tasks were differentiated to ensure that every child could participate according to their ability level.

Parent meetings were also arranged to raise awareness about the importance of early-grade reading and to encourage families to support their children's practice at home.

Throughout the process, evidence was collected in the form of teaching videos, assessment records, student work samples, charts, flashcards, and meeting records with parents.



Print rich environment



Handmade wooden box



Students are using the three-Letter box



Students are practicing the process by using the box

THE IMPACT

Improved foundational literacy and reading confidence among early-grade learners

Alhamdulillah, the Three-Letter Sound Box has had a significant positive impact on my students' learning.

Students are now able to:

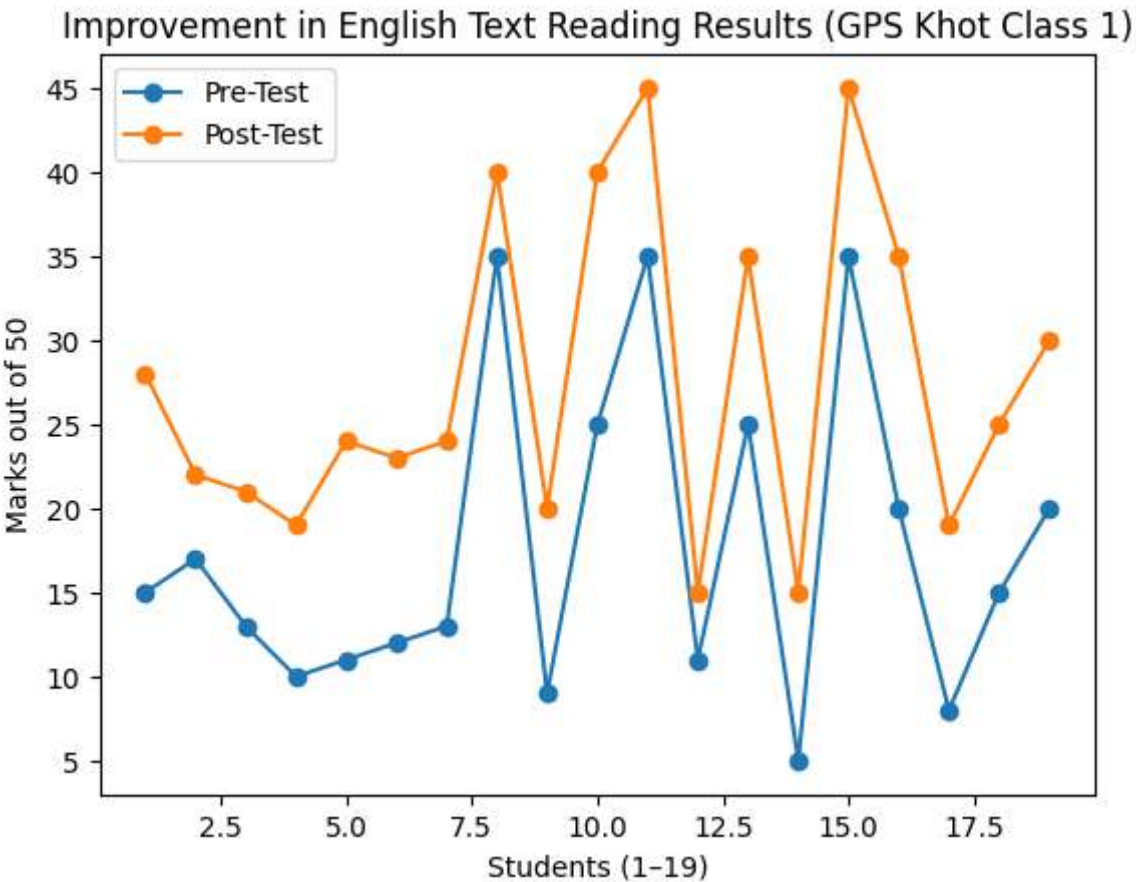
- Recognize phonemes and graphemes
- Blend and segment sounds confidently
- Manipulate letters to form new words
- Identify rhyming words
- Improve vocabulary and reading fluency

Previously, phonics instruction did not produce strong results, and students were more dependent on smartphones and passive learning methods. However, after introducing structured phonics instruction and activity-based learning, their engagement and understanding improved significantly.

Now, students can read unfamiliar words with greater confidence. They are able to read signboards, textbooks, newspapers, headlines, and other written materials in their surroundings. Their hesitation has reduced, and their motivation to learn has increased remarkably.

Overall, this small but innovative intervention has created a meaningful and sustainable improvement in early-grade reading outcomes. It has strengthened students' foundational literacy skills and boosted their confidence, laying a strong base for their future academic success.

THE IMPACT (CONTINUED)



Meet the Teacher/s



Ata-e-Rahman

Primary School Teacher



My name is Ata-e-Rahman. I hold an M.Sc., B.Ed., PTC, and CT qualification, and I have nine years of teaching experience. Currently, I am serving as a Senior Primary School Teacher (SPST) at GPS Khot. By the grace of Allah, I am also blessed with artistic talent. I am an artist and painter, and my students greatly admire and appreciate this skill, which adds creativity and joy to my classroom.

I am proud to be part of the teaching profession because I believe that all other professions are shaped and nurtured by teachers. Whenever I perform my duties with honesty and dedication, I feel a deep sense of inner peace and satisfaction. I consider myself a nation builder, as the precious jewels of our society are shaped through my efforts.

My late father was also a teacher, and he has been my greatest inspiration. From my childhood, I observed and admired his commitment and dedication to this noble profession. When I became a teacher, I consciously adopted the positive qualities I saw in him and tried to avoid the practices that were not suitable for a professional educator.

One of my strongest qualities is encouraging my students. I consistently motivate them and assure them that they can achieve success through hard work and determination. This encouragement strengthens their confidence and self-belief. I maintain a friendly and supportive relationship with my students, which allows them to share their opinions and ideas without hesitation. As a result, they grow not only academically but also develop holistically as confident and responsible individuals.



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