



92NY DEL Dance Education
Laboratory



DEL Dancing Phonics

Welcome to *DEL Dancing Phonics*!

***DEL Dancing Phonics* is a video series and accompanying Teacher Activity Guide** that reinforces foundational reading skills through dance, combining research-based literacy instruction with embodied learning experiences for students in grades K-2. Created by The 92nd Street Y, New York Dance Education Laboratory (DEL), the project includes 10 student-facing videos, an introductory video, and **10 accompanying classroom activities with printable resources and activity extensions**. The *DEL Dancing Phonics* resources are available for free on the [92NY DEL website](#).

Grounded in the science of reading, research on embodied learning, and DEL's nationally recognized approach to dance education, *DEL Dancing Phonics* integrates movement-based learning strategies to strengthen reading-enabling phonological awareness and phonics skills. Through dance, imagination, and creative expression, students actively engage with literacy concepts in meaningful, embodied ways that support learning and deepen understanding.

The *DEL Dancing Phonics* videos follow the adventures of Kayla and Scarlett as they travel from a New York City school blacktop to different worlds in their imagination, where they explore foundational reading concepts including rhyming, phoneme segmentation, phoneme blending, prefixes, suffixes, digraphs at the beginning of words, digraphs at the end of words, glued/welded sounds, heart words, and vowel-consonant-e (VCe) words. Along the way, students are encouraged to dance and learn about phonics alongside them!

Designed for flexible classroom use, the videos can be incorporated into foundational reading skill instruction, used to reinforce previously taught concepts, or serve as literacy-focused movement breaks. Each video is paired with a teacher-led activity that extends learning beyond the screen, providing opportunities for deeper reading practice, movement exploration, and creative application.

Whether students are dancing through a rainforest of rhyming words, blending phonemes among the stars, or tiptoeing through a museum full of digraphs, *DEL Dancing Phonics* transforms foundational reading instruction into an active and joyful learning experience.

Why Dance and Phonics?

Learning to read is an active process. Research increasingly demonstrates that movement can play a powerful role in helping young children learn, remember, and apply new concepts.¹ *DEL Dancing Phonics* is grounded in research on embodied learning, an approach that recognizes the connection between physical movement and cognitive development. Studies have found that embodied learning can positively impact student achievement and motivation by engaging learners both mentally and physically.²

At the same time, the series is informed by the science of reading, incorporating explicit instruction and opportunities for repeated practice of foundational literacy skills.³ Together, these approaches create a multisensory learning experience that supports both student engagement and reading skill retention.

Simply put, when children move, they learn differently. When learning is joyful, children are more likely to engage in the meaningful practice that leads to mastery.

The Literacy Foundations of *DEL Dancing Phonics*

The *DEL Dancing Phonics* series is intentionally designed around reading-enabling (i.e., phonological and phonemic awareness) and phonics skills⁴ to support foundational reading development through explicit, developmentally appropriate instruction.

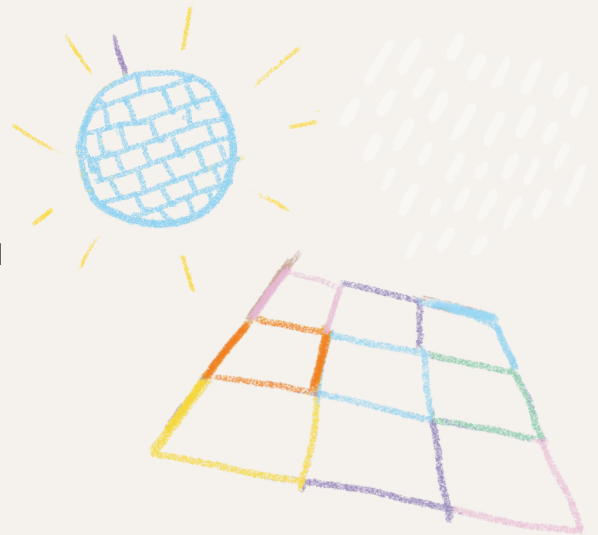
The series focuses primarily on the word recognition strands of Scarborough's Reading Rope, including:

- Phonological Awareness
- Phonemic Awareness
- Decoding
- Sight Word Recognition

The videos and activities also support other essential aspects of reading:

- Vocabulary development
- Morphology
- Oral language
- Background knowledge
- Language comprehension

Each *DEL Dancing Phonics* video presents a clear model of a phonics or phonological awareness concept, followed by guided opportunities for students to practice through movement. Repeated viewings provide distributed practice⁵, a research-supported strategy that strengthens long-term retention and skill development.



The DEL Model: Learning Through Dance

DEL Dancing Phonics is grounded in the pedagogical model of 92NY Dance Education Laboratory (DEL), a nationally recognized leader in dance education professional learning. The DEL Model views dance as a powerful tool for teaching and learning. Through movement exploration, dance-making, observation, reflection, and discussion, students deepen their understanding while developing creative thinking, communication skills, and expanded vocabulary.

Throughout the videos and activities, students are invited to:

- Explore infinite movement possibilities
- Embody literacy concepts
- Create original movement responses
- Build vocabulary
- Connect movement to language and meaning

In each written activity, you will find a list of the DEL Dance Framework Components incorporated into the experience. The descriptions below provide an overview of these key elements of the DEL Model and how they support student learning:

- **DEL Dance Framework:** The **DEL Dance Framework** is a core tool that supports student dance learning and dance-making through an accessible, shared movement vocabulary. Based on Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) as applied to dance education, the DEL Dance Framework offers a clear organizing structure for exploring, creating, observing, and discussing dance, and is organized into four categories: **Body, Effort, Space, and Relationship (BESR)**.
- **Guided Exploration:** **Guided Exploration** invites students to explore a wide range of movement possibilities. In Guided Exploration, teachers use open-ended “guided discovery” prompts from the **DEL Dance Framework** to encourage multiple movement responses from students, helping them to expand their movement vocabulary and discover the myriad of movement possibilities that exist.
 - We encourage you to use the **DEL Sentence Frames for Guided Exploration** document for ideas and prompts.
- **Action Words:** Action words are the **verbs of movement**. There are many different categories of action words: traveling, non-traveling, stopping, sinking, rising, and turning.
 - Examples: Hop, bounce, flop, spin, melt, reach
- **Movement Sentence:** A Movement Sentence is a combination of two or more action words (verbs); has a beginning, middle, and end, like a sentence; and starts still and ends still. A Movement Sentence acts as an organizing structure for student dance-making.
 - Examples:
 - Float Spin Drop
 - Gallop Shake Kick
 - Consider these **Tips to Vary Your Movement Sentence**.
- **Making Connections:** At DEL, we believe you can make a dance about anything! Connecting dance to other disciplines fosters interdisciplinary learning and critical thinking, offering students new perspectives through movement and the creative process.



Standards Alignment

DEL Dancing Phonics was developed to align with current educational standards and best practices for literacy and arts instruction.

The videos and Teacher Activity Guide are aligned with:

- New York State Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards
- New York City Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance
- New York State Dance Anchor Standards

The literacy scope and sequence addresses foundational reading skills including:

- Rhyming
- Segmenting phonemes
- Blending phonemes
- Decoding common phonics patterns, including digraphs
- Reading high-frequency words by sight
- Understanding prefixes and suffixes
- Distinguishing short and long vowel patterns through VCe syllables

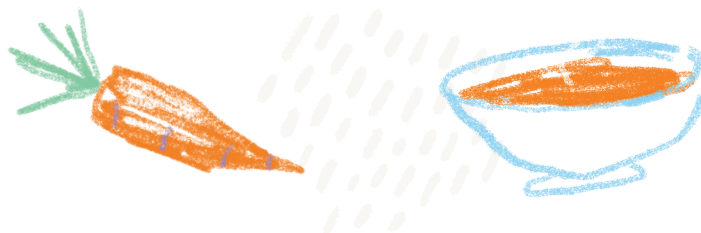
Dance learning is integrated with equal intentionality to the recommendations of instructional practices for foundational reading skill development in current reading research.

In alignment with **NYS Dance Anchor Standard 1: Generate and Conceptualize Artistic Ideas and Work**, students use sounds, letters, words, rhythms, music, visual prompts, and imaginative contexts as stimuli for movement exploration.

In alignment with **NYS Dance Anchor Standard 2: Organize and Develop Artistic Ideas and Work**, students create and combine movement ideas, participate in repeated movement patterns, and develop original Movement Sentences with clear beginnings, middles, and endings. The accompanying Teacher Activity Guide extends this work through continued opportunities for exploration and collaborative dance-making.

In alignment with **NYC's Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance: PreK-12, Grade 2 Benchmarks** students engage with the following Strands of Learning:

- Dance Making
- Developing Dance Literacy



How to Use the Videos

The *DEL Dancing Phonics* videos are designed to fit easily into the elementary classroom.

Videos may be used as:

- Whole-group phonics instruction
- Reinforcement of previously taught concepts
- Literacy center activities
- Movement transitions
- Small-group intervention support
- Family engagement resources



Each video is short, accessible, and highly interactive. Students are encouraged to move throughout the lesson while practicing foundational literacy skills alongside the video facilitators.

All videos were intentionally designed to create an engaging experience that students will want to revisit again and again. Repeated viewings are encouraged to strengthen learning and build confidence.

How to Use the Teacher Activity Guide

Each video is paired with a classroom activity that extends learning beyond the screen.

Every activity includes:

1. **Video Connection:** Overview of the related *DEL Dancing Phonics* video
2. **Components:** The literacy domains addressed in the activity
3. **Subcomponent Focus:** Specific skill targets, such as blending phonemes, suffixes, digraphs, or glued sounds
4. **DEL Dance Framework Components:** The key DEL Dance Framework components explored within the activity
5. **Learning Objectives:** Clearly articulated student outcomes
6. **Activity Statement:** A summary of the learning experience
7. **Phonics Cards:** Printable and projectable phonics cards
8. **Activity Steps:** Detailed facilitation guidance, including suggested teacher language
9. **Additional Literacy Applications:** Suggestions for extending literacy learning
10. **Activity Extension:** Additional opportunities to deepen both literacy and dance learning

Together, the videos and activities provide a flexible, classroom-ready resource that can be adapted to meet the needs of diverse learners and various instructional settings.

DEL Dancing Phonics Scope & Sequence

The 10 videos and activities represent a progression of skills, but they can be used out of order to reinforce primary reading skills, provide extra practice, or support additional reading skills. We encourage you to move between videos/activities as needed, rewatch/revisit them, or use them in sequence - however best supports your students:

Video/Activity	Primary Reading Skill Focus	Additional Reading Skills Addressed
Rhyming Rainforest	Phonological Awareness: Rhyming Words	Phonics (words are displayed)
Alphabet Soup	Phonemic Awareness: Segmenting Phonemes	Phonics (words are displayed)
Star Sounds	Phonemic Awareness: Blending Phonemes	Phonics (words are displayed)
Prefix Parade	Phonics	Morphology (i.e., prefixes, base words)
Suffix Balloon Bonanza	Phonics	Morphology (i.e., suffixes, base words), Vocabulary
Digraph Disco	Phonics: Beginning Digraphs	Vocabulary
Night at the Digraph Museum	Phonics: Ending Digraphs	Vocabulary, Background Knowledge Building
Goopy Glued Sounds	Phonics: Welded/Glued Sounds	N/A
Heart Word Stadium	Phonics: High-Frequency and Irregular Sight Words; Reading and Spelling	N/A
Magic E	Phonics: Vowel-Consonant-E (VCe) Patterns	N/A



Video/Activity Overviews:

Rhyming Rainforest



- **Video Connection:** In this video, students travel with Kayla and Scarlett to a rainforest, where they **hop**, **pop**, and **drop** like a tree frog; **glide**, **hide**, and **ride** like a caiman; and **creep**, **leap**, and **sleep** like a jaguar!
 - **Activity Statement:** Students will explore rhyming **Action Words** through **Guided Exploration** and perform rhyming **Movement Sentences**.
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Alphabet Soup



- **Video Connection:** In this video, students are transported with Kayla and Scarlett to a kitchen, where they **chop** words into individual sounds to make Alphabet Soup!
 - **Activity Statement:** Students will engage in a **Guided Exploration** of the action word **chop** and segment phonemes in three-phoneme words using a variety of elements from the **DEL Dance Framework**.
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Star Sounds



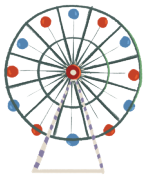
- **Video Connection:** In this video, students are transported with Kayla and Scarlett to outer space, where they **reach** for stars in the galaxy - each star making a sound - and then **blend** the star sounds together!
 - **Activity Statement:** Students will engage in a **Guided Exploration** of the action word **reach**; identify and blend phonemes in 3-phoneme words; and embody corresponding animals.
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Prefix Parade



- **Video Connection:** In this video, Kayla and Scarlett are transported to a festive parade, where they use their upper bodies to embody prefixes **pre-**, **un-**, **mis-**, and **re-**, and their lower bodies to embody base words - marching together through the parade as complete new words!
- **Activity Statement:** Students will engage in a **Guided Exploration** of the action word **march**. They will embody prefixes and base words - marching to embody base words and adding specific arm actions to embody each prefix - deepening their understanding of how prefixes change the meaning of words.

Suffix Balloon Bonanza



- **Video Connection:** Step right up! [In this video](#), Kayla and Scarlett are transported to a carnival filled with balloons, where they explore how suffixes **-ful**, **-less**, and **-ing** combine with base words to create new words. They create still shapes for base words and then **grow**, **shrink**, and **shake** in the wind like balloons when suffixes arrive!
- **Activity Statement:** Students will engage in a **Guided Exploration** of the **Action Words** **grow**, **shrink**, and **shake**, using movement and stillness to experience how adding suffixes to base words changes their meaning.

Digraph Disco



- **Video Connection:** Grab your dancing shoes! [In this video](#), Kayla and Scarlett are transported to a disco, where they dance their digraphs by each embodying a letter, then coming together to make one sound: **ch**, **sh**, **ph**, and **th**. They groove down a Soul Train line, dancing words that begin with each digraph!
- **Activity Statement:** Students will engage in a **Guided Exploration** of digraphs at the beginning of words - **ch**, **sh**, **ph**, and **th** - using dance, sound, and imaginative play to embody each digraph and associated words.

Night at the Digraph Museum



- **Video Connection:** Shhhh! [In this video](#), Kayla and Scarlett are magically transported to a museum after hours, where they quietly creep through the halls, discover digraph statues, and use their bodies to create each letter shape. Their museum adventure continues as they dance like the artwork they encounter, with each piece representing a word ending in a digraph.
- **Activity Statement:** Students will engage in a **Guided Exploration** of digraphs at the end of words - **sh**, **th**, **ck**, and **ph** - using dance, sound, and imaginative play to embody each digraph and associated words.

Goopy Glued Sounds



- **Video Connection:** [In this video](#), Kayla and Scarlett find themselves in a sticky situation when they are transported inside a gooey lava lamp, full of glued sounds! They put letters on different body parts and “glue” them together to create stuck-together shapes that embody each glued sound.
- **Activity Statement:** Students will pretend to glue body parts together to embody glued sounds and then engage in a **Guided Exploration** of words containing those sounds.

Heart Word Stadium

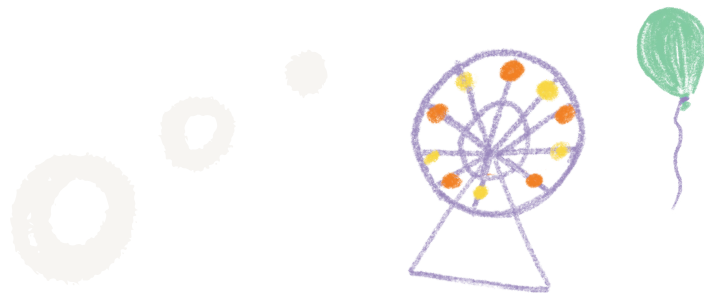


- **Video Connection:** In this video, Kayla and Scarlett are transported to a stadium for the big game! They discover that some words do not follow spelling rules and can't be sounded out, but when they add a cheer, they learn to read and spell them by heart!
- **Activity Statement:** Students will learn and practice heart words through a movement-based chant activity, using actions like bouncing, twisting, and jumping to reinforce spelling and reading skills and maintain engagement through rhythm and movement.

Magic E



- **Video Connection:** In this video, Kayla and Scarlett journey into the clouds and discover a new rainbow superpower: the power of Magic E! Together, they show how Magic E **jumps** over the consonant at the end of a word to help the vowel say its name.
- **Activity Statement:** Students will engage in a **Guided Exploration** to experience how the Magic E **"jumps"** like a rainbow over the consonant to transform a word. They will then dance like the transformed word to embody its meaning.



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DEL Dancing Phonics is the result of the creativity, expertise, and collaboration of an extraordinary team. We extend our utmost gratitude to the brilliant collaborators whose contributions helped shape and bring this work to life.

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