The Science of Reading Implementation Guide

Ideas and Tools for Integrating Scientifically Based Strategies into Early Reading Instruction

3 Ways to Use This Toolkit

- Develop and sustain expertise in science-based reading instruction
- Garner support for reading reform at the school level
- Create implementation support structures for practitioners

District Leadership Forum

District Leadership Forum

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Executive Summary

Most Early Grade Instruction Fails to Align with the Science of Reading

Researchers have long examined how the brain learns to read and what this means for reading instruction. However, most administrators and elementary reading teachers are unaware of this research and its implications for the classroom. As a result, more than half of today's fourth grade students struggle to reach reading proficiency.[1]

Below are four barriers that prevent the science of reading from informing elementary reading instruction. To support districts as they implement science-based reading reform, this toolkit offers templates and resources that aim to address each of the following barriers.

1 Higher Education Inadequately Prepares Teachers to Teach Reading Effectively

Teachers are often inadequately prepared to teach reading by their teacher preparation programs. Studies have found that fewer than half of teacher preparation programs actually teach scientifically-based reading instruction methods, particularly in foundational reading skills.[2]

39%
Of teacher preparation programs teach scientifically-based reading methods

25%
Of pre-service teachers report a strong focus on the essential components of early reading instruction in their preparation program

46%
Of pre-service teachers felt that they were adequately prepared to teach phonemic awareness and phonics

2 Most Reading Professional Development Fails to Fill the Void

While professional development may seem like the perfect opportunity for teachers to develop the expertise their teacher preparation programs failed to provide, professional development often falls short of supporting teachers. A review of the impact of professional learning on student achievement found that 14 or more hours of teacher development are needed to have a positive and significant effect on student achievement. However, too often districts are not devoting sufficient hours of professional learning to any one content area, as many teachers report spending just a few hours each year on development in reading instruction.

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1) As measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the only standardized national assessment
2) Foundational reading skills refer to phonological awareness, print concepts, phonics/word recognition, and fluency.

Source: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2010, Study of Teacher Preparation in Early Reading Instruction; National Center on Teacher Quality, 2016, Landscapes in Teacher Prep: Undergraduate Elementary Ed; NCES, 2017, Teacher Professional Development By Selected Teacher and School Characteristics: 2011-12; REL Southwest, 2007, Reviewing the evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement; EAB interviews and analysis.

Executive Summary

3   Many Principals Have Limited Knowledge to Reinforce Sound Reading Instruction

Supportive and knowledgeable school leadership is also critical to ensuring the lasting success of any initiative. But principals do not always have a background in reading instruction and are often lacking the same knowledge their teachers are.

Principals Often Have No More Knowledge of Reading Than Teachers

"Principals help to set the foundations for school success, but **we were finding that many of the principals themselves did not have much background in the science of reading**…Some principals shared similar teacher beliefs that some students were unlikely to make much reading improvement by third grade because of non-school factors beyond their control. After all, this is how it's always been. We had to change our mindset."

Jack Silva, CAO
Bethlehem Area School District

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4   Ongoing Implementation Support Rare but Necessary to Ensure Lasting Impact

Simply providing principals and teachers knowledge of the science of reading is critical but not enough. Even the best professional development can fail to translate to classroom practice without ongoing support and pragmatic guidance. In a survey of 20,000 teachers, nearly all of them expressed their belief that ongoing instructional support is very helpful as they work to improve practice, but just one fifth of them believe they actually get that kind of support.

To compound this problem, schools often have inconsistent definitions of ideal reading instruction, and without a shared understanding, administrators and teachers are left to their own discretion to determine the best path forward.

50% Of administrators report that it is **very challenging to provide content-specific guidance** for teachers

162 Average hours per year that elementary teachers spend **creating and sourcing their own material** for literacy blocks

Districts need to **create clear and consistent structures** that will ensure teachers know how to translate this knowledge into practice and that will support them in doing so**. Explicit implementation guidance and frequent feedback** can help teachers and principals make sure their students benefit from scientifically-informed reading instruction.

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Implementation Tools: Key Lessons from the Research

1

Build Districtwide Expertise in the Science of Reading

Provide teachers and school administrators with professional development on the science of reading so they can become experts in both how the brain learns to read and how to align classroom instruction with the science of reading.

Tool 1: Science of Reading Sample Syllabus and Discussion Guides

2

Cultivate Principal Advocates to Lead Reading Reform

Create principal urgency by holding them accountable for their school-level data and provide them with the tools and resources they need to become leaders of reading reform within their schools.

Tool 2: Principal Playbook for Reading Reform
Tool 3: Sample Talking Points to Address Opposition

3

Provide Explicit Guidance for Implementing Evidence-Based Reading Instruction

Support teachers' instructional improvement by providing fundamental information related to teaching foundational reading skills and concrete examples that translate scientific reading theory into classroom application.

Tool 4: Reading Block Time Allocation Guidance
Tool 5: Foundational Skills Instructional Guide
Tool 6: Sound Wall Starter Kit
Tool 7: Foundational Skills Look-For Document

4

Increase Opportunities for Observation and Feedback

Create systems for self- and peer-to-peer observations that allow teachers to record, observe, and reflect upon reading lessons in the classroom.

Tool 8: Video-Based Teacher Observation Playbook
Tool 9: Self- and Peer-Observation Checklist

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

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Build Districtwide Expertise in the Science of Reading

Section Description

To improve students' reading outcomes, teachers should understand the science of how the brain learns to read and the instructional practices that support that learning. However, formal professional development programs that provide this knowledge can be costly and unsustainable for many districts. District and school leaders can create their own opportunities for teachers to learn this valuable information using a number of easily accessible resources.

Resources

Recommended Owners: Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Principals, Department Chairs

Tool 1: Science of Reading Sample Syllabus and Discussion Guides

Overview and Key Lessons

This section is designed to help leaders build reading expertise within their district by embedding shared reading and research-based discussions within existing professional development and professional learning communities.

1 Form district-level and school-level discussion groups to **create forums for knowledge sharing and research-based discussions, establishing cohorts of reading experts** throughout the district.

2 Guide discussion by providing **structured questions and prompts around the key concepts and priorities** district leaders would like emphasized in the classroom.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

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1 | Science of Reading Sample Syllabus

Readings and Resources: Session 1

Structure Professional Development to Focus on the Science of Reading

Use the following suggested syllabus and corresponding resources to guide school-based book clubs, grade-level teams, professional learning communities (PLCs) and other professional development opportunities to develop reading expertise throughout the district.

Session 1: What Does the Science of Reading Mean for Our Instructional Approach to Early Reading?

Recommended Reading:

- **Ending the Reading Wars: Reading Acquisition From Novice to Expert**, by Anne Castles, Kathleen Rastle, and Kate Nation

Related Resources:

- EAB's On-Demand Webconference "**Embracing the Science of Reading**"
- EAB's "**Narrowing the Third-Grade Reading Gap Research Brief**"
- EAB's "**How our Brains Learn to Read**" infographic

Discussion Topics:

- Gaps between the research and classrooms, common myths about foundational skills
- See **Discussion Guide** on page 9

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1 | Science of Reading Discussion Guides

Discussion Guide: Session 1

Embracing the Science of Reading in Our Approach to Early Literacy Instruction

1 What **neurological and biological aspects of learning to read** were you not aware of before? Which takeaways from the reading and the related resources did you find surprising?

2 What are the **critical principles or concepts** children must master along their progression to reading mastery? Why are these skills foundational to long-term reading success?

3 Which **myths about early reading instruction** were ones you formerly espoused? How does debunking these myths change your understanding of reading instruction?

4 Using the science to ground our plan, what are **three tangible changes** we will resolve to make to our current approach to literacy instruction?

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

1 | Science of Reading Sample Syllabus

Readings and Resources: Session 2

Structure Professional Development to Focus on the Science of Reading

Session 2: How Can We Develop and Sustain Expertise in the Science of Reading?

Recommended Reading:

- **Hard Words: Why Aren't Kids Being Taught to Read?**
  by Emily Hanford (AMP Report)

Related Resources:

- EAB's On-Demand Webconference "**Develop and Implement Schoolwide Expertise in Science-Based Reading Instruction**"

Discussion Topics:

- Systems and practical structures needed to maintain sustainability and success
- See **Discussion Guide** on page 11

1 | Science of Reading Discussion Guides

Discussion Guide: Session 2

Developing and Sustaining Schoolwide Expertise in the Science of Reading

1 How can we ensure that elementary teachers are well-versed in the scientific research behind the process of learning to read? What is our strategy for providing teachers the **continuous professional development** they need to become experts in early literacy?

2 In what ways can we ensure **sustainability of this expertise**? Who can we appoint to serve as the district-based/school-based expert and to continue to share this information with all incoming teachers?

3 Where are we likely to experience **resistance to proposed changes** to reading instruction? What can we do to mitigate these potential challenges?

4 Who are likely to be our biggest supporters and **champions of this initiative**? How can we elevate their roles so they have a leadership opportunity and can carry enthusiasm for the work to and through their school(s)?

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
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1 | Science of Reading Sample Syllabus

Readings and Resources: Session 3

Structure Professional Development to Focus on the Science of Reading

Session 3: How Can We Most Effectively Aid Teachers in Implementing Science-Based Instruction?

Recommended Reading:

- **Do Children Read Words Better in Context or Lists? A Classic Study Revisited**, by Tim Nicolson

- **Bridging the Gap Between Science and Poor Reading in America**, by Richard Gentry (*Psychology Today*)

Related Resources:

- EAB's On-Demand Webconference "**Develop and Implement Schoolwide Expertise in Science-Based Reading Instruction**"

- Student Achievement Partners' "**Foundational Skills Guidance Documents**."

Discussion Topics:

- Typical vs. ideal classroom approach, time allocation and emphasis of foundational skills

- See **Discussion Guide** on page 13

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1 | Science of Reading Discussion Guides

Discussion Guide: Session 3

Aiding Teachers in Implementing Science-Based Instruction

1 How will we **prioritize which instructional practices we would like our teachers to embrace**? Which changes can be implemented in the short-term and which require long-term planning?

2 What explicit guidelines have we previously set for teaching **foundational reading skills**, including phonemic awareness, print concepts, phonics, and fluency? What explicit guidance do we want to provide to ensure implementation of scientifically-sound reading instruction?

3 What **additional knowledge or support do our teachers need** in order to transform elements of their current practice and ensure alignment with science-based methods?

4 How can we ensure **adequate time** is allotted to explicit and systematic foundational skills instruction in the early grades?

1 | Science of Reading Sample Syllabus

Readings and Resources: Session 4

Structure Professional Development to Focus on the Science of Reading

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Session 4: How Can We Redesign Small Group Instruction to Target Student Skill Deficits?

Recommended Reading:

- Excerpt from *10 Success Factors for Literacy Intervention,* by Susan Hall

Related Resources:

- EAB's On-Demand Webconference "**Redesign Small Group Instruction to Target Student Skill Deficits**"
- EAB's "**Skills-Based Grouping Toolkit**"

Discussion Topics:

- Limitations of traditional screening and grouping methods, research-based alternatives
- See **Discussion Guide** on page 15

For Continued Learning, Consider These Book Club Recommendations:

- *Language at the Speed of Sight: How We Read, Why So Many Can't, And What Can Be Done About It,* by Mark Seidenberg

- *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain,* by Marianne Wolf

- *The Reading Mind: A Cognitive Approach to Understanding How the Mind Reads*, by Daniel Willingham

- *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties,* by David Kilpatrick

- *Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers*, by Louisa Moats

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1 | Science of Reading Discussion Guides

Discussion Guide: Session 4

Redesigning Small Group Instruction to Target Student Skill Deficits

1 What is our **current approach to grouping students** for small group instruction? What evidence do we use to determine the best grouping assignment for a student?

2 In what ways are **traditional screeners valuable?** In what ways are they **limited**? What other **resources, tools, and materials would we need to group students by specific skill deficits**, rather than reading level?

3 What are some examples of broad instructional areas? What are some examples of **specific skill deficits we observe in our students** that we can be targeting in small group instruction?

4 How can grouping students by specific skill deficits help students **progress in their reading development**?

Cultivate Principal Advocates to Lead Reading Reform

Section Description

Principals are essential to establishing a school environment where science-based reading instruction can take hold. But too often, principals lack the same training and understanding of the science of reading as their teachers, making it difficult to support or hold teachers accountable. Principals who engage in trainings on the science of reading and collaborate with other school leaders across the district can more effectively address opposition with research-aligned responses, select evidence-based instructional materials, and create the environment most conducive to long-term reading success.

Resources

Recommended Owners: Chief Academic Officer, Principals

Tool 2: Principal Playbook for Reading Reform
Tool 3: Sample Talking Points to Address Opposition

Overview and Key Lessons

This section is designed to help district leaders promote faithful implementation of evidence-based reading reform by collaborating with school-level leadership and empowering them to maintain momentum at their individual schools.

1 Ensure systems and processes are in place throughout the district and at individual schools to **cultivate school-level leadership, data-informed decision making, and ongoing collaboration** across the district.

2 Equip principals and other school leaders with the **essential talking points needed to secure ongoing support** for a focus on foundational skills in the early grades. Encourage principals to update their running list of talking points and share these with other principals in the district.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

2 | Principal Playbook for Reading Reform

Prepare Principals to Be Building-Level Literacy Leaders and Advocates

Use this principal playbook to formalize critical processes and procedures that ensure effective reading instruction reform by cultivating both urgency and the necessary conditions for change. The following process is inspired by the work of **Bethlehem Area School District** in Pennsylvania.

Convene Districtwide Principal Data Summit

Use data summits as a call to action that schools across the district must improve their approach to reading instruction.

1 Gather elementary principals from throughout the district for a professional development day

2 Present the district's data on student reading outcomes

3 Highlight areas of underperformance in district data, disaggregated by schools and student populations

4 Set clear and concrete expectations for areas where improved student reading performance must be achieved

5 Encourage principals to replicate the data summit at their own schools, presenting school-specific data

Engage in Professional Learning on the Science of Reading

Require all elementary principals to participate in professional development on the science of reading, alongside teachers, to build knowledge and signal commitment.

6 Facilitate professional development sessions on the science of reading across the district to increase principal knowledge and awareness of what evidence-based instruction looks like in the classroom [*see Part One of this toolkit*]

7 Encourage principals to prepare to answer difficult questions from teachers and to look for scientifically-aligned classroom practices during observations

Source: Bethlehem Area School District; EAB interviews and analysis.

2 | Principal Playbook for Reading Reform

Convene Principals for Change Management Training

Require school-level leadership to participate in collaborative change management training to address any opposition to the science of reading and prepare for changes to reading instruction.

8 Work with principals to develop a collective set of talking points to address pushback from change-averse teachers [*see pgs. 20-22 for a preliminary list*]

9 Discuss the practices that principals should and should not see in the classroom, given their increased knowledge of the science of reading

10 Help principals prepare for difficult situations by discussing realistic scenarios and brainstorming practical solutions

Establish Collaborative Platform for Ongoing Principal Collaboration

Engage principals in districtwide collaboration by establishing a shared space for discussion and best practice sharing to ensure ongoing progress.

11 Create a password-protected online document sharing system using a free or inexpensive platform (e.g., Google Docs)

12 Encourage principals to regularly share resources and talking points, collaborating with each other to enact best practices and monitor progress

13 Help principals troubleshoot solutions to challenges as they arise

Source: Bethlehem Area School District; EAB interviews and analysis..

2 | Principal Playbook for Reading Reform

Host Quarterly Progress Meetings for All Elementary Principals

Facilitate progress and increase sustainability of the initiative through ongoing support and data-based discussions.

14 Convene principals on a quarterly basis to analyze and discuss student outcomes data

15 Require principals to bring their school-level and grade-level data to quarterly meetings, prepared to discuss areas of success and areas in need of growth

16 Reserve time for sharing best practices and strategies that have proven successful within schools as well as any lessons learned from those that have not proven successful

Encourage Principals to Gather Teachers for Bi-Monthly Data Reviews

Require ongoing data-based discussions at the school level to keep principals informed of student progress and create opportunities for principals to share guidance with teachers.

17 Hold principals accountable for convening teachers for data meetings by requiring them to bring their school- and grade-level data to the quarterly district-level data meetings

18 Prepare principals to lead bi-monthly data meetings with teachers to review student outcomes from progress monitoring reports and formative assessments

19 Instruct principals to use this time to discuss students' instructional needs and demonstrated growth

20 Ensure that all principals revisit their plan for continuous improvement and student development by soliciting revised action plans on a quarterly basis

Source: Bethlehem Area School District; EAB interviews and analysis..

3 | Sample Talking Points to Address Opposition

Align Messaging Throughout District to Ensure Accuracy and Awareness

To prepare principals to effectively lead instructional reform and embrace the science of reading throughout their schools, consider creating an ongoing list of research-based responses to common points of contention. District leaders should collaborate with principals to develop a collective set of talking points, such as the examples listed below, to address potential opposition from change-averse teachers.

Claim: Children will learn how to read naturally so long as they are immersed in a word-rich learning environment.

Response: Learning to read is NOT a natural, innate process; rather, it is one that requires the brain to rewire itself through explicit and systematic instruction in a number of critical skills.

Claim: Children will come to read when they are developmentally ready. Many who haven't yet learned are simply not ready to do so.

Response: Third grade is a critical threshold for reading proficiency not only because curricular shifts and standardized assessments demand it but also because the years leading up to this age mark a physiological critical period in the brain's white matter development. This is why scientifically-based instruction at an early age can prevent many reading difficulties later in life.

Claim: At first, students should be taught many sight words.

Response: Beginning and emerging readers should be taught a very limited number of sight words to aid them in building better decoding skills at the forefront.

Claim: Students learn early word recognition through visual cues and pictures, memorization, and contextual guessing.

Response: Early readers need to be taught phonetic decoding. Research confirms that strong readers rely heavily on decoding skills, while struggling readers rely heavily on context clues. Students should first learn the skill of breaking down words into their component parts (i.e., phonemes) before gradually building up to a point of automaticity in their ability to recognize words on sight.

3 | Sample Talking Points to Address Opposition

Claim: Reading instruction should focus on meaning; direct phonics instruction is comprised of drills and lacks textual meaning.

Response: Instruction in the foundational skills should be grounded in contextually-based situations (e.g., culturally rich texts and stories) and linked to meaning as often as possible. Mastering the alphabetic code and other foundational skills is essential to creating meaning from text. Once children understand the relationship between sounds and letters, they are able to decode text to construct meaning.

Claim: Teachers need to make learning to read fun in order to motivate their students to want to read. Phonics is taught through worksheets and drills, which is not an engaging form of instruction.

Response: Students who are properly prepared to read and are able to do so successfully will gain the motivation and confidence to continue reading on their own. Like any other subjects, instruction in phonics and other foundational skills can be engaging forms of learning that do not need to be taught solely using drills and worksheets.

Claim: Handwriting is not a critical skill in early literacy instruction.

Response: Explicit and systematic instruction in letter formation is a critical component to mastering the alphabetic principle and print concepts. When students reach a point of automatic letter formation and recognition, they are better prepared to encode and decode accurately.

Claim: Spelling should be taught separately from reading instruction.

Response: Spelling can serve as a window into a student's reading struggles; observing the former can better inform strategies to address the latter. Spelling, as well as orthography (i.e., the spelling and writing conventions of a language), should be taught in conjunction with reading so that the encoding process is practiced in tandem with the decoding.

Source: Castles et al., 2009; Kirsch et al., 2002; Share, 1995; "How Superkids Aligns with Evidence-Based Reading Instruction," The Superkids Reading Program, 2016; EAB interviews and analysis.

3 | Sample Talking Points to Address Opposition

Claim: To promote comprehension for early readers, teachers should focus most of their time on comprehension strategies.

Response: Ongoing comprehension support and instruction are critical for all readers. Comprehension instruction for young readers should focus on improving listening comprehension, increasing automaticity in decoding, attaining language proficiency, and building background knowledge. When students are able to decode automatically and accurately, they've freed up enough cognitive space to focus more on complex reading comprehension strategies.

Claim: Teaching systematic phonics means that teachers will be teaching nonwords. Nonwords will confuse students.

Response: The aim of phonics instruction is to equip children with the skills to sound out, spell, and read new words independently. Nonwords are primarily used not for teaching but for assessment, to evaluate children's decoding skills independently of their word knowledge and recognition.

Claim: English is too irregular for phonics to be of value.

Response: More than 80% of monosyllabic words are completely regular and, for those that are not, a "partial decoding" will often bring a student close to the correct pronunciation. Of course, the English writing system is complex, and many words are irregular, violating typical letter-sound mappings. However, many of these irregularities become predictable when learning phonics patterns and rules. Teaching the patterns behind the language's irregularities can help students recognize the irregular spelling patterns as easily as they recognize the regular ones.

Claim: Teachers should read texts to or with students before students read on their own.

Response: Teacher-led read alouds are incredibly valuable for exposing students to rich language and increasing their excitement for reading. But it is also important for students to apply the skills they're learning by reading independently and aloud to their teachers so that teachers can monitor student progress and provide support as needed.

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Provide Explicit Guidance on Evidence-Based Reading Instruction

Section Description

It can be difficult for teachers to integrate professional learning into the classroom without implementation support beyond professional development days. Such guidance helps teachers translate theory into practice. District leaders should aim to ensure teachers know what is expected of them by creating consensus around proper classroom time allocation, defining quality instruction, and highlighting what should and should not be emphasized in class.

Resources

Recommended Owners: Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Early Literacy Coordinator

Tool 4: Reading Block Time Allocation Guidance
Tool 5: Foundational Skills Instructional Guide
Tool 6: Sound Wall Starter Kit
Tool 7: Foundational Skills Look-For Document

Overview and Key Lessons

This section provides guidelines, tools, and strategies for supporting teachers as they align their instruction to brain-based reading research.

1 Set concrete, grade-level guidelines for how reading block time should be allocated **across foundational reading skills.**

2 Ensure teachers are given **fundamental information related to teaching the foundational skills** by clearly defining the skills and supporting their practice in the classroom.

3 Provide teachers with the necessary information to **create classroom sound walls** and promote greater **focus on phonemic awareness and phoneme-grapheme correspondence**.

4 **Establish expectations of what science-based reading instruction entails** and assist teachers in lesson planning through the use of a look-for document.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

4 | Reading Block Time Allocation Guidance

Recommended Daily Instructional Time Allocation by Skill Focus and Grade-Level[1]

Though many teachers claim to teach foundational skills, most teachers spend insufficient time on these skills. Districts should provide teachers with explicit guidance as to how to allocate their reading block time and promote increased emphasis on foundational reading skills.

Grade	Phonological Awareness	Print Concepts	Phonics	Fluency	Comprehension Strategies
K	20 min	15 min	15 min	15 min	25 min
1st	10 min	10 min	20 min	25 min	25 min
2nd	5 min	5 min	25 min	25 min	30 min

45 Minimum number of minutes to be spent on daily practice of foundational skills in grades K-2

Key Reading Time Allocation Considerations

Phonological awareness is critical, especially in the early phases of a student's reading development. Time allocated to this skill should gradually decrease as students become more familiar with the sounds of the language. In turn, the time allocated to phonics and comprehension instruction gradually increases as students transition to focusing more on the patterns, words, and meaning of the language than on the individual sounds or phonemes that comprise it.

The same can be said for print concepts. **Once students have become more comfortable with the basic elements of print, letter formation, and letter recognition, these concepts can be deemphasized** in the classroom in favor of more in-depth phonics practice, reading application, and comprehension instruction.

1) Based on a 90-minute reading block

Source: Student Achievement Partners, "Foundational Skills Guidance Documents: Grades K-2"; EAB interviews and analysis.

5 | Foundational Skills Instructional Guide

Align Early Grade Instruction with Reading Research

In addition to providing teachers knowledge of scientifically-based research, it is important that district and school leadership assist them in translating this knowledge into classroom practice in a pragmatic and easy to implement way. **The following foundational skills instructional guide provides information on fundamental reading concepts as well as sample ideas for integrating their practice into the classroom**.

Establish a Shared Understanding of the Foundational Skills
Foundational Reading Skills as Defined by the Common Core State Standards

Phonological Awareness

- Discernment and manipulation of units of oral language, including words, syllables, and rimes
- Includes **phonemic awareness**, which is the recognition and manipulation of discrete speech sounds (phonemes)
- Can be promoted in the classroom with explicit reference to a **sound wall**
- *See page 26 for guidelines on phonological awareness progression and pages 30-36 for a guide to building a classroom sound wall*

Print Concepts

- Understanding the features and organization of print
- **Recognition and formation of letters and the basic elements of print** (e.g., capitalization and punctuation conventions)
- Foundational to introducing students to the **alphabetic principle** and to **sound/symbol (phoneme/grapheme) correspondence**
- *See page 27 for sample guidelines and strategies for practicing print concepts*

Phonics

- Understanding **sound and spelling patterns** through analysis of the relationship among sounds, letters, and roots within words
- Improves with knowledge of **morphology**, the study of the structure of words
- *See page 28 for sample phonics and morphology strategies*

Fluency

- Application of sound, letter, and word knowledge through accurate decoding
- Involves the **rate, accuracy, and expression (or prosody)** of one's reading
- Improves through **practice with decodable readers** and increased **automaticity of word recognition**
- *See page 29 for sample fluency guidelines and strategies*

Source: Student Achievement Partners, "Foundational Skills Guidance Documents: Grades K-2"; EAB interviews and analysis.

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5 | Foundational Skills Instructional Guide

Sample Phonological Awareness Guidelines and Strategies

Phonological Awareness

Sequence Instruction to Match the Progression of Reading Development

Think of reading development occurring along a spectrum of complexity. Instruction should similarly progress from simplest skills to the most complex.

▶ Consider the following progression of **phonological awareness development**:

SIMPLEST

1 **Oral Rhymes and Alliteration**
Recognition of the sounds at the beginning and ends of words

2 **Words in Sentences**
Identification of the number of words in a sentence

3 **Syllables in Words**
Breaking words down into discrete syllables

4 **Onset and Rime in Words**
Breaking down syllables into the initial sound before the vowel (onset) and the closing sound including the vowel (rime)

5 **Discrete Phonemes in Words**
Identification of English's 44 phonemes in spoken words

MOST COMPLEX

▶ Consider the following **guidelines when planning instructional sequencing**:

① **Teach students all consonant phonemes before moving on to consonant blends** (consonant clusters that blend two or more sounds together) **or digraphs** (consonant clusters that produce one sound).

② When introducing new sounds, be sure to **avoid teaching two sounds of similar articulation one right after the other.** For example, two phonemes that differ only in voiced or voiceless articulation should be taught separately.

▶ *See the **Sound Wall Starter Kit** on pages 30-36 for guidance on building a sound wall to promote phonological awareness in your classroom.*

Source: Student Achievement Partners, "Foundational Skills Guidance Documents: Grades K-2"; EAB interviews and analysis.

5 | Foundational Skills Instructional Guide

Sample Print Concepts Guidelines and Strategies

A Print Concepts

Ensure Students Master the Alphabetic Principle

Understanding the alphabetic principle, the systematic relationship between the written letters of an alphabet and its sounds, is a critical skill students must master to decode words accurately and one that requires frequent practice in the classroom. Embed practice of phoneme-grapheme or sound-symbol correspondence into lessons to help students achieve mastery of this fundamental principle.

▶ Every phoneme is represented by a single grapheme, which can be one or more letters. Consider the following examples. [*See pages 33-35 for a complete list of English phonemes and corresponding graphemes and page 36 for information on critical phonemes for speakers of non-mainstream English*.]

	Phoneme	Corresponding Graphemes	Examples
①	/e/	a, ai, eigh, aigh, ay, et, ei, au, a_e, ea, ey	b**a**by, m**ai**d, w**eigh**, str**aigh**t, p**ay**, fil**et**, **ei**ght, g**au**ge, m**a**d**e**, br**ea**k, th**ey**
②	/ʃ/	sh, ce, s, ci, si, ch, sci, ti	**sh**am, o**ce**an, **s**ure, spe**ci**al, pen**si**on, ma**ch**ine, con**sci**ence, sta**ti**on

▶ Students need to **practice mapping phonemes to graphemes** to improve their decoding ability and their understanding of the alphabetic principle. Students can practice by **manipulating chips, tiles, or other markers to segment words into their component phonemes/graphemes, or they can use a grid**, such as the example below in which a student writes one grapheme (representing a single phoneme) in each box of the grid.

maid	m	ai	d
sham	sh	a	m
cheese	ch	ee	se

5 | Foundational Skills Instructional Guide

Sample Phonics Guidelines and Strategies

Phonics

Help Students Build Lifelong Language Comprehension Skills

Explicitly teach students key elements of morphology, or the study of the structure of words and word formation, to help students recognize the meaning of word roots, prefixes, and suffixes and the rules that govern their synthesis.

▶ A **morpheme** is the smallest unit of language that conveys meaning. Morphemes can be **free**, meaning they can stand on their own as independent words, or they can be **bound**, meaning they are affixes (i.e., prefixes or suffixes) that cannot stand on their own and must be combined with a free morpheme. A **word matrix**, such as the one below, can help students visualize the multiple ways bound and free morphemes combine to form new words.

		-ful	-ness
un-	**help**	-s -ing -ed	
		-er	-s

▶ Using **word sums**, such as the equations below, can help students better understand the relationship between morphology and phonology, making **explicit common spelling and pronunciation conventions**.

un + self +ish + ness = unselfishness

please + ant + ly = pleasantly

desire + able + ity = desirability

▶ Direct instruction in morphology can also help ELL students make connections between English words and words in other languages. Learning to **recognize cognates, or words of similar etymological origins**, builds linguistic skills across many languages.

Example of Morphological Analysis through Cognates			
Language	Root	Suffix	Full Word
English	**Rapid**	**-ly**	**Rapidly**
Spanish	Rápido/a	-mente	Rápidamente
French	Rapide	-ment	Rapidement

Source: Fromkin et al. (2011), *An Introduction to Language*, 9th ed.; Student Achievement Partners, "Foundational Skills Guidance Documents: Grades K-2"; Bowers, WordWorks Literacy Centre; Shanahan, "What Should Morphology Instruction Look Like"; Moats et al., "Teaching Phonics, Word Study, and the Alphabetic Principle," Sopris West, 2nd ed. 2010; EAB interviews and analysis.

5 | Foundational Skills Instructional Guide

Sample Fluency Guidelines and Strategies

Fluency

Increase Fluency Through Ongoing Practice of Decoding and Word Recognition

Incorporate ample opportunity for students to recognize spelling and sound patterns within the language to support fluency and increase automaticity in word recognition.

▶ It's important that students have the opportunity to apply their knowledge of decoding skills to decodable texts.

💡 **Begin practicing decoding skills with decodable texts that use a combination of consonant and short vowel sounds**. This will allow access to words that follow the consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) pattern.

▶ Word sorting can be a helpful exercise that allows students to increase their familiarity with a number of words by expanding upon their knowledge of known spelling and sound patterns to recognize new words. Word sorts can be executed two different ways:

① **Closed Sort**: Students sort the provided words according to pre-determined categories, which can be based on sound patterns or spelling patterns (e.g., words with a short "a" versus a long "a" or words with a CVC pattern and those without).

② **Open Sort**: Students sort the provided words according to their own observed categorizations. This variation of word sorting is likely most effective with more advanced readers.

A Note about Writing…

Consider Writing an Opportunity for Skills Practice and Progress Monitoring

Utilize a combination of encoding and decoding exercises to ensure application of learned skills and identify gaps in understanding.

▶ Examine students' writing to gain insight into the concepts they've mastered and those they have not. Encouraging students to use **inventive spelling methods**—slowly articulating the sounds they hear in a word and their corresponding grapheme—can improve both decoding and encoding skills, while **highlighting the sounds and symbols the student may still need to practice**.

🔧 For more instructional guidance and activity examples related to foundational skills practice in the classroom, visit Student Achievement Partners' "Foundational Skills Guidance Documents" at AchievetheCore.com.

Source: Student Achievement Partners, "Foundational Skills Guidance Documents: Grades K-2"; Cabarrus County Schools, "Types of Sorts," 2019; Williams et al., "Word Study Instruction in the K-2 Classroom,"2019; Moats et al., "Teaching Phonics, Word Study, and the Alphabetic Principle," Sopris West, 2nd ed. 2010; EAB interviews and analysis.

6 | Sound Wall Starter Kit

The Importance of Sound Walls in the Early Grades

Useful in Teaching Phonemic Awareness and Phoneme-Grapheme Correspondence

Most early grade reading teachers decorate their classrooms with alphabet signs and guides, which are helpful to students as they increase their mastery of print concepts and letter recognition. However, to support students in their development of phonemic awareness and sound-symbol correspondence, teachers should also use a sound wall to guide students through the process of producing sounds and mapping each sound to its corresponding letter or group of letters. See example photos below.

Source: tools4reading, 2019; EAB interviews and analysis.
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How to Build a Sound Wall

1. Find a Prominent Space in the Classroom

Locate a wall, bulletin board, or white board with enough space to accommodate the sounds included in the sound wall. Remember there are 44 total speech sounds in the English language.

2. Organize the Sounds by Category

First separate the consonants from the vowels. [*see the next page for guidance on vowel arrangement*] Then separate consonants from consonant digraphs. [*see pages 33-35 of this toolkit for a list of all English phonemes by categorization*]

3. Use Images of Corresponding Mouth Positions to Assist in Articulation

Cartoon images, drawings, photos, or computer graphics of the position of the mouth that corresponds to each of the sounds can **remind students of the way in which each sound is articulated**.

4. Include Images to Illustrate Words that Contain the Sound

In addition to using images of the mouth articulating the sound, **provide an image to represent one of the words in which that sound can be found**. For example, an image of a balloon can remind students of the sound /b/.

5. Illustrate Various Spellings of the Sound

English phonemes can map to English graphemes in a number of ways. Use the sound wall to **provide examples of the many ways a sound can be spelled** to improve students' ability to recognize the sound in words. [*see pages 33-35 for a list of all English phonemes and corresponding spellings*]

6. Use Sound Wall to Promote Phonological Awareness and Phonics Mastery

Point out the sound wall as often as the alphabet wall when referring to spelling patterns and sounds. **Remind students of this classroom resource as they work to decode and encode new words**. Support English language learners by emphasizing the most difficult phonemes for non-native English speakers. [*see page 36 for a list of critical phonemes that often prove difficult for Spanish-speaking students*]

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

eab.com

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How to Build a Sound Wall

Arrange Vowel Sounds to Correspond with Place of Articulation

Linguists study both the place and manner of articulation of phonemes, or speech sounds, in a given language. The following sound wall format is based on the English vowel chart used by linguists to highlight the variation in vowel articulation. The vertical labels designate the height of the tongue (i.e., high, mid, low), while the horizontal labels designate the part of the tongue involved in articulation (i.e., front, central, back).

Part of Tongue Used in Articulation

← **Front** ——— **Central** ——— **Back** →

Height of Tongue in Articulation

High

m**ee**t   sn**oo**ze

f**i**t   s**oo**t

Mid

b**ai**t   b**oa**t

n**e**t

banan**a**

b**u**t   b**o**re

Low

n**a**p   m**o**p
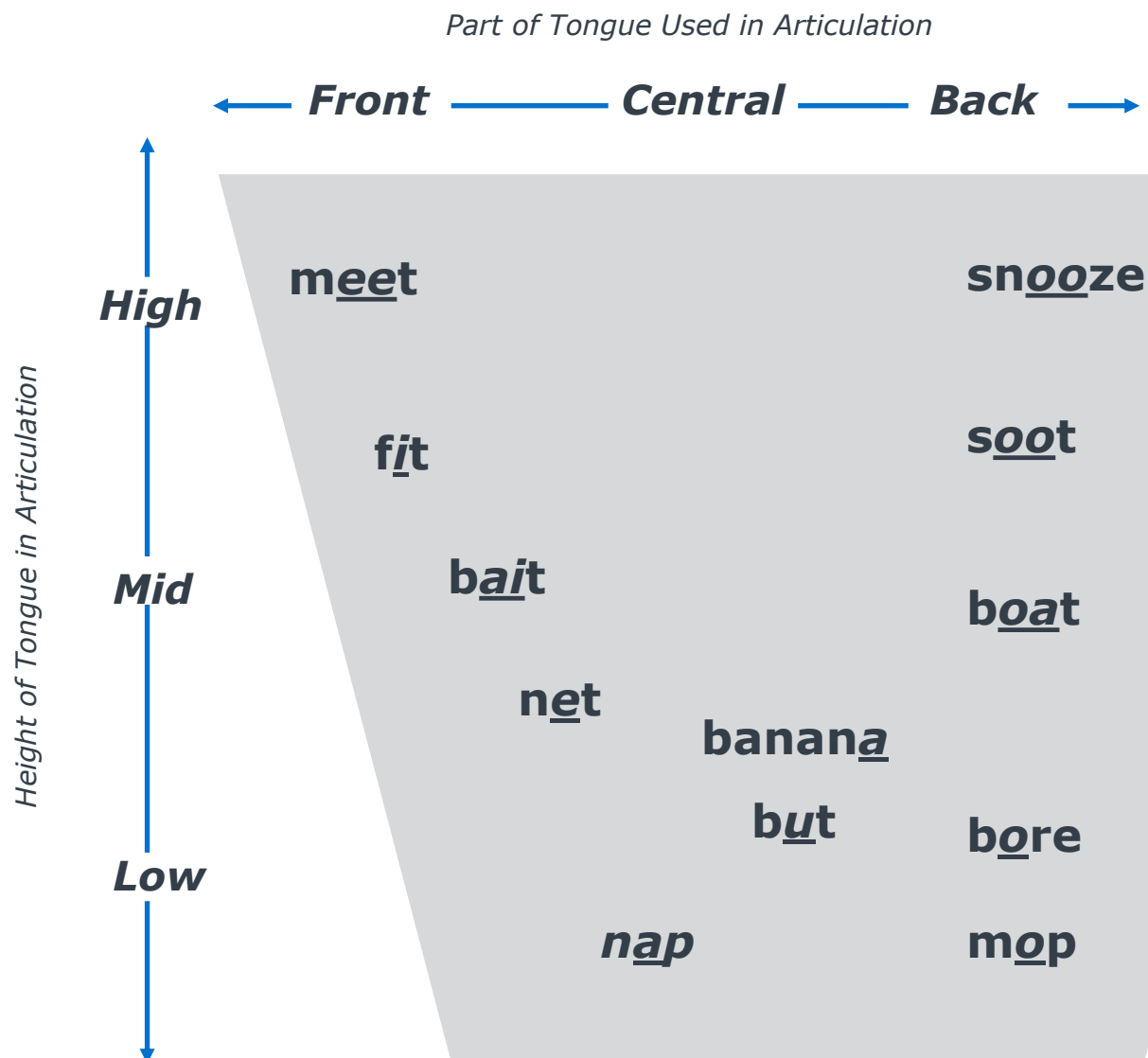
6 | Sound Wall Starter Kit

List of 44 English Phonemes

Consonants

Phoneme	Graphemes	Examples
1. /b/	b, bb	**b**ug, bu**bb**le
2. /d/	d, dd, ed	**d**ad, a**dd**, mill**ed**
3. /f/	f, ff, ph, gh, lf, ft	**f**ig, cli**ff**, **ph**one, enou**gh**, ha**lf**, o**ft**en
4. /g/	g, gg, gh, gu, gue	**g**un, e**gg**, **gh**ost, **gu**est, prolo**gue**
5. /h/	h, wh	**h**op, **wh**o
6. /ʤ/	j, ge, g, dge, di, gg	**j**am, wa**ge**, **g**iraffe, e**dge**, sol**di**er, exa**gg**erate
7. /k/	k, c, ch, cc, lk, qu, q(u), ck, x	**k**it, **c**at, **Ch**ris, a**cc**ent, fo**lk**, bou**qu**et, **qu**een, ra**ck**, fo**x**
8. /l/	l, ll	**l**ive, we**ll**
9. /m/	m, mm, mb, mn, lm	**m**an, su**mm**er, co**mb**, colu**mn**, pa**lm**
10. /n/	n, nn, kn, gn, pn	**n**et, fu**nn**y, **kn**ow, **gn**at, **pn**eumonic
11. /p/	p, pp	**p**in, ha**pp**y
12. /r/	r, rr, wr, rh	**r**un, ca**rr**ot, **wr**ench, **rh**yme
13. /s/	s, ss, c, sc, ps, st, ce, se	**s**it, le**ss**, **c**ircle, **sc**ene, **ps**ycho, li**st**en, pa**ce**, cour**se**
14. /t/	t, tt, th, ed	**t**ip, ma**tt**er, **Th**omas, ripp**ed**
15. /v/	v, f, ph, ve	**v**ine, o**f**, Ste**ph**en, fi**ve**
16. /w/	w, wh, u, o	**w**it, **wh**y, q**u**ick, ch**o**ir
17. /z/	z, zz, s, ss, x, ze, se	**z**oo, bu**zz**, hi**s**, sci**ss**ors, **x**ylophone, cra**ze**, pha**se**
18. /ŋ/	ng, n, ngue	ri**ng**, pi**n**k, to**ngue**
19. /j/	y, i, j	**y**ou, on**i**on, hallelu**j**ah

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List of 44 English Phonemes

Consonant Digraphs

Phoneme	Graphemes	Examples
20. /ʒ/	s, si, z	treasure, division, azure
21. /ʧ/	ch, tch, tu, ti, te	chip, watch, future, action, righteous
22. /ʃ/	sh, ce, s, ci, si, ch, sci, ti	sham, ocean, sure, special, pension, machine, conscience, station
22. /θ/	th (voiceless)	things, with
23. /ð/	th (voiced)	thy, leather

Short Vowels

Phoneme	Graphemes	Examples
24. /æ/	a, ai, au	cat, plaid, laugh
25. /ɛ/	e, ea, u, ie, ai, a, eo, ei, ae	end, bread, bury, friend, said, many, leopard, heifer, aesthetic
26. /I/	i, e, o, u, ui, y, ie	it, England, women, busy, guild, gym, sieve
27. /a/	o, a, ho, au, aw, ough	hop, swan, honest, maul, slaw, fought
28. /ʌ/	u, o, oo, ou	lug, monkey, blood, double
29. /ə/ (schwa sound)	a, i, e, u, ar, er, or	about, dolphin, ticket, cactus, dollar, ladder, honor
30. /ʊ/	oo, u, ou, o	look, bush, would, wolf

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List of 44 English Phonemes

Long Vowels

Phoneme	Graphemes	Examples
31. /e/	a, ai, eigh, aigh, ay, et, ei, au, a_e, ea, ey	b**a**by, m**ai**d, w**eigh**, str**aigh**t, p**ay**, fil**et**, **ei**ght, g**au**ge, m**ade**, br**ea**k, th**ey**
32. /i/	e, ee, ea, y, ey, oe, ie, i, ei, eo, ay	b**e**, b**ee**, m**ea**t, lad**y**, k**ey**, ph**oe**nix, gr**ie**f, sk**i**, dec**ei**ve, p**eo**ple, qu**ay**
33. /aɪ/	i, y, igh, ie, uy, ye, ai, is, eigh, i_e	sp**i**der, sk**y**, n**igh**t, p**ie**, g**uy**, st**ye**, **ai**sle, **is**land, h**eigh**t, k**i**t**e**
34. /o/	o, oa, o_e, oe, ow, ough, eau, oo, ew	**o**pen, m**oa**t, b**o**n**e**, t**oe**, s**ow**, d**ough**, b**eau**, br**oo**ch, s**ew**
35. /u/	o, oo, ew, ue, u_e, oe, ough, ui, eu, ou	wh**o**, l**oo**n, d**ew**, bl**ue**, fl**u**t**e**, sh**oe**, thr**ough**, fr**ui**t, man**eu**ver, cr**ou**p
36. /ju/	u, ou, eau, ew, ieu, iew, eu, yu, eue	**u**niform, y**ou**, b**eau**ty, f**ew**, ad**ieu**, v**iew**, f**eu**d, **yu**le, qu**eue**
37. /ɔɪ/	oi, oy	s**oi**l, t**oy**
38. /aʊ/	ow, ou, ough	n**ow**, sh**ou**t, b**ough**

R' Controlled Vowels

Phoneme	Graphemes	Examples
39. /ɛr/	air, are, ear, ere, eir, ayer	ch**air**, d**are**, p**ear**, wh**ere**, th**eir**, pr**ayer**
40. /ɑr/	ar, er, ear	**ar**m, s**er**geant, h**ear**t
41. /ɜr/	ir, er, ur, ear, or, our, yr	b**ir**d, t**er**m, b**ur**n, p**ear**l, w**or**d, j**our**ney, m**yr**tle
42. /ɔr/	or, oor, ore, oar, our, ar	p**or**k, d**oor**, m**ore**, b**oar**d, f**our**, w**ar**
43. /ir/	ear, eer, ere, ier	**ear**, st**eer**, h**ere**, t**ier**
44. /ʊr/	ure, our	c**ure**, t**our**ist

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6 | Sound Wall Starter Kit

Critical Phonemes for Non-Mainstream English Speakers

Support English Language Learners in Their Study of Phonemic Awareness

Students whose first language is a language other than English or who come from a home where a dialect distinct from Mainstream English (MSE) is spoken may need additional practice to learn the phonemes of Mainstream English that may differ from their native language or dialect. Therefore, it is critical for schools to be mindful of the phonetic features of the different dialectical and language structures that are represented in their diverse student body. Schools should provide additional reading instruction for non-MSE speakers by focusing on the phonemes they are least familiar with. See below for a list of English phonemes that often prove difficult for Spanish-speaking students.

Sample English Phonemes Most Difficult for Spanish Speakers

English Phoneme	Examples
/ʃ/ → "sh" (voiceless)	**sh**ell, mi**ss**ion, na**tio**n, **ch**ef, spe**c**ial
/ʒ/ → "sh" (voiced)	mira**ge**, plea**s**ure
/θ/ → "th" (voiceless)	**th**ing, wi**th**
/ð/ → "th" (voiced)	**th**at, **th**is
/dʒ/ → "j"	**G**eor**ge**, **j**ail, ed**ge**
/z/ → "z"	**z**ebra, ha**s**
/v/ → "v"	**v**iolin, **v**ery
/r/ → "r"	**r**obe, fu**r**, he**r**
/æ/, /ɛ/, /ɪ/, /a/, /ʌ/ (short vowels)	c**a**t, l**e**d, b**i**t, m**o**p, **u**s

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The American Speech-Language Hearing Association provides information on phonetic systems and cultural differences related to the following languages and dialects:

Sample Languages

- Amharic
- Arabic
- Bhutanese
- Bosnian
- Burmese
- Chinese
- Congolese
- Dafuri
- Haitian Creole
- Hindi
- Hmong
- Korean
- Pashto and Persian
- Russian
- Spanish
- Somali
- Tagalog
- Turkish
- Vietnamese

Sample Dialects

- African American Vernacular English (AAVE)
- Chicano English

Source: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2018), "Phonemic Inventories and Cultural and Linguistic Information Across Languages."; Thonis, E. (1983) "The English-Spanish Connection. Compton, CA: Santillana; EAB interviews and analysis.

7 | Foundational Skills Look-For Document

Integrate Foundational Skills Practice into the Classroom

It is important that district and school leaders ensure that reading teachers in the early grades have the necessary support to focus enough time on foundational skills and know the right approach to teaching them. The following "look-for" document is adapted from **Cedar Rapids Community School District** in Iowa and serves as a lesson planning guide and informal observation tool. It provides descriptions of what an observer should ideally see and hear and also what should not be happening in the lesson.

Lesson Component	What I Should and Shouldn't See and Hear	Notes
Learning Purpose	**Should:** • Be connected to the phonic diagnostic data	
	Shouldn't: • Be solely a phonological learning purpose	
Phonological Awareness **3-5 minutes**[1]	**Should Hear:** • "My Turn, Do It With Me, Your Turn" or something similar • Choral Responses with signals • Quick pace, consistent language • A well-established routine • Errors are being corrected **Might See:** • The use of manipulative chips representing words, syllables, or phonemes	
	Shouldn't See: • Looking at letters or hearing teachers say letter names	
Review Previously Taught Skills **2-5 minutes**	**Should Hear:** • "Yesterday we learned these letter sounds…" • Students saying letter sounds or reading words with targeted letter sounds using choral response with signal • Corrective feedback **Might Hear:** • Student reviewing previously taught memory words	
	Shouldn't Hear: • The explicit routine • The teacher reading	

1) The length of each lesson component could vary depending on the total time allocation.

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7 | Foundational Skills Look-For Document

Lesson Component	What I Should and Shouldn't See and Hear	Notes
Phonics **2-5 minutes**	**Should See:** • One new skill being explicitly introduced and practiced (My Turn, Do it With Me, Your Turn) **Should Hear:** • Students sounding out words • "Sound it out. What word?" **Might See***:* • Varying degrees of "I do" based on the number of lessons students have had with this skill	
	Shouldn't Hear: • Teacher reading the words • Students reading words with sounds that haven't been explicitly taught	

Phoneme-Grapheme Mapping
 	
5-10 minutes
	Should See and Hear:
	• Steps of the phoneme-grapheme mapping routine.
	  1. Say the word aloud
	  2. Count the sounds (phonemes)
	  3. Ask what the first sound is
	  4. Write it
	  5. Repeat for all remaining sounds
	  6. Write the whole word in the final box of grid
	  7. Say the word fast
	• Teacher with a predetermined word list that includes only spelling patterns previously taught
	
	Might See or Hear:
	• Teacher showing a card, before or after the mapping routine, saying "Remember these letters make this sound."	

	Shouldn't See*:* • Students looking at a printed copy of the whole word • Students mapping words with spelling patterns they haven't yet been taught	
Apply to Texts **5-10 minutes**	**Should See:** • Students reading the text before receiving any scaffolding by the teacher • Teachers listening in and correcting errors, prompting students to go back and reread the decodable word, possibly by saying, "Sound it out."	
	Shouldn't See: • Teacher reading the text to the students or students reading the text with a device	

Source: Cedar Rapids Community School District; EAB Interviews and analysis.

Increase Opportunities for Observation and Feedback

Section Description

High-frequency coaching and feedback can be powerful drivers of change but only when provided consistently. Though many districts offer instructional coaches, coaches' time is often stretched thin across a number of responsibilities, making frequent and meaningful feedback difficult to scale. In these cases, teachers often lack the consistent and tangible guidance needed to improve practice. The use of recording platforms and video-based teacher observations expands opportunities for ongoing support and peer feedback. Such formative feedback and reflection allows for better alignment between the science of reading and classroom practice.

Resources

Recommended Owners: Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Principals

Tool 8: Video-Based Teacher Observation Playbook
Tool 9: Self- and Peer-Observation Checklist

Overview and Key Lessons

This section is designed to help districts create systems for self- and peer-observation using recording capabilities in the classroom. These tools provide guidance on how to implement this initiative and contain a sample checklist to guide teachers through the review process.

1 Ensure **districtwide awareness and consensus around the non-evaluative and constructive purpose** of video-based observations.

2 **Determine districtwide priorities for the instructional practices teachers should embrace.** Consider evidence-based techniques for teaching foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness, print concepts, phonics, and fluency.

3 Expand upon existing opportunities for teachers to **observe other teachers as well as instructional coaches and to reflect upon their own practice.**

4 Overcome resistance by **allowing teacher choice and control in the process,** regarding which lessons they record and with whom they will share those recordings.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

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8 | Video-Based Teacher Observation Playbook

Guide to Implementing Video-Based Observations

Expand Coaching Capacity Through Recordings

Use recording capabilities to maximize coaching capacity and increase opportunities for ongoing observation and feedback. Video-based observations allow teachers to record, observe, and reflect upon reading lessons in the classroom. Below is a step-by-step process guide for implementing video-based observations in your district.

1. Determine Right-Fit Recording Platform

Consider the number of recording and observational platforms available, and select the best fit for your district based on cost and ease of implementation. Some popular options include Swivl and TORSH Talent.

2. Ensure Full Teacher Awareness of Initiative

Use staff meetings or professional development time to demonstrate for teachers how to properly use recording platform. Use this opportunity to ensure teachers that this initiative is for coaching purposes only and is not evaluative in any way.

3. Encourage Instructional Coaches to Serve as Model Participants

Ask instructional coaches to record themselves first as an example of participation and as an exemplary model of reading instruction.

4. Begin Teacher Recording Process

Require all early grade teachers to record a reading lesson focusing on foundational reading skills. Allow them the opportunity to record multiple lessons, should they choose.

5. Allot Time for Teacher Self-Review Process

Reserve time during staff meetings or PLC sessions for teachers to review their own video and self-evaluate using a prescribed instructional checklist. [*see the Self- and Peer-Observation Checklist on pgs. 41-42 for an example*]

6. Pair Teachers for Peer Review Discussion

Following self-reviews, pair teachers together to review each other's recording and provide feedback according to instructional checklist.

7. Showcase Exemplary Videos

Find time to highlight high-quality videos as models of effective foundational reading lessons.

8. Encourage Revision of Practice

Encourage teachers to integrate techniques learned from the process into their future lessons before repeating the process.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

9 | Self- and Peer-Observation Checklist

Provide Opportunity to Record, Observe, and Reflect upon Reading Lessons

The following video-based observation checklist is adapted from **Cedar Rapids Community School District** and serves as a guide for non-punitive self- and peer-observations of recorded reading lessons.

Every Component, Every Day	Critical Lesson Components	Completed?
Phonological Awareness	Did I clearly state the learning target?	
	Did I provide scaffolds? (e.g., chips, tiles, tapping)	
	Model: Did I provide the "I do"? (my voice only)	
	Guided Practice: Did I include the "we do"? (my voice with students)	
	Independent Practice: Did I include the "you do"? (students choral and/or individual response)	
	Did I use a signal? (i.e., verbal or non-verbal cue)	
	Did I complete this component in 2 minutes or less?	
	Did I review the learning target for phonological awareness?	
		/8
Review of Previous Skills	Did I review alphabetic or phonics skills taught up to this point using a cue card?	
	Did I have students reread words with previous skills for automaticity?	
	Did I complete this component in 2 minutes or less?	
		/3
Phonics Decoding	Did I state the learning target? (Determined based on diagnostic information)	
	Did I teach the new skill?	
	• Did I discriminate new sound with example and non-example words? (4-3 examples/non-examples)	
	• Did I explicitly teach the pronunciation of the new sound? (reference shape and position of mouth, tongue, lips)	
	• Did I demonstrate phoneme-grapheme correspondence with a cue card to articulate new sound?	
	• Did I trace the grapheme for the corresponding phoneme *while saying the sound* on one or two different tactile surfaces (table, partner's back, sandpaper)?	
	Did I teach word reading?	
	• Did I have students practice blending and reading words?	
	• Did I have students practice rereading for automaticity?	
	• Did I provide scaffold of additive blending, if needed (CVC words only)?	
	Did I use consistent language?	
	Did I use signals as needed?	
	Did I complete this component in 6-8 minutes?	
		/11

Source: Cedar Rapids Community School District; EAB Interviews and analysis.

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9 | Self- and Peer-Observation Checklist

Every Day, Every Component	Critical Lesson Components	Completed?
Phonics Encoding	Did I make connection to phonic decoding skill?	
	Did I provide scaffolds?	
	Did I use consistent language?	
	Did I use signals as needed?	
	Did I complete this section in 6-8 minutes?	
	Did I review the learning target for both decoding and encoding?	
		/6
Apply to Connected Text	Did I have students make a connection to the phonic skill?	
	• Did students whisper read the text?	
	• Did students choral read?	
	• Did students partner read?	
	• Did students whisper read again?	
	• Did I complete this component in 6-8 minutes?	
		/6

Notes to Guide Improvement

Key Checklist Considerations

- **Solicit input from instructional coaches and literacy specialists** when writing your district's checklist

- Organize checklist according to **foundational components of reading instruction**

- Use checklist as opportunity to **remind teachers of sound pedagogy**

- Provide **concrete metrics** to assist in timing and pacing of lessons

- Include opportunity for teachers to **self-grade lessons** in a non-punitive way and to **record notes** of ways they'd like to improve moving forward

Source: Cedar Rapids Community School District; EAB Interviews and analysis.

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