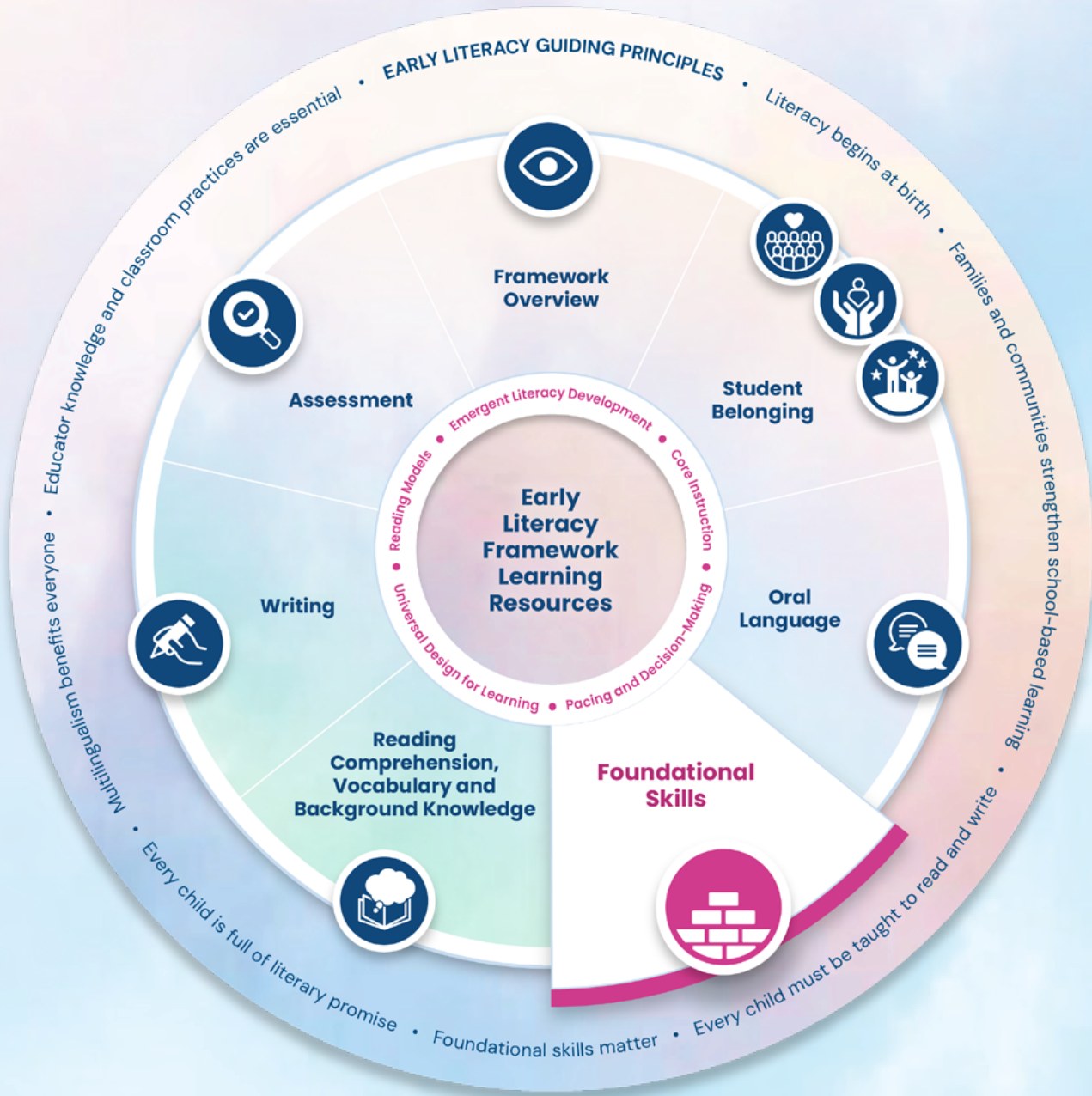


COLLABORATIVE LEARNING SESSION GUIDE

# Foundational Skills

Engaging Students in Foundational Skills  
Beyond Explicit Instruction



# Foundational Skills

## Engaging Students in Foundational Skills Beyond Explicit Instruction

### Overview

*This Collaborative Learning Session (CLS) is intended to complement and extend the learning in the Foundational Skills Module, an asynchronous online learning experience.*

### Foundational Skills Module Review

The [Foundational Skills module](#) is focused on exploring ways to effectively implement foundational skills instruction in participants' practice. Through this module, participants gain an understanding of the role of foundational skills instruction in a comprehensive approach to literacy and explore ideas for effective and culturally responsive foundational skills instruction. The module includes activities such as watching videos, reading vignettes and self-assessing learning to reflect on foundational skills knowledge, leveraging student strengths, effectively differentiating foundational skill instruction, and integrating decodable texts in comprehensive literacy instruction. Overall, the module provides resources and reflection questions to support educators in enhancing their instructional practices related to foundational skills instruction.

Participation in the Foundational Skills module is not required for participation in the CLS, but it is highly recommended.

### Foundational Skills Collaborative Learning Session

The CLS builds on the Foundational Skills module by focusing on ways to incorporate meaningful opportunities for practicing foundational skills throughout the school day. Participants will reflect on engaging foundational skills activities that they and their colleagues incorporate into their school days, view an example video of a teacher talking about how they incorporate foundational skills activities throughout the school day using a note catcher, review grade-specific foundational skills guidance on effective and engaging ways to practice individual foundational skills, and complete a week-long template for planning effective and engaging foundational skills activities beyond explicit instruction that they can then take back and implement in their classrooms immediately.

### Preparing for the Collaborative Learning Session

This CLS is scheduled to take 40 minutes with an opportunity to extend the meeting up to 90 minutes.

## Facilitator Preparation

### Review Oregon Early Literacy Framework (OELF) Resources

- Revisit the Foundational Skills module as a refresher.

### Schedule the CLS

- Communicate with your team about the session date, time, location and goals.
- Consider sending a meeting reminder one to two days prior.

### Prepare for Facilitation

- Closely read the facilitator agenda below.
- Familiarize yourself with the [Phonological Awareness Throughout the Day](#) video.
- Make sure you have a way to watch the video as a group during the CLS, e.g., computer screen, projector, etc.
- Review each handout.
- Print or set up access to digital copies of each handout.

## Facilitator Reminders

While students need systematic, regular foundational skills instruction drawn from high-quality instructional materials, they also need ample opportunities to meaningfully and independently apply what they have learned. Teachers can incorporate engaging and effective practice opportunities throughout the school day in connection to content students are learning across the core curriculum that help foundational skills come to life in the classroom. Of note, foundational skills practice opportunities should reflect current skills. Students do not need to repeatedly practice what they have already mastered. So, it is important to adjust activities to reflect students' developing learning.

## Responsive Facilitation

The agenda in this guide serves as a reference. As a facilitator, you may want or need to adjust the flow to better meet the needs of your team. This may include additional reflection time, work time for teachers to engage in activities, review of materials and/or feedback opportunities.

# Suggested Meeting Agenda

## Materials

VIDEO GALLERY	HANDOUTS	ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Phonological Awareness Throughout the Day</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Handout 1 – Video Participation Guide</a></li> <li><a href="#">Handout 2 – K-2 Foundational Skills Guidance document</a></li> <li><a href="#">Handout 3 – Effective Enhancements for Foundational Skills Instruction</a></li> <li><a href="#">Handout 4 – Weekly Foundational Skills Scheduling Template</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chart paper</li> <li>Projector or screen</li> </ul>

## Learning Goals

Participants will:

- review the importance of foundational skills practice throughout the school day and
- learn how colleagues take advantage of time outside of explicit instruction to meet the diverse foundational skills needs of the learners in your classroom.

## Success Criteria

Participants will:





- identify engaging foundational skills lesson ideas that align with current student learning needs and reinforce systematic foundational skills instruction;
- reflect on your own practice around embedding foundational skills throughout the school day; and
- devise a week-long plan to incorporate engaging foundational skills practice throughout the school day that builds on explicit instruction around a specific foundational skill.



## Essential Questions for Discussion

- How can you take advantage of time outside of explicit instruction to meet the diverse foundational skills needs of the learners in their classrooms?
- How can you equip parents and caregivers to support the development of foundational skills (e.g., phonological awareness, print concepts) outside of school hours?

## Agenda

TIME	LEARNING PROGRESSION AND FACILITATOR GUIDANCE	MATERIALS
1m	<b>Welcome</b> Use an icebreaker that allows everyone time to talk to make sure your team members feel welcomed into the space.	Select your favorite opener for a meeting.
1m	<b>Introduce Purpose and Goal of the CLS</b> Share the handouts with the team. Explain the video that was selected for the learning today and why. Clarify any questions about the agenda. This will ground participants in the topic of Foundational Skills for today's learning.	Handouts

TIME	LEARNING PROGRESSION AND FACILITATOR GUIDANCE	MATERIALS
5m	 <h3 data-bbox="418 243 906 279">Small or Whole Group Discussion</h3> <p data-bbox="418 300 1156 569">Give participants one minute to answer the following question: “How do you embed opportunities for students to practice foundational skills throughout the school day? Provide a specific activity and setting in which students engage in this activity.” <b>NOTE:</b> this is about reinforcing the focused foundational skills work from the curriculum in the literacy block throughout the day.</p> <p data-bbox="418 600 1200 674">Ask for volunteers to share out their ideas that they discussed in pairs. List these ideas on chart paper.</p> <p data-bbox="418 705 1188 1014">Discuss with the group the challenges they face when incorporating opportunities for foundational skills practice throughout the school day. Make note on the chart paper of notable challenges that participants discuss. Listen for opportunities to highlight strategies that support and align to the systematic, explicit instruction guided by the curriculum and to steer away from approaches that reflect incoherence with the curricular progression.</p>	Chart paper
8m	 <h3 data-bbox="418 1068 610 1104">Watch Video</h3> <p data-bbox="418 1125 1192 1314">Spend eight minutes viewing the <a href="#">Phonological Awareness Throughout the Day</a> video of a teacher talking about how they incorporate foundational skill opportunities—specifically opportunities for practicing phonological awareness—throughout the school day.</p> <p data-bbox="418 1346 1196 1524"><b>NOTE:</b> Make sure to note that the video they are viewing is of a preschool teacher and that the skills the students in the video are practicing may be different from the skills their own students may be working on in higher grade levels and may require different types of activities, which are presented and discussed in the next activity.</p>	Video link, projector or screen
5m	  <p data-bbox="418 1583 1192 1814">Following the video, have participants spend three minutes to complete the Video Participation Guide in small groups. Have one person from each small group serve as a notetaker and another as a reporter for the group. Then, spend two minutes having participants share out to the larger group using the guiding questions on the Video Participation Guide.</p>	<a href="#">Handout 1 – Video Participation Guide</a>

TIME	LEARNING PROGRESSION AND FACILITATOR GUIDANCE	MATERIALS
3m	 <p>Provide participants with the K-2 Foundational Skills Guidance handout, as well as the Effective Enhancements for Foundational Skills Instruction handout. Give participants three minutes to silently read over their handouts.</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Handout 2 – K-2 Foundational Skills Guidance</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Handout 3 – Effective Enhancements for Foundational Skills Instruction</u></a></p>
15m	 <p>Introduce the Weekly Foundational Skills Scheduling Template and the activity. Participants will plan a week’s worth of activities around a specific foundational skill their students are working on developing during explicit instruction. Participants can use grade-specific handouts. Give the group 10 minutes of independent work time to complete the Weekly Foundational Skills Scheduling Template independently. Then, allow participants to share their weekly template with peers in pairs or in small groups and allow them to take notes or adjust plans based on feedback.</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Handout 4 – Weekly Foundational Skills Scheduling Template</u></a></p>
2m	<p><b>Closing</b></p> <p>Debrief the activities presented. Invite team members to share an appreciation of someone in the group to acknowledge team members and the learning that took place.</p>	

## Extension Ideas

- After having carried out the activities listed on the weekly plan created in the previous CLS, participants will put into practice plans created during the CLS. At the start of the next CLS, participants will begin by sharing out on the following discussion questions:
- What foundational skill did you plan for students to have more practice?
- Describe the activities you used and any materials used.
- How did your students respond to the activities?
- How did you measure student learning?



# Suggested Participant Agenda

## Essential Questions

- How can you take advantage of time outside of explicit instruction to meet the diverse foundational skills needs of the learners in their classrooms?
- How can you equip parents and caregivers to support the development of foundational skills (e.g., phonological awareness, print concepts) outside of school hours?

## Learning Goals

Participants will:

- review the importance of foundational skills practice throughout the school day and
- learn how colleagues take advantage of time outside of explicit instruction to meet the diverse foundational skills needs of the learners in your classroom.

## Success Criteria

Participants will:

- identify engaging foundational skills lesson ideas that align with current student learning needs and reinforce systematic foundational skills instruction;
- reflect on your own practice around embedding foundational skills throughout the school day; and
- devise a week-long plan to incorporate engaging foundational skills practice throughout the school day that builds on explicit instruction around a specific foundational skill.

# CLS Meeting Agenda

TIME	AGENDA
2m	Welcome and purpose/goals of the CLS
5m	Small and whole group discussion
13m	Video activity and discussion
18m	Weekly foundational skills planning activity and discussion
2m	Closing

## Materials

- [Handout 1 – Video Participation Guide](#)
- [Handout 2 – K-2 Foundational Skills Guidance document](#)
- [Handout 3 – Effective Enhancements for Foundational Skills Instruction](#)
- [Handout 4 – Weekly Foundational Skills Scheduling Template](#)

## Activity 8

# Video-Viewing Guide: Phonological Awareness Throughout the Day

**Directions:** As you view Video 8: Phonological Awareness Throughout the Day (<https://youtu.be/5jicNOF12t0>), record reflections about the guiding statements.

Guiding Statements	Reflections
During small-group instruction the tasks were blending (putting together) and segmenting (pulling apart) spoken words at the syllable level.	1.
Provide two examples of where (setting) and how (task) the teacher reinforced phonological awareness at the syllable level throughout the day.	2.
Provide three examples of where (setting) and how (task) the teacher reinforced phonological awareness at the word level throughout the day.	1.
	2.
	3.
List opportunities and settings throughout your day when you could embed phonological awareness.	

## Grade-Level-Specific Guidance for Kindergarten

Below you will find some concrete recommendations for time use and instructional foci that fit the unique needs of a kindergarten classroom.

Guidance for Daily Instructional Time – Early Kindergarten	
Foundational Skills Instruction	
Phonological/Phonemic Awareness	20–30 minutes
Other components (letter recognition, letter formation, high-frequency words, etc.)	5–10 minutes
Phonics and Wordless or Decodable Readers	15–20 minutes

*Note: Phonological/Phonemic Awareness will take the highest allocation of time before phonics instruction begins.*

Guidance for Instructional Time – Mid-Late Kindergarten	
Foundational Skills Instruction	
Phonics (and related Phonological Awareness Tasks)	20–30 minutes
Working with Decodable Readers	15–20 minutes
Other components (high-frequency words, handwriting/letter formation)	10–15 minutes
Reteaching (support based on weekly assessments)	As needed

*Note: Phonological/Phonemic Awareness tasks can move to transitions and/or small group instruction as needed.*

Notes for Instruction: Flexibility Within Structure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct Instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, high-frequency words, and work with Decodable Readers can be: <b>Whole-Class</b> or <b>Small-Group</b></li> <li>• Student Practice can be: <b>Independent</b> or <b>Teacher Monitored</b></li> <li>• Small Group Instruction can include: <b>Observing and Practicing a Current Skill</b> or <b>Reteaching and Remediating a Past Skill</b></li> </ul>	

### Phonemic Awareness for Early Kindergarten

#### What?

As defined above, phonemic awareness requires students to hear, manipulate, and identify phonemes, the smallest units of sound. Phonemes are speech sounds, such as /b/ as the first sound in *bat*.

Phonemic awareness is taught orally. Initially in kindergarten, it consists of learning about rhyming and listening for, recognizing, and manipulating sounds in words.

### **Why?**

Phonemic awareness has been shown to be a better indicator of early reading success than *anything* else, including socioeconomic status. The reason for this is that it sets the stage for successful decoding. To decode successfully, students need to learn the sounds that are represented in print by letters and combinations of letters, as well as how to blend these together to make words. This is quite simply an unfair task if we have not taught children how to hear the sounds in words. Phonemic awareness teaches students to recognize and blend sounds before blending written letter combinations. Allowing them to learn one thing at a time instead of two at once.

### **How?**

[Here](#) you will find an optional scope and sequence for kindergarten games, activities, and tasks using the recommended text *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children* by Marilyn Adams, Barbara Foorman, Ingrid Lundberg, and Terri Beeler. This book is co-written by one of the writers of the foundational skill standards of the Common Core, and one of the top reading experts in the United States. It begins with key phonological awareness concepts and covers more ground than other programs to transition to phonemic awareness and set the stage for phonics. It does it all through games, songs, music, and movement. Any of the activities can replace a less engaging task or game in your core program. For this reason, we recommend you get this book and use the tasks and games to enhance your core program for work supporting phonemic awareness.

This resource also provides diagnostic assessments that are recommended for use in first grade, or after instruction has taken place in kindergarten. A [kindergarten-friendly assessment](#) that matches the text foci is provided as a supplemental resource in this guide. This resource is optimal for assessing progress during small-group instruction.

## **Letter Recognition and Letter-Sound Correspondence**

### **What?**

By the end of the first two months of kindergarten, it is imperative that all students are able to recognize lower- and upper-case letters visually and name each letter. Singing and memorizing the alphabet is not enough! As part of this work, students should also learn how to properly form each letter, lower- and upper-case. As students are learning the letter names, it is supportive for them to also learn the most commonly associated consonant and short vowel sound for that letter. Make sure you are pronouncing each letter sound clearly and precisely yourself. This requires practice.

### **Why and How?**

Follow your core curriculum's scope and sequence in this area, being sure to provide sufficient practice opportunities so that *all students master* letter recognition and sound correspondence. Teachers must assess students regularly to determine who has mastery and who needs additional support in this area.

## **Small-Group Instruction**

When with the teacher, students should have ample opportunities to practice the skills being focused on during the current week, and/or practice skills that were not previously mastered. Repeating games and tasks from phonemic awareness, with on-the-spot feedback and reteaching, should be the focus of this time. Your whole class will be moving through the tasks and games, so this may represent critical time to support students who need differentiated

practice. For kindergarteners especially, small-group instruction is a chance for students to practice using oral language. For some learners, this accountable time with their teacher will make a huge difference. Keep an observation checklist to assess students regularly in real time.

### **Independent/Group/Center Tasks**

Centers and work time (in groups, partners, or independently) can serve as an ideal way to support skills practice. It is important to use only centers and tasks that are *easily* implemented, simple to monitor, and independent (they should not require your guidance or attention). Repeating tasks that were taught whole-group and using similar tasks with varied content from week to week, will allow students to focus independently on the task at hand. You should be sure that all your reading centers are focused on the skills your students must master for reading success.

While it may seem obvious, an important guideline for tasks during early kindergarten is that they be clear in format for students. If directions are needed, explaining the directions whole class for a center or task that repeats will allow for more instructional time later.

Suggested focus points for tasks during early kindergarten include:

- Name writing
- Letter recognition
- Handwriting (proper letter formation)
- Uppercase/lowercase match of taught letters
- Rereading decodable or wordless books
- Retelling read alouds based on pictures
- Creating storylines for wordless books based on pictures

### **Phonemic Awareness Activities in Mid-Late Kindergarten**

After the first few months of school, continue to use the phonemic awareness games, tasks, and activities from the text referenced above, but limit the amount of time. These engaging routines can be used in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to):

- Quick tasks on the rug to start or end a lesson
- As a transition between activities
- When students are lining up, waiting for a new task at their seat, or moving throughout the room/school building
- Morning warm-ups or the close of the day

### **Notes for Instruction and Differentiation**

Phonemic awareness tasks will all be done orally. Be sure to cold call frequently to get a range of responses.

It is vital that in small-group work you repeat the full-group lesson in order to observe and give feedback to each child. Whenever possible, do not go on to the next stage with the full class until students who are struggling with the phonemic awareness tasks have reached mastery. *Do not create a structure where one group is constantly lagging behind.*

Depending on your program, it is likely that this phonemic awareness work will continue while students are beginning phonics instruction. This is not a problem: these two concepts will mutually reinforce one another.

## Phonics (and related Phonological Awareness) for Mid- and Late Kindergarten

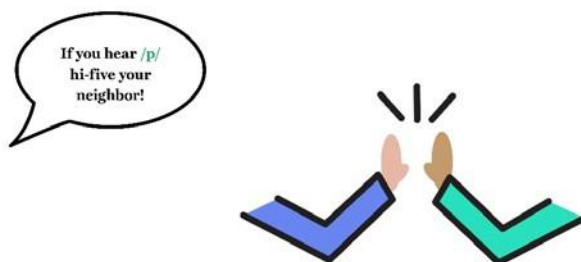
### What?

As students move along in the school year, core curricula begin to focus on phonics (usually beginning with consonant or short vowel sounds) and using the sound/symbol relationship to recognize letters and words (phonics).

### Why and How?

Follow your core curriculum's scope and sequence. Lessons may be done orally and/or with supporting materials. Follow the three suggestions below to enhance your core curriculum.

1. Use the [effective enhancements](#) to bring more joy and energy to tasks in your core program. This time should feel engaging and fun for students, offering them the chance to learn crucial skills through movement, songs, chants, and high-energy activities.
2. For every taught-phonics skill, students should have **at least five practice opportunities**. These practice opportunities can consist of worksheets, workbooks, word and picture sorts that isolate related sound and spelling patterns, work with magnetic letters or word cards, etc. Practice should be an opportunity for *students to work independently as well as with support so that all students master phonics patterns and high-frequency words that have been taught*. This attention to student practice allows time for students to independently rehearse what they have learned.
3. Attend to the out-of-context skill through in-context practice with **decodable readers** ([see protocol](#)).



## Other Components for Kindergarten

### High-Frequency Words

High-frequency words (also known as “sight words”) should be a feature of all kindergarten core curricula. High-frequency words are those that are used frequently in grade-level texts and may or may not have irregular spelling patterns. High-frequency words are read by sight once they are securely part of a student’s long-term memory. If your program does not specify explicitly how to teach high-frequency words, do the following with each high-frequency word:

- High-frequency words begin as the very first words some students know. Be sure to reinforce any familiar learning within high-frequency words as the year progresses. (Example: Look, we just learned the /w/ sound- we’ve already seen this sound in some of our words this year!)

- If a high-frequency word sounds the way it is spelled (*in, at, on*), students should be taught to *decode* the word based on the regular sound and spelling pattern, not to “memorize” the word by sight. While memorization and automaticity will likely come, students at this stage should be taught to connect letters and sounds whenever possible. The more exposure and practice students get with the phonic patterns of English, the better!
- If a high-frequency word has irregular spelling or does not follow the sound and spelling patterns that have been taught (*me, the, of*), teach the word by *first* identifying the regular sounds (Example: What sounds in this word do we know?) before attending to the new or irregular part of the word (Example: In this word, the \_\_ sounds like \_\_).

### **Handwriting**

Students need to be provided with clear direct instruction around proper letter formation as they are learning to form lower- and upper-case letters. They also benefit from writing sound and spelling patterns as they are learned. As students learn letter features in phonics, practice writing helps to engrain letter-sound relationships, as this skill differs from that required when only reading a word. At this age, students benefit from time to practice proper letter formation. They will enjoy gaining skill and confidence in this area.

### **Tasks for Mid- and Late- Kindergarten**

Suggested focus points for tasks for this time of year include:

- Letter/sound recognition
- Handwriting/ letter formation
- Practice tasks and activities based on phonics skill
- Practice tasks and activities reviewing high frequency words taught as wholes
- Re-reading/retell previously taught decodables (independent or buddy reading)
- Retelling read alouds based on pictures
- If available, phonics games on tablets/computers



## Grade-Level-Specific Guidance for First Grade

Guidance for Instructional Time – First Grade	
Foundational Skills Instruction	
Phonics (and related Phonological Awareness Tasks)	20–30 minutes
Working with Decodable Readers	20–25 minutes
Other components (high-frequency words, handwriting/letter formation)	5–10 minutes
Re-teaching (support based on weekly assessments)	As needed

*Note: Phonological/phonemic Awareness tasks can move to transitions and/or small group instruction as needed.*

### Notes for Instruction: Flexibility Within Structure

- Direct Instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, high frequency words, and work with Decodable Readers can be: **Whole-Class** or **Small-Group**
- Student Practice can be: **Independent** or **Teacher Monitored**
- Small Group Instruction can include: **Observing and Practicing a Current Skill** or **Reteaching and Remediating a Past Skill**

### Phonemic Awareness Activities

If this is your first year using this guide, see the Kindergarten Guidance for Phonemic Awareness games, tasks, and activities from the recommended text *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children* by Marilyn Adams, Barbara Foorman, Ingrid Lundberg, and Terri Beeler. Your first graders may benefit from direct instruction with these games and tasks. If students are successfully able to identify and manipulate phonemes, they will not need this direct instruction.

It is important that teachers administer a basic assessment of phonemic awareness at the start of first grade to determine the best place to start instruction for students. A tracker for the diagnostic assessment that connects with the text *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children* [is provided](#) with this guide. Use the assessment to determine the best place for full-class instruction (where the majority of the students are no longer successful independently) as well as notes for specific student needs within small-group instruction.

As needed, these engaging tasks can be added into routines in a variety of ways to provide reinforcement and fun practice, including (but not limited to):

- Quick tasks on the rug to start or end a lesson
- As a transition between tasks
- When students are lining up, waiting for a new task at their seat, or moving throughout the room/school building
- Morning warm ups or the close of the day

## Phonics (and Related Phonological Awareness) in First Grade

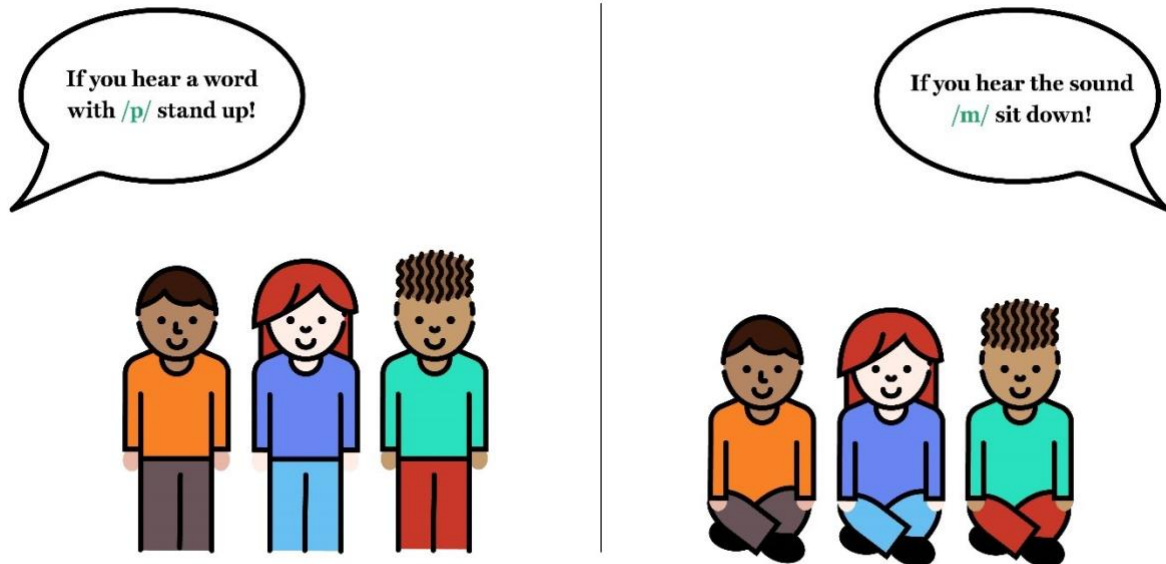
### What?

The teaching of phonics and using the sound and spelling patterns to decode words in and out of context is critical for first grade.

### Why and How?

Follow your core curriculum's scope and sequence. Lessons may be done orally and/or with supporting materials. Follow the three suggestions below to enhance your core curriculum.

1. Use the [effective enhancements](#) to bring more joy and energy to tasks in your core program. This time should feel engaging and fun for students, offering them the chance to learn crucial skills through movement, songs, chants and high-energy activities.
2. For every taught phonics skill, provide students **at least five practice opportunities**. These practice opportunities can consist of worksheets, workbooks, word and picture sorts that isolate related sound and spelling patterns, work with magnetic letters or word cards, etc. Practice should be an opportunity for *students to work independently as well as with support so that all students master phonics patterns and high-frequency words that have been taught*. This attention to student practice allows time for students to independently rehearse what they have learned.
3. Attend to the out-of-context skill through in-context practice with **decodable readers** ([see protocol](#)).



## Other Components for First Grade

### High-Frequency Words

High-frequency words should be a feature of all first-grade core curricula. High-frequency (sight) words are those that are used frequently in grade-level texts, and they may or may not have irregular spelling patterns. High-frequency words are read by sight once they are securely part of a student's long-term memory. If not explicitly specified in your program, do the following with each high-frequency word:

- If a high-frequency word sounds the way it is spelled (*in, at, on*), students should be taught to *decode* the word based on the regular sound and spelling pattern, not to “memorize” the word by sight. While memorization and automaticity will likely come later on, students at this stage should be taught to connect letters and sounds whenever possible.
- If a high-frequency word has irregular spelling or does not follow the sound and spelling patterns that have been taught (*me, the, of*), teach the word by *first* identifying the regular sounds (Example: What sounds in this word do we know?) before attending to the new or irregular part of the word (Example: In this word, the \_\_ sounds like \_\_).
- Connect new sound and spelling patterns to high-frequency words students already know! It is likely that they'll have already had some experience with select letter pairings based on high-frequency words they've been using since kindergarten.

### Fluency

Core programs often vary in how they address fluency in first grade. While there is always value in modeling of fluent reading with prosody (expression that includes timing, phrasing, emphasis, and intonation), first-grade students should focus more on accuracy and automaticity in decoding at first and should be reading these texts with purpose and understanding. Once a child is able to decode with automaticity, re-reading the decodable reader to focus on prosody (in partners or independently) is a valuable task for first graders. Fluency tasks that are not connected to reading in context, such as memorizing word lists, should be deemphasized or skipped.

The [decodable protocol](#) offers several opportunities to reinforce important aspects of fluency. Accuracy is a key focus when students are reading words with familiar sound and spelling patterns in context. Additionally, buddy and choral reading provide opportunities to reinforce prosody, especially when hand-in-hand with a strong teacher model of fluent reading. Rate is less important in first grade. As students make progress, and if they are showing a solid grasp of decoding, you may want to turn your attention to reinforcing phrasing, punctuation, and the smoothness of speech in the later part of first grade.

### Handwriting

If students were taught proper letter formation in kindergarten, this expectation should be reinforced in first grade instruction. It is recommended that students be provided with clear direct instruction around proper letter formation if they are not forming letters properly.

## Differentiation

In first grade, a gap may begin to emerge between students who are quickly mastering skills and those who are not. Now is the time to fill this gap! Students who are a year behind in reading need significantly more instruction than those on grade level (or the more the gap grows). Small-group instruction does not need to be doled out in a way that is mathematically even for each student. Rather, use the time to provide extra support for those who need more instructional time.

## First Grade Tasks

Suggested focus points for tasks for this time of year include:

- Practice tasks and activities based on phonics skill(s)
- Practice tasks and activities reviewing high-frequency words taught as wholes
- Re-reading/retelling previously taught decodables (independent or buddy reading)
- Retelling read-aloud texts based on pictures
- If available, phonics games on tablets/computers
- Decodable games from decodable readers
- Writing center connected to current read aloud/writing instruction
- Sentence-making tasks with high-frequency words and phonics patterns

Late First Grade:

- Fluency work (buddy reading, reader's theater with a para/aide/volunteer) for those students decoding with accuracy and automaticity

## Recommended Writing Tasks for First Grade

Below are several options for writing tasks that can provide support while still allowing students to work independently. Choosing writing tasks that are repeated and familiar will allow them to become a friendly routine, ideal for tasks that happen during small-group instruction and are largely completed independently.

- Generic text-dependent responses, such as (but not limited to):  
Narrative:
  - What was your favorite part of this story?
  - Who was your favorite character and why?
  - What was the problem and how was it solved?
  - Where did this story take place?Informational Texts:
  - What is something new you learned in this text?
  - What was this text mostly about?
  - What did you find most interesting and why?
- Text-specific tasks (these will vary based on the anchor text)
  - Writing a letter to the main character about an event from a narrative
  - Providing a photocopy of a picture from the text and asking students to write the caption
  - Writing a letter to a friend explaining what was learned from an informational text

## Grade-Level-Specific Guidance for Second Grade

Guidance for Instructional Time – Second Grade	
Foundational Skills Instruction	
Phonics (and related Phonological Awareness Tasks)*	20–30 minutes
Working with Decodable Readers**	20–25 minutes
High-Frequency Words	5 minutes
Re-teaching (support based on weekly assessments)	As needed

*Note: \*Brief phonemic awareness tasks to support new sound and spelling patterns may be used during this time. No additional phonemic awareness activities should be needed in 2nd grade unless used as an intervention to support a below level reader.*

*\*\*Work with Decodable Readers will focus on accurate decoding as well as fluency.*

### Notes for Instruction: Flexibility Within Structure

- Direct Instruction in phonics, high-frequency words, and work with Decodable Readers can be: **Whole-Class** or **Small-Group**
- Student Practice can be: **Independent** or **Teacher Monitored** • Small Group Instruction can include: **Observing and Practicing a Current Skill** or **Reteaching and Remediating a Past Skill**

## Phonemic Awareness Activities

In second grade, phonemic awareness is taught only as it connects to the sound and spelling patterns of your phonics curriculum. It is imperative that you remediate immediately if students are showing deficits in this area. See the first grade guidance for a diagnostic assessment and supporting materials as needed.

## Phonics (and Related Phonological Awareness) in Second Grade

### **What?**

Second-grade phonics moves past sound by sound decoding into word recognition and word parts, setting students up to decode multisyllabic words. Additionally, in the second grade, students will be able to read words with common suffixes and prefixes, as well as irregular sound and spelling patterns. Students should begin to read words with far greater automaticity, as if they were reading the words by sight (though, in actuality, they are decoding the word with such ease and automaticity that it seems to be by sight). This is how proficient readers recognize words. You will spend most of your time focusing on word recognition in order to build towards fluency.

### **Why and How?**

Follow your core curriculum's scope and sequence. Follow the three suggestions below to enhance your core curriculum.

1. Use the [effective enhancements](#) to bring more joy and energy to tasks in your core program. This time should feel engaging and fun for students, offering them the chance to learn crucial skills through movement, songs, chants and high-energy activities.
2. For every taught phonics skill, provide students **at least five practice opportunities**. These practice opportunities can consist of worksheets, workbooks, word and picture sorts that isolate related sound and spelling patterns, work with magnetic letters or word cards, etc. Practice should be an opportunity for *students to work independently as well as with support so that all students master phonics patterns and high-frequency words that have been taught*. This attention to student practice allows time for students to independently rehearse what they have learned.
3. Attend to the out-of-context skill through in-context practice with **decodable readers** ([see protocol](#)). Wherever possible, emphasize aspects of **fluency**, as this is critical for grade 2.

## Other Components for Second Grade

### High-Frequency Words

High-frequency words should be a feature of all second-grade core curricula. High-frequency (sight) words are those that are used frequently in grade-level texts, and they may or may not have irregular spelling patterns. High-frequency words are read by sight once they are securely part of a student's long-term memory. If not explicitly specified in your program, do the following with each high frequency word:

- In second grade, students should already have a large bank of high-frequency words that they have memorized such that they recognize them on sight and read them with automaticity. If new high-frequency words are spelled with taught sound and spelling patterns *or* are connected to previously learned words, teach students to decode the word based on the sound and spelling patterns they know, or connect to known words (Example: What word do you see in the word call if you take off the /k/ sound?)
- As students are building to this bank of words, they are likely to encounter high frequency words that do not sound the way they are spelled. Teach the word by *first* identifying the regular sounds (Example: What sounds in this word do we know?) before attending to the new or irregular part of the word (In this word, the \_\_ sounds like \_\_). (Example: In the word *watch*, it starts with the /w/ sound. Say it: "w". But in this word, the "atch" doesn't sound like *catch* or *hatch*; this word is pronounced *watch*.)

### Fluency

Fluency is perhaps the most critical element of second grade. You can address this in many ways, including the modeling of fluent reading with prosody (expression that includes timing, phrasing, emphasis, and intonation), as well as attending to building fluency in your readers. Second graders should be able to decode most words with accuracy and automaticity. You can now turn greater attention to addressing rate (speed) and prosody. Please note that these two go hand-in-hand: speed should not be prioritized over accuracy or expression. Fluent reading contributes a great deal to comprehension. In this way, oral reading can serve as an assessment (you can hear whether a student understands the text based on how he or she is reading it) and a student support (reading expressively can help students make meaning). Students' oral reading is predictive of their silent reading abilities.

The [decodable protocol](#) offers several opportunities to reinforce important aspects of fluency. Additionally, buddy and choral reading provide opportunities to reinforce prosody, especially

when hand-in-hand with a strong teacher model of fluent reading. Accuracy should be a key focus only when students are reading words with new sound and spelling patterns in context. If students are not reading with accuracy and automaticity in second grade when reading texts with familiar sound and spelling patterns, more support or intervention is critical.

### **Handwriting**

If students were taught proper letter formation in kindergarten and first grade, this expectation should be reinforced in second grade instruction and should not take significant instructional time. It is recommended that students be provided with clear direct instruction around proper letter formation if they are not forming letters properly.

### **Differentiation**

In second grade, a gap may begin to emerge between students who are still decoding and those who can read with fluency. Now is the time to fill this gap! This is a critical year for students, as they are still mastering many foundational skills, but also expected to read texts within the second-third grade complexity band. Small-group instruction does not need to be doled out in a way that is mathematically even for each student. Rather, use the time to provide extra support for those who need more instructional time.

### **Second Grade Tasks**

Suggested focus points for tasks for this time of year include:

- Practice tasks and activities based on phonics skill(s)
- Practice tasks and activities reviewing high-frequency words taught as wholes
- Re-reading previously taught decodables (independent or buddy reading)
- Listening to/following along with anchor texts from read-aloud lessons at a listening center
- If available, phonics games on tablets/computers
- Decodable games from decodable readers
- Writing center connected to current read-aloud/writing instruction
- Fluency work (buddy reading, reader's theater with a para/aide/volunteer) for those students decoding with accuracy and automaticity

### **Recommended Writing Tasks for Second Grade**

Below are several options for writing tasks that can provide support while still allowing students to work independently. Choosing writing tasks that are repeated and familiar will allow them to become a friendly routine, ideal for tasks that happen during small-group instruction and are largely completed independently. Reinforce the expectation that students should be providing text evidence whenever they are writing about what they have read.

- Generic text-dependent responses, such as (but not limited to):

Narrative:

- What was your favorite part of this story?
- Who was your favorite character and why?
- What was the problem and how was it solved?
- Where did this story take place?

Informational Texts:

- What is something new you learned in this text?
- What was this text mostly about?

- o What did you find most interesting and why?
- Text-specific tasks (these will vary based on the anchor text)
  - o Writing a letter to the main character about an event from a narrative
  - o Providing a photocopy of a picture from the text and asking students to write the caption
  - o Writing a letter to a friend explaining what was learned from an informational text



## Effective Enhancements for Foundational Skills Instruction: Make Foundational Skills Instruction More Fun!

By enhancing your foundational skills instruction with engaging activities, you'll make important learning opportunities feel like fun and games to learners! For each of the suggestions below, consider how you will adapt the content of the activity to match your scope and sequence of skills and students' needs.

Want a quick refresher on the difference between print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency? See this handy [one-pager](#).

*Italic = Suited for remote learning*

### Print Concepts

- **"Be the Sentence":** Write each word of a sentence on a piece of paper and ask students to arrange themselves in order. Then discuss features of the sentence such as spacing, capitalization, number of words, and punctuation.
- **Lights Out Letters:** Use a flashlight and a large alphabet wall. Chant "Magic light, magic light, where will you go? Children tell me the letters that you know." Point the flashlight to a letter, asking students to identify the letter and discuss its features. See a video of this activity [here](#).

### Phonological Awareness

- **Hungry Monster:** Use a puppet or picture of a "hungry monster." Speak one sound, syllable, or word part (in compound words) at a time and ask students to "feed" the monster the correct word by blending the parts together. You may even use printed or projected pictures of the foods for this activity. To see this effective enhancement in action, check out this video.
- September

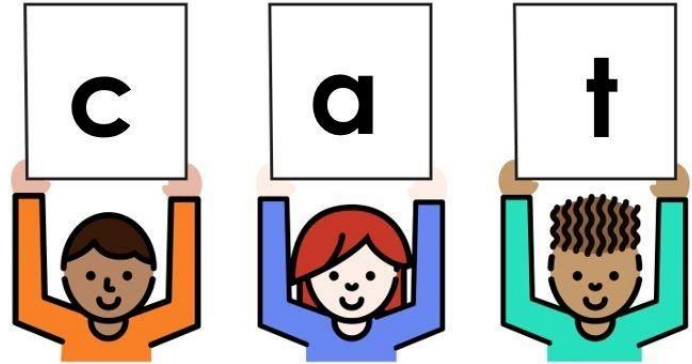
June
- **If You're Happy and You Know It:** Turn a task into a song by setting it to the lyrics of kid-friendly tunes, e.g., "If you hear /s/ and you know it, clap your hands." "If you think you know the word, yell it out!"
  - **Stand Up/ Sit Down:** Turn word sorts into an opportunity for movement. "Stand up if you hear a word with ----" or "sit down if you see the sound ----" can add movement to a basic task.
  - **Sound Riddles:** Provide students with riddles with the target sound (e.g., for /k/ I'm thinking of something that you wear when it's cold.). Give students a few seconds to think before answering chorally. To see a video of sound riddles in action, check out [this video](#).
  - **Do You Speak Robot?** Turn your blending oral routine into a game by teaching students that you (or a puppet!) speak robot- one sound at a time. Students must listen to the segmented sounds

and blend them together to understand the words. To see a variation of this activity using onset and rime blending, check out [this video](#).

- **Snap/Clap/Stomp When You Hear:** Give students a physical activity to do when they hear a sound and spelling pattern, rhyming word, or other stated task.
- **Freeze Dance:** Play music and let students dance. Have them freeze when they hear a given sound and spelling pattern, rhyming word, or other stated task.

## Phonics & Word Recognition

**Team Chaining:** Give each student a card with a taught sound and spelling pattern. Call out a word and invite students up to the front to spell the word with their individual sound and spelling cards. Ask other students to provide feedback to the spelling team. See this [video example](#).



**Head, Shoulders, Toes:** Blend written words with a physical activity like touching parts of your body for each sound in a word. For example, with “cat,” students read “c” (touch head), “a” (touch shoulders), “t” (touch toes), and then “cat” again. Note: this activity could also be adapted to incorporate other movements like dribbling for each sound and spelling pattern and then shooting a basket to blend the written word together.

**Hi-Five Your Neighbor:** Hi-Five a neighbor ( or use a silent hand signal) to note when you see a target sound and spelling pattern throughout the day.

- **Let’s Hear It For:** Teach students to spell high-frequency words, or to learn word parts, by cheering for each letter. “Give me an A” “I’ve got your A, I’ve got your A!”
- **Whisper It, Shout It:** Vary any activity by simply varying the volume level for students when they are responding. Alternating between whispering and shouting or adding other silly additions (say it like you’re underwater, say it in slow motion, mouth it with no sound) can bring the fun to a simple task.

## Fluency

- **Choice of Voice:** Practice rereading a decodable text in a silly voice, e.g. “Read the text in a robot voice.” “Read the text in a mouse voice.”
- **Read to Me:** Ask students to read decodable texts out loud to a stuffed animal or celebrity of their choice (celebrity photo).

## Stop to Reflect

How can you use effective enhancements to support practice with skills from your scope and sequence?  
How could you modify these activities (or substitute them) to better engage or reflect your students?

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**Appendix B: Foundational Skills Template**

Grades K-2	DAYS				
Components*	M	T	W	Th	F
Whole Class – PA and/or Phonological Awareness <i>[insert skill for week]</i>					
Whole Class Phonics <i>[insert skill for week]</i>					
Decodable Readers <i>Text, types of read, notes as needed</i>					
Small Group Instruction and Practice					
Centers					
Independent or Group Practice/Tasks					
Group A					
Group B					
Group C					
Group D					

\*Note: Component names may vary based on core program.