

Teaching Beginning Reading Skills, Grade K

Introducing Sounds and Letters

About the Routine

In *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!*, kindergarten students learn to connect sounds to letters by using the **Alphabet Sound Cards**. Each card contains the letter as well as a picture that begins with the target sound. Except for the long-vowel cards, the pictures also represent actions that serve as reminders of the sounds. For instance, the Monkey card introduces the sound /m/ and connects it to the letter *Mm*. It shows a monkey which has the target sound at the beginning of the word. In addition, students learn a story about the monkey who makes the sound /m/ when it eats a banana. Each card (excluding the long-vowel cards) depicts both an object whose name includes the sound and an action association. The sound and the picture are linked through a story that accompanies the introduction of each card.

Posting the Cards

Initially, post the cards in alphabetical order with the picture side to the wall so that only the alphabet letters show. As you introduce the *Alphabet Sound Wall Cards*, turn the card to show the picture and the letter on the other side. Once the cards are posted, keep them in the same position so that students can locate the cards quickly when using them during reading and writing.

Introducing the *Alphabet Sound Cards*

Each sound and letter is introduced by using a see/hear/say/write routine.

1. **See:** The students see the letter on the **Alphabet Sound Card** and the board or on a transparency.
2. **Hear:** They hear the sound used in words and in isolation in the story or poem. The sound is, of course, related to the picture (and the action) shown on the **Alphabet Sound Card**.
3. **Say:** The students say the sound, both during the story and in isolation.
4. **Write:** The students write the letter for the sound.

There are a number of important points to remember about this technique.

- The letter of the sound being introduced is the first thing written on the board. This gives the letter a special emphasis in the mind of the students. It is the "see" part of the sequence.
- One of the causes of blending failure is the failure to teach the sound thoroughly during introduction of the **Alphabet Sound Card**.
- To help ensure success for all students, make certain that every student is able to see the **Alphabet Sound Wall Cards** and the board or writing area.
- After the initial presentation of a sound and letter, have students go to the board, a few at a time, to write the letter. They sound the letter as they write. After they have written the letter of the sound, give them a chance to proofread their own work. Then give the other students the opportunity to help with proofreading by noting what is good about the letter and by suggesting how to make it better.

Routine for Introducing the *Alphabet Sound Wall Cards*

- Before turning a card, point to the letter. Ask students to tell what they know about the card. They are likely to know the name of the letter, that there is an upper- and lowercase form, if it is a vowel or a consonant, and possibly its sound if it's one they have already worked with.

- Turn the card and show the picture. Tell students the name of the card, and explain that it will help them to remember the sound the letter makes.
- Tell students the name of the card, the letter, and the sound.
- Read the poem or alliterative story that goes with the card. Read it expressively, emphasizing the words with the target sound and the isolated sound when it occurs. Have students join in to produce the sound.
- Repeat this a few times, having students make the sound along with you.
- Repeat the name of the card, the letter, and the sound.
- Name the picture and have students listen for the target sound at the beginning of words. Have students give a thumbs-up if they hear the sound in the specified position.
- For every sound-letter introduction, a listening activity follows the introduction of the cards. Engage the students in the "Listening for the Sound" activity to reinforce the letter sound.
- Demonstrate how to form the capital and small letter by writing on the board or on an overhead transparency. Students practice forming the letter, saying the sound as they write it. (Information on how to form letters is found in the Level Appendix of the ***Open Court Reading*** and ***SRA Imagine It!*** Level K ***Teacher's Editions.***)
- Review the name of the card, the letter, and the sound.