

Phonics and Fluency, Grades 2-3

Classroom Management

Open Court Reading and *SRA Imagine It!* recommend a whole-class approach for most instruction. Therefore, it is particularly important for teachers to employ management techniques that maximize student attention. Establishing a set of predictable routines for instruction is the primary way to engage students effectively. For example, the predictable routines used in *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!* for introducing the **Sound/Spelling Cards** and for blending words allow students to focus their attention on what is most important—learning sound/spelling correspondences and a strategy for sounding out words in preparation for reading—rather than on figuring out new instructional activities each lesson.

Review the **Sound/Spelling Cards**

The **Sound/Spelling Cards** are an important resource to students, who can use them to help remember sound/spelling correspondences as they read and write. The cards are a major feature of Mrs. Coronado's classroom, and they play a key role in instruction. Note that Mrs. Coronado:

- Has posted the cards on the wall. The first twenty-six cards are posted in alphabetical order. The rest are posted in the order in which they are introduced and reviewed. Keep the cards in the same location throughout the year, so students can comfortably use them as a reference tool.
- Has made sure that the cards are positioned so all students can see them and so she can touch them easily as she refers to them.
- Moves around the room. This helps her keep students' attention as she reviews the cards.
- Points to each card as she refers to it to make sure students know exactly which card she is referring to.

Sound-by-sound blending

Mrs. Coronado uses a routine in the teaching of blending. By doing so, the students are free to focus all of their attention and energy on the content of the lesson. It is clear in the video that the students are attentive. None of them seem confused or uncertain of what they should do next. Mrs. Coronado consistently:

- Uses the words provided in the *Teacher's Edition*. These words have been carefully chosen to ensure a systematic review of the sound/spellings.
- Builds the word sound-by-sound on the board, asking students to say the sound each letter represents as it is written.
- After the whole word has been written, moves a hand slowly beneath the spellings, having students say the sound each represents.
- Blends the sounds through the vowel before sounding and blending the complete word: for example, /s/, /a/, /sa/; /t/; /s/, /a/, /t/; /sat/, sat!
- Rapidly sweeps a hand from left to right beneath the word, leading students to fluently blend the sounds and naturally pronounce the word.
- Immediately clarifies the meaning of a possibly unfamiliar word and uses it in one or more sentences. If the word is familiar, she asks a volunteer to say the word and use it in a sentence.
- Directs her students' attention to any useful spelling patterns or noteworthy features in the word.

The following additional management tips can be gleaned from the blending lessons in this course:

- Once students are familiar with the blending routine, the teacher can maximize involvement by having students take the lead whenever possible in the blending exercises. For example, students can refer to appropriate **Sound/Spelling Cards** and help each other with difficult words.
- Teachers should vary the response mode for the activities. They should sometimes call on individual students and sometimes on the whole group or a small group. This helps keep all students attentive and interested.
- Have all activities proceed at a brisk pace. Blend words quickly so the students readily learn the routine and see the spelling pattern. Don't waste time by discussing each word once it is blended or waiting until you are sure every student can blend the word. Overdependence on drilling in an endeavor to achieve mastery will most certainly cause students' attention to wander. Frequent repetition and practice over time is far more beneficial. Teachers should take note of students who may benefit from extra help during Workshop.
- When writing at the chalkboard or overhead projector, teachers should be sure that all students can see what they are writing. This is especially important when the students are blending words and sentences.
- Have students *do* something—give a thumbs-up/thumbs-down response or hold up the appropriate individual letter card. This tends to focus attention.

Dictation and spelling

Preparation of the room and the students is essential for the dictation and spelling lessons to flow smoothly with the students' attention consistently on the purpose of the activity—to learn strategies for mapping spellings onto sounds.

- Make sure the **Sound/Spelling Cards** are visible to the students and that you can touch them. Continual reference to the cards is an important element of the dictation lessons. The students need to be able to see them clearly so that they can use them to help in their spelling throughout the day.
- Make sure all of the students have the materials they will need in order to complete the required tasks. For dictation activities, the students need paper, a pencil or pen to print the words, and a proofreading pencil or pen to correct their work. Notice how Ms. Hunter always asks the students to hold up the appropriate pen/pencil for the task at hand. In addition, Ms. Hunter has taken the time to put a small piece of Velcro™ on each pencil and pen and a small piece on each desk. Proofreading pencils are always available to the students throughout the day, but using the Velcro helps keep the pencils from rolling off the desk or getting lost.

Developing routines for basic activities has many benefits. In this course, the Dictation and Spelling routines:

- Give the students the comfort of knowing what to expect—how to respond, what is expected of them, what comes next.
- Free the students to concentrate on spelling rather than on learning new presentations or response modes.
- Learning activities should start quickly and move smoothly. You will know that any problems or confusions are based on what is being learned—the sounds and spellings—rather than confusion over how to respond.
- Reduce the amount of time spent on giving directions and allow more time for the instruction and learning.

Review the videos, watching specifically to see how Mrs. Coronado and Ms. Hunter help eliminate distractions and use the materials they and the students need for the activity.