

The Alphabetic Principle, Grade K

EL

EL considerations for teaching how the alphabet works

It is important to validate and reinforce English learners' existing knowledge of letters and sounds. Encourage these students to tell the class how they say the names of the alphabet letters in their primary languages. Students who have learned a different alphabet should be encouraged to show the class what that alphabet looks like. As they begin to learn the sounds of English letters, allow English learners to demonstrate the sounds of any letters that are common to both English and their native language.

English learners will probably encounter some problems as the class begins to learn sound/letter correspondences. This is not surprising; some sounds associated with English letters do not exist in other languages, and some sounds used in other languages do not exist in English. These children will be reassured to discover that even students who are native speakers of English have difficulty with some letter/sound correspondences. See the chart below for more information on sounds that may be difficult for English learners.

[Click here to view the chart.](#)

EL considerations for using the *Alphabet Sound Cards*

The procedure for using the *Alphabet Sound Cards* can be beneficial to English learners, even with sounds that are not used in their primary languages. The see/hear/say sequence, followed immediately by writing activities, provides ample reinforcement of the letter-sound correspondences by engaging students in recognizing and producing each sound and its letter. In addition, students do not have to know the English name of the picture on the card to be able to recognize the action-sound association.

During Workshop, you might want to review the *Alphabet Sound Cards* with English learners until they are thoroughly familiar with English sound-letter correspondences. Knowing the English sounds and letters will give English learners the confidence they need to begin blending and to develop their reading skills.

EL considerations for phoneme discrimination

English learners may have some difficulty with phoneme discrimination activities. Because some of the words used may not be in their oral vocabularies, they might be distracted by trying to figure out the word's meaning. In Workshop, provide visuals or actions to clarify the meaning of any word that might distract students. During Workshop, you might also provide a context for the words, and allow English learners to use them in sentences. This will have the added benefit of promoting vocabulary growth.

Additional resources

August, D., and K. Hakuta, eds. *Educating language-minority children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1998.

Brown, H. D. *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New York: Longman, 2000.

Delpit, L. D. *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: New Press, 1996.

Web pages

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL)
<http://www.tesol.org>

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)
<http://www.nbpts.org>