

## The Alphabetic Principle, Grade K

### Classroom Management

*Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!* recommend a whole-class approach for most instruction. With this approach, it is particularly important for the teacher to employ management strategies that focus students' attention.

Students thrive on routine. The primary way to engage them, then, is by establishing a set of predictable procedures for instruction. The routines for introducing sound/letter correspondences, blending, and reading a decodable allow students to focus their attention on what is most important—learning sound/letter correspondences and using that knowledge to recognize words.

Wendy Martinez employs several different methods to ensure that all of her students are engaged and learning. When working with the group, she:

- Makes the instruction personal as often as possible by using the students' personal information—their names, the names of brothers and sisters, the names of pets, and so on.
- Makes sure her students know what behavior she expects from them. For example, before starting to use the **Letter Cards**, she reviews with them the way in which she expects them to hold the cards and how they should respond with the cards.
- Explains why she or the other students are doing what they are doing. In this way, she makes sure that everyone understands. For example, when she changes a letter during the "I'm a Letter Expert" activity, one of the students automatically returns to her place and sits down. Mrs. Martinez does not assume that everyone understood why she did this—she explains it to the class.
- Has the students on their feet and/or responding physically whenever possible.
- Turns the responsibility for learning over to the students by helping them self-correct instead of jumping in with the correct answer herself. Although this takes them a bit more time, the students stay engaged because they all understand that getting to the answer is up to them and that they will be given the same opportunity when it is their turn.
- Takes every opportunity to reinforce learning. In this course, what might have been wasted time—the handing out of the **Letter Cards**—became an opportunity for Mrs. Martinez to listen to each student say the target sound.
- Has the students explain their responses. This helps those who may be unsure or unclear in their understanding.
- Emphasizes the target element—in this case the /s/ sound—in everything she does. Throughout the lesson, the students are given hundreds of opportunities to hear what they need to hear.
- Moves around the room giving help and encouragement, and monitoring and assessing each student's grasp of the subject.
- Concludes each activity by having the students tell what they did and why they did it. In this way, she can be sure the students understood not only the activity but also the reason for the activity.

In addition to the techniques Mrs. Martinez uses when working with whole-group instruction, she has arranged her room to facilitate this approach and uses the tools available with the *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!* programs.

- She has provided ample open space in the front of the room for students to gather around her for instruction. This setup assures that all students can clearly see what she is doing and allows her to position herself in such a way that she can see each student and monitor everyone's responses. Because the arrangement is informal and relaxed, it reduces students' anxiety about their responses. It also makes it possible for students to help each other without causing disruptions.
- She has posted the **Alphabet Sound Cards** in such a way that all students can see them clearly. She will not change the position of the cards throughout the year. It is essential that the students have easy and fast access to the cards as they read and write throughout the day. The **Alphabet Sound Cards** become a major source of support to the students as they progress in their reading and writing.