

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics, Grade 1

Classroom Management

Open Court Reading and *SRA Imagine It!* recommend a whole-class approach for most instruction because whole-group instruction that is focused, engaging, and comprehensive ensures that all children have access to the same curriculum. Therefore, it is particularly important for teachers to employ management techniques that sustain children's attention. Establishing a set of predictable routines for instruction is the primary way to engage children effectively. For example, the predictable routines for introducing the *Sound/Spelling Cards* and for blending words allow children 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 techniques. In addition, pacing and high expectations for everyone in the class contribute to successful whole-group instruction.

Introducing the *Sound/Spelling Cards*

The *Sound/Spelling Cards* are an important resource for children, who can use them to help remember sound/spelling correspondences as they read and write. The cards are a major feature of Ms. Canzone's classroom, and they play a key role in her instruction. To display and introduce the cards, she has followed this *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!* procedure:

- She has posted the cards with their pictures to the wall so that only the alphabet letters show. The first twenty-six cards are posted in alphabetical order. The rest are posted in the order in which they are introduced. (Please note: Once the cards are posted, they should not be rearranged—this might confuse children and prevent them from locating a card quickly.)
- She has made sure that the cards are positioned so all children can see them and so she can touch them easily as she refers to them.
- As she introduces each card, she turns it to show the picture and spelling(s) to her children.
- She uses a "see/hear/say/write sequence" to introduce the sound/spelling.
 1. **See:** Children see the spelling(s) on the *Sound/Spelling Card* and on the board or overhead.
 2. **Hear:** Children hear the target sound used in words, in isolation, and in the story about the picture on the card.
 3. **Say:** Children say the sound.
 4. **Write:** Children write the spelling(s) for the sound.

Note how this process engages the children and how Ms. Canzone moves quickly and comfortably through the routine.

Sound-by-sound blending

The steps of the sound-by-sound blending routine used by Ms. Canzone are as follows:

1. The teacher starts with the first word on the blending line, for example *sat*.
2. On the board, the teacher builds the word sound by sound, asking children to say the sound each spelling represents as it is written.
3. After she writes the vowel spelling, she makes the blending motion and has the children blend through the vowel sound.
4. The teacher writes the final spelling, having the children give the sound, and then has them blend to the end of the word.

5. After the whole word has been written, the teacher moves a hand slowly beneath the letters, having children blend the sounds and spellings to say the word.
6. The teacher has the children reread the word naturally as they would say it.
7. If the word is new or less familiar, the teacher immediately clarifies its meaning and uses it in one or more sentences. If the word is familiar, the teacher asks a volunteer to use it in a sentence and then extend the sentence.
8. The teacher directs children's attention to any useful spelling patterns or noteworthy features in the word or line of words.

Early blending can be a challenge for some children. One of the advantages of routines is that children will have many opportunities to practice blending. Blending may initially be frustrating for the teacher. Within a short period of time, blending will become comfortable and automatic.

For those children who continue to have problems with blending, the following suggestions may help focus attention on the most important aspect of the routine. The suggestions that follow should be used during Workshop with individuals and/or small groups, rather than with the whole class:

- Use two colors of chalk—one color for vowels and one for consonants. This might help children to grasp the connections between the sounds and the spellings. If you use this technique, however, be consistent in the use of colors. Red is a good choice for vowels because it matches the colors on the *Sound/Spelling Cards*. White or another pale color might work best with consonants, because it will contrast well with the red vowels. (If you use an overhead projector for blending lines, use red and black ink.)
- If a line of words is used to introduce or reinforce a particular spelling pattern, do not have children use the words in sentences until all the words in the line have been blended. This encourages children to focus attention on the spelling pattern.

Vowels are problematic for some children. Another way to give children a "jump start" for blending in Workshop is to use the vowel-first blending routine. This routine is a good alternative because it focuses on the most difficult part of each word: the vowels. You can use this routine to preteach, reteach, or review blending lessons. The steps for vowel-first blending are as follows:

1. Write the vowel spelling in each of the words to be blended. (Use only one vowel at a time.) For example, *a a a*.
2. Point to each vowel and have children say the sound.
3. Begin blending around the vowels. Add the spelling for the beginning sound of the first word, make the blending motion, and blend through the vowel. Add a blank to indicate that the word is not complete. Repeat for each partial word. (*ma__ sa__ pa__*)
4. Have children blend the partial word as you make the blending motion, and add the spelling for the final sound or sounds. Have the children give the final sound(s). Then make the blending motion and have children read the completed word. For example, *mat*. Encourage children to reread the words naturally as they would say them. Have children use the word in a sentence and extend the sentence.

Preteaching is a powerful instructional option. You can preteach the sound/spellings and blending for the next lesson. Preteaching is an excellent way to "jump start" children, particularly English Learners and other children with special needs. Preteaching the meaning of words gives children a confirming strategy. They blend the spellings and sounds to read a word. Once they say the word, they can then say to themselves, "I know what that word means. It makes sense."

Preteaching using two colors of chalk and/or vowel-first blending provides an instructional scaffold for those children who need it.

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

- Once children are familiar with the blending routine, the teacher can maximize involvement by having them take the lead whenever possible in the blending exercises. For example, children can refer to

appropriate *Sound/Spelling Cards* and help each other with difficult words. The *Sound/Spelling Cards* are reference tools for thinking about the English language and for solving problems as the children are reading and writing.

- Once children understand the routine, the teacher can drop the oral directions, such as "sound, sound, blend," and just point to the spellings and use the blending motion as appropriate. This helps build independence and moves the lesson along more rapidly.
- Teachers should vary the response mode for the activities. They should sometimes call on individuals and sometimes on the whole group or a small group. This helps keep all children attentive and interested.
- Have all activities proceed at a brisk pace. Over-dependence on drilling in an endeavor to achieve mastery will most certainly cause children's attention to wander. Frequent repetition and practice over time is far more beneficial. Teachers should take note of children who may benefit from extra help during Workshop.
- When writing at the board or overhead projector, teachers should be sure that all children can see what they are writing. This is especially important when children are blending words and sentences. Note how Ms. Canzone shifts her position when writing words to be blended to ensure that all children can see each spelling she writes.
- Engage the children. Have them do something—give a thumbs-up/thumbs-down response or hold up the appropriate individual letter card. This tends to focus attention.