

## Phonics and Fluency, Grade 1

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Reading and writing work hand in hand. By learning to recognize the spellings of the different speech sounds of the language, children learn to read. By learning to listen to the sounds of the language in words and assign the appropriate spellings to those sounds, children learn to spell.

This course, a continuation of the instructional techniques found in the Grade 1 Phonemic Awareness and Phonics course, focuses on the introduction and practice of the long-vowel spellings—specifically, the long *a* spellings: *a* and *a\_e*.

In this course, Julie Canzone demonstrates how phonics instruction works using *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!* resources and teaching strategies. *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!* is designed to provide teachers with all the tools they need to implement effective phonics instruction as part of the comprehensive reading program.

A reader's ability to easily and accurately decode words based on sound/spelling correspondences is crucial to developing fluency. If children are to become fluent, confident, and enthusiastic readers, they need extensive experience with language and literature plus instruction in phonics and in developing the skills necessary for accessing meaning in print. In fact, as automaticity increases, so does comprehension. A good phonics program in first grade should include:

- Specific and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness.
- Sequenced and explicit instruction in sound/spelling correspondences.
- Instruction in how spellings are blended into words.
- Productive strategies for figuring out unfamiliar words.
- Opportunities to practice sound/spelling correspondences by reading decodable text.
- Instruction in recognizing high-frequency sight words.

### Teaching Example 1

In Teaching Example 1, Ms. Canzone prepares the children to decode words containing long-vowel spellings—long *a* spelled *a* and *a\_e*. This task is more difficult than previous decoding and blending lessons because long-vowel sounds can be represented in many different ways. Long *a* has four common spellings, all of which the children will eventually learn (*a*, *a\_e*, *ai\_*, and *\_ay*). In order to avoid confusion and minimize the time it takes to explain the activities to the children, Ms. Canzone follows the *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!* instructional routine she has been using throughout the year to introduce these new spellings.

### Introducing Long *a*

By this time in the year, the children have had a great deal of practice with new sound/spellings. They have been introduced to all of the short-vowel sounds and spellings and many of the consonant sounds and spellings. Ms. Canzone uses that experience and knowledge to help the children understand that although the long-vowel spellings may be a bit more difficult, they know what they are doing and what is expected of them. Ms. Canzone is explicit in her introduction of the new sound/spellings. She:

- Introduces the long *a* **Sound/Spelling Card**.
- Reads the short poem about long and short *a*.
- Points out and discusses the two spellings the children will be learning.

- Discusses other spellings the children have learned.
- Has the children listen for the long *a* sound in different positions in words.

### Teaching Example 2

In Teaching Example 2, Ms. Canzone continues the introduction of long *a* spelled *a* and *a\_e*. The children are presented with words containing this target sound and spellings. Blending practice gives the children the tools they need to decode unfamiliar words. Reading words in isolation is the first step in becoming completely familiar with a spelling.

#### Blending Long *a*

Ms. Canzone presents the children with various words containing the two target spellings. Each word is presented spelling by spelling. Although the children have progressed at this point to whole-word blending, Ms. Canzone drops back to sound-by-sound blending for the introduction of the more difficult long-vowel spellings. Once she is sure the children understand the spellings, she returns to whole-word blending. In addition to blending each word, Ms. Canzone:

- Has the children make sentences containing the target words to make sure they know what the words mean.
- Stops to clarify certain words, such as homophones.
- Has the children reread each line of words as they would normally say them to help the children gain fluency.
- Completes the blending activity by having the children find the words that answer riddles or fit definitions she gives.

### Teaching Example 3

In Teaching Example 3, Ms. Canzone takes the children to the next level in reading words containing long *a* spelled *a* and *a\_e*. She does this by leading them in blending sentences that contain some words with the target spellings.

Although reading words in isolation is a good first step in working with new sound/spellings, eventually the children need to be able to recognize and read words containing these spellings in connected text. Blending words in sentences provides the children with practice in reading the target spellings in connected text as well as in reading sight words and words containing previously introduced sounds and spellings.

#### Blending Sentences

Watch as Ms. Canzone leads the children through the blending of three sentences. She:

- Introduces the sight words the children will encounter in the sentences.
- Uses whole-word blending, first writing a whole word and then pointing to the spellings in each word, having the children give the sounds, and then blending the sounds to read words.
- High-frequency sight words are written and underlined so children know to just read them and not blend them.
- Increases fluency by having the children reread the sentences naturally as they would say them.
- Uses the sentence blending activity to review features of a sentence, such as capitalization and end-punctuation.

### Teaching Example 4

Continuing the introduction of long *a* spelled *a* and *a\_e*, Ms. Canzone and the children now write the words using the **Phonics Skills** book.

In working with the **Phonics Skills** book (or the **Skills Practice** book with **SRA Imagine It!**), the children have another opportunity to practice their new knowledge of sounds and spellings in reading and writing words containing the target spellings, both in isolation and in the context of sentences. Notice how Ms. Canzone works with the children as they complete this page. Workbook activities are learning activities. This also gives Ms. Canzone an ideal opportunity to observe her children's understanding of the new sounds and spellings.

### **Working with Long a and its Spellings**

In working with the **Phonics Skills** book, the children continue the introduction routine by reading and spelling words containing the target sound and spellings. The activities in the **Phonics Skills** book are not designed for independent practice—they are teacher directed and designed for whole-class use. Ms. Canzone:

- First reviews the target sound/spelling, making sure the children know what they are to look for.
- Has each word pronounced by a student.
- Encourages the children to sound out each word as they spell it.
- Encourages the children to refer to the **Sound/Spelling Cards**.
- Gives the children all the help and support they need.
- Observes children so she can plan for Workshop.

### **Teaching Example 5**

The children have had many opportunities at this point to read words containing the target sound and spellings, both in isolated words and in sentences. The next step is to read words in connected text. In order to give the children ample practice, Ms. Canzone has them read a **Decodable Book**. **Decodable Books** are written specifically to give the children many opportunities to read words containing newly learned spellings. Each word in the book contains sounds and spellings the children have been introduced to and can, therefore, sound out, or is a previously introduced sight word.

### **Reading Decodable Books**

Ms. Canzone starts the reading of the **Decodable Book** with some simple book awareness activities—identifying the title, author, and illustrator. She then introduces or reviews the high-frequency sight words the children will encounter while reading the story. In the decodable, Ms. Canzone follows an instructional routine, which provides the children with the security of knowing what comes next and what they are expected to do. This allows them to concentrate all of their energy on reading the book. Ms. Canzone has the children:

- Browse through the book.
- Raise questions and discuss things they notice in their browsing.
- Read each page once silently and once out loud.
- Answer questions by pointing out the answers in the book.
- Reread the book with a partner for fluency.