

## Phonics and Fluency, Grade 1

### 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 and maintain children's attention.

Children thrive on routine. Therefore, the primary way to engage them is by establishing a set of predictable procedures for instruction. The routines for introducing sound/spelling correspondences, blending, and reading a *Decodable Book* help children focus their attention on what is most important—learning new sounds and spellings, using the new sounds and spellings to blend words, and reading words and text. Thus, it is important for the teacher to establish these routines.

### Sound-by-sound blending

The steps of the *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!* sound-by-sound blending routine used by Ms. Canzone are as follows:

- To begin, the teacher starts with the first word on the blending line, such as *assat*.
- On the board, the teacher builds the word spelling by spelling, sound by sound, asking children to say each sound as the spelling is written.
- After Ms. Canzone writes the vowel spelling and has the children give the sound, she has the class blend through the vowel.
- Then she writes the remaining consonant spellings, having the children give the sound for each as she writes it.
- After the remaining consonant spellings have been written, the teacher moves a hand slowly beneath the letters, having children say the sound each letter represents.
- The teacher rapidly sweeps a hand from left to right beneath the whole word, leading children to fluently blend the sounds and naturally pronounce the word.
- The children reread the word naturally.
- If the word is not a common one, 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 say the word, use it in a sentence, and then extend the sentence.
- The teacher directs children's attention to any useful spelling patterns or noteworthy features in the words once an entire line has been blended.

Vowels can be a problem for some children. If this is the case, during Workshop use the vowel-first blending routine to preteach, reteach, or review the blending lines. This routine focuses on the most difficult part of each word: the vowels. The steps for vowel-first blending are:

- Write the vowel spelling in each of the words to be blended. (Use only one vowel at a time.) For example, *a a*.
- Point to each vowel and have the children say the sound.
- 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\_\_*).

- Have children blend the partial word as you make the blending motion, and add the spelling for the final sound. Make the blending motion and have children read the completed word. For example, *mat*. Have them use the word in a sentence and extend the sentence.

As an alternative, you may want to use colored chalk—red or orange—to write the vowel spellings in sound-by-sound blending to highlight the vowel spellings. You may want to try both the vowel-first blending routine and writing the vowels in colored chalk to see which works best for your children who are having problems with blending.

During Workshop you may want to preteach the sound/spellings and blending for the next lesson. Preteaching is an excellent way to jump-start children. In the case of English-language learners, 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."

Think about the following management tips as you view 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.
- Once children are familiar with the routine, drop the verbal cues and just point to the spellings as you write them as a cue for children to give the sounds. This helps maintain a good pace and starts to turn the responsibility for blending over to the children.
- Teachers should vary the response mode for the activities. They should sometimes call on individual children 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 they are blending words and sentences.
- Have children *do* something—give a thumbs-up/thumbs-down response or hold up the appropriate individual *Letter Card*. This tends to focus attention.

### **Reading a Decodable Book**

Following an established routine keeps the lesson moving and the children engaged. It is especially important to give as many children as possible a chance to read and participate in the lesson. However, if you notice that some children cannot keep up with the others, plan to meet with them during Workshop rather than slowing down the rest of the class.

Many *Decodable Books* are featured in *Open Court Reading* ©2002 and *SRA Imagine It!*. It will be helpful to devise a system to keep track of the books the children read with a partner. One suggestion is to have the children keep track of their readings on a personal title sheet. The title sheet should be a chart with six columns. The heading of the first column should be *Decodable Book* and the remaining columns should be headed *Date/Partner*. The title of the *Decodable Book* goes in the first column and each time the child reads that book, he or she enters the date and/or the partner's name in a box in that row. You can either use this system or devise one that works for your classroom. What is important is to have a way for both you and the children to monitor the reading and rereading of these books.

As you work with your children, note those who need extra practice reading *Decodable Books*. You may want to work with these children during Workshop. Others can practice with a partner and you can check their progress simply by listening to these children read a page or two.