

Develop Awareness of the Segments of Sounds in Speech and How They Link to Letters

Purpose

This document provides educators with information about a high-leverage, evidence-based practice recommended in the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) practice guide, [Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade](#).¹

Introduction

Developing awareness of the segments of sounds in speech and how they link to letters is an evidence-based practice with a strong level of evidence for student achievement and a critical foundational skill for early readers. Page 14 of the practice guide states:

The National Reading Panel (NRP) report found that teaching students to recognize and manipulate the **segments of sound** in words (also referred to as **phonological awareness**) and to link those sounds to letters is necessary to prepare them to read words and comprehend text...To effectively decode (convert from print to speech) and encode (convert from speech to print) words, students must be able to identify the individual sounds, or phonemes, that make up the words they hear in speech; name the letters of the alphabet as they appear in print; [and] identify each letter's corresponding sound.

For more information about this practice guide, see the [AOE's Annotated Guide](#), as well as [Resources for Educators](#) on the WWC (including videos and instructional rubrics).

ESSA Level of Evidence

ESSA levels of evidence are the result of a synthesis of current evidence-based research. Below is the level of evidence for this recommendation:

- **Tier 1 – Strong Evidence**

See the [full practice guide](#) for more information about specific studies and the [summary guide](#) for a high-level overview of the evidence for this recommendation. For more information about levels of evidence, see the REL document [ESSA Tiers of Evidence: What You Need to Know](#).

¹ [What Works Clearinghouse/IES Practice Guides](#) provide recommendations for educators of evidence-based practices to improve student outcomes. WWC/IES Practice Guides were developed by a panel of literacy experts based on reviews of research, practitioner experiences, and expert opinions.

Contact Information:

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How to Carry Out the Recommendation

Listed below are ways to [develop awareness of the segments of sounds in speech and how they link to letters](#). See the pages of the guide referenced next to each instructional practice to find more specific implementation strategies.

- Teach students to recognize and manipulate segments of sound in speech (15-18).
- Teach students letter-sound relations (18-19).
- Use word-building and other activities to link students' knowledge of letter-sound relationships with phonemic awareness (19-20).

Connections to Literacy Essential Practices

[Literacy Essentials](#) provide evidence- and research-based approaches educators can use to support early literacy. This resource was introduced to Vermont through work done with [Dr. Nell Duke](#) and includes classroom practices teachers can use daily to implement the recommendations in the WWC practice guides. See the page number referenced next to each Essential Practice to find more specific implementation strategies.

[Literacy Essential Practices for Prekindergarten](#)

- **Essential Practice #4:** Play with sounds inside words (4)
- **Essential Practice #5:** Brief, clear, systematic, and explicit instruction in letter names, the sound(s) associated with the letters, and how letters are shaped and formed (5)
- **Essential Practice #9:** Ongoing observation and other forms of assessment of children's language and literacy development that informs their education (7)

[Literacy Essential Practices for Grades K-3](#)

- **Essential Practice #4:** Activities that build phonological awareness (grades K and 1) (4)
- **Essential Practice #5:** Explicit instruction in letter-sound and sound-letter relationships (5)
- **Essential Practice #9:** Ongoing observation and other forms of assessment of children's language and literacy development that informs their education (7)