

# Teach Students to Decode Words, Analyze Word Parts, and Write and Recognize Words

## 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](#).<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

**Teaching students to decode words, analyze word parts, and write and recognize words** is an evidence-based practice with a strong level of evidence for student achievement and a means to develop a critical foundational skill for early readers. Page 22 of the practice guide states:

Once students know a few consonants and vowels, they can begin to apply their letter-sound knowledge to decode and read words in isolation or in connected text. Students also need to learn how to break down and read complex words by segmenting the words into pronounceable word parts. To do this, students must understand **morphology**, or the knowledge of the meaningful word parts in the language. Learning to recognize letter patterns and word parts and understanding that sounds relate to letters in predictable and unpredictable ways, will help students decode and read increasingly complex words. It will also help them to read with greater fluency, accuracy, and comprehension...Increasing the ease of word recognition allows students to focus more on word meaning when they read, ultimately supporting reading comprehension.

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**

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<sup>1</sup> [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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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](#).

## How to Carry Out the Recommendation

Listed below are ways to [teach students to decode words, analyze word parts, and write and recognize words](#). See the pages of the guide referenced next to each instructional practice to find more specific implementation strategies.

- Teach students to blend letter sounds and sound–spelling patterns from left to right within a word to produce a recognizable pronunciation (23-25).
- Instruct students in common sound–spelling patterns (25-26).
- Teach students to recognize common word parts (26-27).
- Have students read decodable words in isolation and in text (28).
- Teach regular and irregular high-frequency words so that students can recognize them efficiently (28-30).
- Introduce non-decodable words that are essential to the meaning of the text as whole words (30).

## 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 the letters are shaped and formed (5)
- **Essential Practice #6:** Interactions around writing (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 #6:** Research- and standards-aligned writing instruction on a daily basis and across content areas in the school day (6)

- **Essential Practice #7:** Intentional and ambitious efforts to build vocabulary and knowledge, including content and other cultural knowledge, throughout the day (6)
- **Essential Practice #9:** Ongoing observation and other forms of assessment of children’s language and literacy development that informs their education (7)