

catching grade K
readers

DAY-BY-DAY SMALL-GROUP READING INTERVENTIONS

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Video 6 Learning Letter-Sound Correspondences

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Video 8 Tracking Print



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Teaching Resources on the DVD

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- Research
- ▶ The Early Intervention in Reading Program (EIR[®]): Research and Development Spanning Twelve Years (Barbara Taylor 2001)
 - ▶ A Brief Review of Research on the Learning-to-Read Process (Barbara Taylor 1998)

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The Weekly Lesson Routine

Now it's time to look at the daily EIR lessons, the rationale behind the various components, and some basic getting started information. The EIR kindergarten program, like the other EIR programs, is supplemental instruction designed to accelerate children's literacy learning. The goal of the program is to develop children's oral language, phonemic awareness, and emergent literacy abilities through literature-based activities and to have them leave kindergarten with the skills needed to learn to read in grade 1.

Ideally, the EIR kindergarten program is used with the entire class for between 10 and 15 minutes a day. If you do not finish an activity you start on one day, such as word work that involves children writing words or sentences, you can finish the next day when the whole group meets again. Through the program, all students develop their oral language and vocabulary abilities, phonemic awareness, phonics knowledge and decoding abilities, print concept awareness, and story comprehension. The more capable children become models for the children who are less skilled.





Many teachers of grade 1 English language learners (ELLs) use the kindergarten EIR program to help develop their students' oral language and phonemic awareness abilities. However, the kindergarten program should be used along with, not instead of, the grade 1 program (Taylor 2010a). If you don't help ELLs learn to read in grade 1, you aren't giving them the chance they deserve.

Additionally, an important component of the program involves providing supplemental help to the children who are having difficulty with literacy concepts and skills. Each day the goal is to spend between 5 and 10 minutes with these students going over, or perhaps completing, some of the activities that were covered with the entire class. Some of the same discussion questions are asked again, and the activities the children had the most difficulty with are repeated. Ideally, groups should be limited to four or five students so all group members get a chance to participate.

First, let's review a few foundational ideas:

- ▶ With EIR, students' emergent reading progress is accelerated because your instruction is based on the same effective reading instruction you use with *all* students—this is not remediation.
- ▶ Students who are struggling with emergent reading get an extra shot of quality, small-group reading instruction. These children are getting this support in addition to, not instead of, other whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one attention.
- ▶ The lessons feature engaging children's books. (See Table 3–1 here and on the DVD for a list of exemplar books for the kindergarten program.)

Children who struggle in kindergarten with letter names, letter sounds, phonemic awareness, and oral language development get the help they need and are likely to become independent readers in first grade.



These books are examples I provide to illustrate how to teach the emergent reading skills and strategies in the 27 lessons in Chapter 4. You can use your own books, however, that fit the objectives of each of these 27 lessons.

Table 3–1 Kindergarten Exemplar Book Titles

Book Title	Author
<i>The 20th Century Children's Poetry Treasury</i>	Jack Prelutsky
<i>Babar's ABC</i>	Laurent de Brunhoff
<i>Go, Dog. Go!</i>	P. D. Eastman
<i>Over in the Meadow</i>	Ezra Jack Keats
<i>The Little Panda</i>	Harley Chan
<i>What Game Shall We Play?</i>	Pat Hutchins
<i>Mr. Gumpy's Outing</i>	John Burningham
<i>Usborne Farmyard Tales Alphabet Book</i>	Heather Amery and Stephen Cartwright
<i>Good-Night, Owl!</i>	Pat Hutchins
<i>I Know an Old Lady</i>	Nadine Westcott
<i>Signs on the Way</i>	Marvin Buckley
<i>A, My Name Is Alice</i>	Jane Bayer
<i>The Three Billy Goats Gruff</i>	Paul Galdone
<i>Hattie and the Fox</i>	Mem Fox
<i>Are You My Mother?</i>	P. D. Eastman
<i>Peanut Butter and Jelly</i>	Nadine Westcott
<i>Do Like Kyla</i>	Angela Johnson
<i>The Mitten</i>	Alvin Tresselt

<i>Time to Sleep</i>	Denise Fleming
<i>Jump, Frog, Jump!</i>	Robert Kalan
<i>Whistle for Willie</i>	Ezra Jack Keats
<i>A Bird Flies By</i>	Marilyn Woolley
<i>Good Morning, Chick</i>	Mirra Ginsburg
<i>Jamaica Tag-Along</i>	Juanita Havill
<i>Just Grandpa and Me</i>	Mercer Mayer
<i>Jamaica and Briana</i>	Juanita Havill
<i>The Little Red Hen</i>	Paul Galdone
<i>Wild Bears</i>	Seymour Simon
<i>Ant</i>	Karen Hartley and Chris Macro
<i>What Animals Need</i>	James Nguyen
<i>Caterpillar</i>	Karen Hartley, Chris Macro, and Philip Taylor

Table 3–1 Kindergarten Exemplar Book Titles

Getting Started: FAQs

Chapter 5 provides more information on determining which children might benefit from the additional EIR small-group support. For now, here are some questions teachers commonly ask about setting up the groups.

How many students are in an EIR group targeted for extra support?

Each group should have four or five students (six at most). If there are more than six children in your room who need the additional EIR lessons, I would recommend finding a way to have two groups instead of just one. If you have Title 1 at your school, perhaps the Title 1 teacher can take one group and you can take the other. (Periodically switch groups so you have a sense of the strengths and weaknesses of all your readers who need additional support to become successful.)

How should I form the extra-support groups if I need to have two of them?

It's a good idea to put the faster-progressing students in one group and the slower-progressing students in the other, so all students will learn at about the same pace. The faster-moving students won't call out answers at the expense of the slower-moving students, and the slower-moving students won't be discouraged when the faster-moving students catch on more quickly. (Students in the faster-progressing group may be pulled from the group as soon as they catch up with the rest of the class. Guidelines to help you decide whether a child no longer needs small-group EIR lessons are provided in Chapter 5.)

Who should teach the EIR students targeted for extra support?

As hard as it is to teach two EIR groups, should you find you need to do this, I cannot recommend that an instructional aide teach one of the groups. Children at risk of reading failure desperately need quality, supplemental reading instruction, provided by certified teachers, in addition to the regular reading program. Also, the whole group EIR lessons should be taught by a certified teacher as well.

What advice do you have regarding English language learners and EIR?

Many ELLs, especially children such as Hmong students whose first language sounds are very different from English, will have more difficulty with the phonemic awareness activities than native English speakers. Nevertheless, put them in a small group to practice EIR activities in the fall unless they have the opportunity to learn to read in their first language. You do not want to take the chance of preventing any student from learning to read by postponing their participation in small-group practice sessions on EIR lessons to a later time, such as after the first of the year. Also, I have found that ELLs generally do well in EIR (Taylor 2001).

How do special education students fare with EIR?

I have also found that EIR works well with students who have learning disabilities. No modifications to the program are recommended. Students who are developmentally and cognitively delayed should participate in the whole-class EIR lessons, but they will need additional one-on-one attention to feel successful.

Do the children in EIR groups feel stigmatized?

Over the many years I've been researching and implementing EIR, teachers report that children do not feel stigmatized. In fact, children love the fast pace and interesting texts, and their feelings of success are enhanced when they have the opportunity to revisit activities from the whole-class EIR lessons in a small-group setting. All children are in small groups with their teacher, so no one seems to think much about who is with the teacher when. But the children in EIR lessons like the extra time with the teacher if she is the one teaching the EIR group.

What is the optimum time of the year to start EIR?

It is best to begin EIR in September or October. However, if you have just bought or been given this book and it is February, then February is the best time! In February, begin with the week 12–15 lessons (if these lessons are too challenging, drop back to week 9 or 10). One of the major problems I've discovered in the hundreds of kindergarten classrooms I have visited over the past

twenty years is that the students, especially the struggling readers, are presented with literacy activities that are too easy for them and repeat these activities more times than necessary. The point of EIR is to challenge students and accelerate their development of emergent literacy, oral language, and vocabulary abilities as well as foster their enjoyment of good literature.

What is the best way for me to be confident about teaching EIR lessons?

First read the summary of weekly procedures in Figure 3–1, then read the detailed lesson routines and watch the corresponding video clips on the accompanying DVD. (These components are described in greater detail in Chapter 4 in the context of weekly lessons.) Soon, the EIR routines will seem very natural, and, as many teachers have reported, you will feel that the extra work on your part is worth the effort! For the past fifteen years, I have consistently found that teachers, by February, are very excited about the progress their struggling readers are making.



How do I know when I am ready to teach the lessons?

Even after reading this book, you may not feel ready to conduct the lessons. Nevertheless, the best way to learn EIR procedures is to jump in and try them. If (when!) you have questions, reread parts of the book or rewatch particular video clips. Ideally, you will be working with a group of colleagues who are also learning and implementing EIR, and you can share successes and discuss questions and uncertainties together.

Weekly Lesson Plans and Routines

Although the EIR programs for grades 1–5 center around a three- to-five-day routine, the kindergarten program has twenty-seven specific weekly lesson plans that you can easily get through during the school year. (It's important to keep on schedule, since some of the most essential activities are covered in the last one-third of the program.) Each weekly plan is built around two or three books in the context of which children enjoy literature and respond to it creatively, develop their vocabulary, make connections to their lives, and participate in a carefully designed scope and sequence of phonemic awareness and other emergent literacy activities. Figure 3–1, which is also on the DVD, summarizes this scope and sequence.



You should approach these phonemic awareness and emergent literacy activities from the perspective of exposure, not mastery—that is, don't expect children to master them. By being exposed to these skills, children will be further along in their literacy development and consequently more ready to learn to read in grade 1.

The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of the literacy activities in the program, especially those that develop phonemic awareness (video clips of kindergarten teachers using these lessons with their students are provided on the DVD). Chapter 4 includes a complete sample lesson for each literacy

Scope and Sequence of EIR Emergent Literacy Activities in Kindergarten

Fall Lessons

Weeks 1–5	September–October
Weeks 6–8	November
Weeks 9–11	December

Winter Lessons

Weeks 12–15	January
Weeks 16–18	February

Spring Lessons

Weeks 19–21	March
Weeks 22–24	April
Weeks 25–27	May

Introduction of Emergent Literacy Skills or Activities

Week 1

- ▶ Discuss texts, explore new vocabulary and concepts, act out text
- ▶ Identify letters A–L

Week 2

- ▶ Identify letters M–Z

Week 3

- ▶ Identify and produce rhyming words

Week 4

- ▶ Identify (hear number of) words in a sentence
- ▶ Observe as teacher points to each word while reading a story summary
- ▶ Develop understanding that readers read left to right, with a return sweep to the next line

Week 6*

- ▶ Hear and segment the beginning sound in a word
- ▶ Identify pictures of things that begin with the sounds for the letters A–H

Week 7

- ▶ Identify pictures of things or words that begin with the sounds for I–R

Week 8

- ▶ Identify pictures of things or words that begin the sounds for S–Z

Week 9

- ▶ Hear the beginning and ending sound in a word
- ▶ Identify and write (or trace) lower- and uppercase A, B, C, D
- ▶ Develop letter-sound correspondences A, B, C, D

**No new activities introduced in weeks 5, 15, 23, 24, 26, and 27.*

Figure 3–1 Scope and Sequence of EIR Emergent Literacy Activities in Kindergarten (continues)

Week 10

- Hear and segment the ending sound of a word
- Identify and write (or trace) lower- and uppercase E, F, G, H
- Develop letter-sound correspondences E, F, G, H

Week 11

- Segment the sounds in words with two phonemes (consonant-vowel or vowel-consonant)
- Identify and write (or trace) lower- and uppercase I, J, K, L
- Develop letter-sound correspondences I, J, K, L

Week 12

- Identify and write (or trace) lower- and uppercase M, N, O, P
- Develop letter-sound correspondences M, N, O, P

Week 13

- Segment the sounds in three-phoneme words
- Identify and write (or trace) lower- and uppercase Q, R, S, T
- Develop letter-sound correspondences Q[U], R, S, T

Week 14

- Identify and write (or trace) lower- and uppercase letters U, V, W, X, Y, Z
- Develop letter-sound correspondences U, V, W, X, Y, Z

Week 16*

- Engage in interactive sentence writing
- Blend two phonemes to make a word in an oral sentence

Week 17

- Say words by blending three phonemes pronounced by teacher as she is reading
- Summarize a narrative by engaging in interactive sentence writing

Week 18

- Say three-letter words from the story by blending the phonemes pronounced by the teacher in isolation (after reading)

Week 19

- Point to, say, and blend three letters in sound boxes that represent the phonemes of a word

Week 20

- Write letters of three-phoneme words in sound boxes

Week 21

- Hear the two parts in two-syllable words
- Summarize an informational text by engaging in interactive sentence writing

Week 22

- Track print while reading, pointing to each word as it is read and not confusing two-syllable words for two words

Week 25

- For a consonant-vowel-consonant word from the story, write more words that belong to same word family

**No new activities introduced in weeks 5, 15, 23, 24, 26, and 27.*

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Figure 3–1 Scope and Sequence of EIR Emergent Literacy Activities in Kindergarten (continued)



activity when it is introduced for the first time. The DVD contains complete weekly lessons for all the exemplar books so you can see the kinds of learning activities you need to provide. However, you can present the activities to your students using your own favorite books.

Teachers have told me they needed to pay careful attention to their timing to get through the recommended daily activities in 10 minutes (or 15 minutes initially). I always tell teachers that if they take longer than 15 minutes for the whole-class lesson and 10 minutes for small-group practice for students who need more support, they may be tempted to drop EIR because it seems to take up too much time. So try to stay within the 20- to 25-minute time frame.

Overview of the Lesson Components

Text Discussion

Every week, opportunities are provided for discussion in which children must think about the story or informational text and questions you ask, and then express themselves. We know from the research literature (Adams 1990; Snow et al. 1998) that not only is reading aloud to children important, but the verbal interaction that goes along with the reading of the story is also important. Furthermore, we know that oral language ability at the beginning of first grade is a powerful predictor of reading and writing ability by the end of the elementary grades (Adams 1990; NRP 2000; Stahl 2001).



Prompt students to think about the meaning of the book you are reading by asking high-level questions as or after you read it. (Examples are provided in Figure 3–2 and on the DVD.) High-level questions get the children to think about and interpret the story. They're not answered with a yes or a no. High-level questions may also prompt students to connect the meaning of the story to their own lives (see the examples in Figure 3–3).

You will need to model by giving example answers to the higher-level questions you ask. You will also have to regularly coach students to elaborate on their answers or model doing so by turning their one- or two-word answers into complete sentences (especially with ELLs). Nevertheless, it is important that you expect your kindergartners to think and to be capable of this level of response. The payoff is worth it! Teachers who ask students to respond to higher-level questions about what they have read see greater growth in students' reading scores than teachers who don't (Taylor et al. 2003, 2005). To ensure that each child understands the story well enough to participate in the higher-level discussion and to develop students' vocabulary, briefly discuss the meaning of potentially unfamiliar but useful words as you read aloud.

Typically, have students turn to a partner and share answers to the questions you ask while you listen to what the pairs are saying. Then call on one or two students to share their ideas with the larger group. It is important to give the children enough time to respond when you call on them. Explain that you will not be able to call on everyone with an idea but that everyone will get a chance to share ideas during the week. (For every verbal child you call on, give a less verbal child a chance to respond as well.)

Coaching for Comprehension: Questions and Prompts for Teachers

Interpretive Questions Based on the Text

- ▶ What kind of person do you think [*name of character*] is? What in the story makes you think this?
- ▶ What are some good [*bad*] things that happen in the story? Why do you think these are good [*bad*] things?
- ▶ What was a problem in the story? How was the problem solved?
- ▶ What do you think is an important thing that happened in the story? Why do you think it is important?
- ▶ Why do you think the author gave the title he/she did to the story?
- ▶ What did you like best about [*name of character*]? Why? What in the story helped you feel this way?
- ▶ What did you not like about [*name of character*]? Why? What in the story made you feel this way?
- ▶ Would you have done the same things the main character did? Why or why not? What might you have done differently?
- ▶ Why do you think [*character in the story*] did [*an action in the story*]?
- ▶ How did [*character in the story*] change? Why do you think this happened?
- ▶ What happened in the beginning [*the middle*] [*the end*] of the story?
- ▶ What did you learn from this story?
- ▶ What important ideas can we learn from this informational text?

High-Level Questions Relating a Story Concept to Children's Lives

- ▶ Which character is most like you? Why?
- ▶ Which character would you like to be like? Why?
- ▶ Which character would you like to have as a friend? What in the story helped you make this decision?
- ▶ How are you like [*character in the story*]? How are you different?
- ▶ Can you compare anything in this story to [*another story*] [*something you have done in your classroom*]? Why do you think these are alike or different?
- ▶ Could you find these animals [*events*] in [*your state*]? Why or why not? Where? What might happen if they were in [*your state*]?)
- ▶ What did you like about this story? Why?

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Figure 3–2 Coaching for Comprehension: Questions and Prompts for Teachers

Story Discussion Questions That Relate to Students' Lives

Good-Night Owl!—Have you ever had trouble sleeping like the animals did at the end of the story? What kept you from sleeping? How did you finally fall asleep?

I Know an Old Lady—Have you ever swallowed something by mistake like the old lady did? Think first and then tell your partner about it.

Do Like Kyla—Do you have an older brother, sister, cousin, or neighbor you like to do things with? What things do you do and why do you like to do things with this person? Share your ideas with your partner.

Figure 3–3 Story Discussion Questions That Relate to Students' Lives

see it in Action



Talking About Text

Paula Berger is reading *Just Grandpa and Me*, by Mercer Mayer, with her kindergarten class in the spring. After they read, she asks students to think before they share about a time they got to do something special with a member of their family. She calls on a

few students. One boy starts out, “I went out with my grampa . . .” and can’t think of anything more to say. Paula coaches, “Where did you go? What did you do?” A girl who is more verbal briefly tells about a trip to the zoo with her grandparents. Then Paula asks everyone to share their ideas with a partner as she coaches a group close to her. She keeps this part of the activity brief, giving them about 30 seconds to share.



Time is limited during EIR lessons; you won’t have time for all students to answer your question. Let one or two children answer, and explain to the others that you will call on them in the next day or two. Even though you would normally have several more children respond, students easily adapt. Also, keep reminding yourself that wait time is important. Wait at least three seconds after asking your question.

Vocabulary and Concepts

Ask questions about concepts (colors, opposites, feelings, body parts, etc.) as they come up in the poems and stories you are reading. Also talk about the meaning of words that you believe many students will not know, especially those they will find useful in many contexts, at the point they are encountered in the poems and stories you are reading (Beck and McKeown 2001; Beck et al. 2002). Discuss the most important words again after you have finished reading.

Creative Dramatics

Creative dramatics provide a safe medium in which students can express themselves. Have all children make story-related movements as you read aloud to them, or assign roles and let specific children act out/speak relevant parts as you reread or retell the story. This is a way to help children become comfortable speaking in front of a group. It's also fun and doesn't require any prompts. Children's wonderful imaginations will carry them through the retelling of all or a part of a story. At first, you'll be the narrator. Later, have children take turns filling this role, supporting them as necessary.

see it in action



Acting Out a Story

Nancy Sharp and her students reread and act out *Mr. Gumpy's Outing*. The students say they know this story, and Nancy says, "But today we are going to talk more about the story and act it out." Nancy and her students retell the story as she asks

questions and they look at pictures in the book. As they reread the story, she asks them to tell her some of the words. She asks them again what *squabble* means. Then, they all get up to show her how to *trample*. Nancy then asks for volunteers. As Nancy retells different parts of the story, they act it out, saying some of the lines. Afterward, they have a brief discussion about boat safety.



tip

Nancy uses some simple props: a large sheet of paper for the boat, a kettle for the tea party at the end, a fishing hat for Mr. Gumpy. Elaborate props like the animal faces aren't necessary. The little girl with the wooly shawl was happy with her prop that "turned her into a sheep." Children are good at using their imaginations without any props at all.

tip

Nancy adds a nice touch by concluding with a brief discussion about the story and boat safety.



Work on segmenting phonemes in words so you voice the sounds as crisply as possible. Especially try to avoid adding a prolonged /uh/ to a consonant with a “stop” sound (/b/, /c/, /d/, /g/, /h/, /j/, /k/, /p/, /q/, /t/). Admittedly, this isn’t easy, but you’ll get better with practice. For example instead of /kuh/ /ah/ /tuh/, say /k/ /a/ /t/.

Phonemic Awareness

Many different kinds of activities to promote phonemic awareness are provided in instructional materials you purchase. However, research has found that the two best predictors of end-of-first-grade reading ability are phonemic segmentation (hearing the sounds in a word) and phonemic blending (blending the sounds in a word to pronounce it) (Adams 1991; NRP 2000; Taylor 1998). Therefore, EIR in kindergarten focuses on phonemic segmentation followed by phonemic blending. Research on a sequence of instructional activities to develop children’s phonemic awareness in kindergarten or early first grade supports this progression (Taylor 1998).

In week 3 you identify rhyme, an important precursor to the development of phonemic segmentation and blending ability. In weeks 6–8, you focus on hearing the beginning sounds in words. In weeks 9–11, you focus on hearing the beginning and ending sounds in words. In weeks 13–15, you work with the children on segmenting the sounds in two- and then three-phoneme words (“What sound do you hear first in *cat*? in the middle of *cat*? At the end of *cat*?”). Examples of teaching these activities are provided in the fall and winter lessons in Chapter 4.

During weeks 16–19, the focus shifts to blending two and three phonemes together to come up with a word in the story just read aloud (“What word do we get if we blend these sounds together—/k/ /a/ /t/? Yes, *cat*”). Sample lessons are included in the winter and spring lessons in Chapter 4.

see it in action



Hearing Beginning Sounds in Words

Four types of animals from *Mr. Gumpy’s Outing* are printed on the chart. Nancy Sharp begins this part of the lesson by saying, “Now we are going to think about some of the animals in the story and we’re going to listen for the beginning sound in the word. What was the first animal in the book?” Students respond with bunny rabbit. Nancy says, “The first sound in *rabbit* is /r/ abbit. What sound do you hear first, /r/?” Students say

/r/. They move on to *cat* and then *dog*. Nancy has students slide their hand from the shoulder to the wrist of the opposite arm as they say the beginning sound, /d/ og. She asks, “What sound do you hear?” Some students call out *d*, but Nancy focuses them on the sound. “The first letter is *d*, but the sound is /d/.”



It’s helpful if students say the beginning sound of the word with you as they start to slide their hand along their arm; it gets them actively involved. It’s also a good idea if students once again tell you the beginning sound in the word, not just give you the letter name; it keeps them focused on phonemic awareness, an auditory ability. When students offer the letter name, coach for the sound as Nancy does.

see it in Action



Hearing Beginning and Ending Sounds in Words

After working on letter sounds from an alphabet book, Nancy Sharp moves on to hearing the beginning and ending sound in words with just two sounds. They are reading the book *Go, Dog. Go!* When they come to the word *up* Nancy pauses and says, "What sound do we hear at the beginning of *up*, /ə/?" Students say /ə/. "What do we hear at the end of *up*, /ə/ /p/?" A student shouts out the letter name, and Nancy says, "The letter is *p* but the sound you hear is /p/." As students say the words with Nancy to hear the sounds, they slide their hand from the shoulder to the wrists of the opposite arm. When they come to the word *in* Nancy has them focus on the ending sound, a newer skill for them than hearing the beginning sound. When they come to *up* again Nancy is very explicit. "So what is the beginning sound? The sound that you hear at the beginning of *up* is /ə/. What is the last sound you hear in *up*? The sound you hear last in *up* is /p/."



In this video, Nancy slides one hand from the shoulder to the wrist of her other arm as she goes from the beginning to the ending sound in a word. This makes the concept of first sound and last sound more concrete.

see it in Action



Blending Sounds into Words

In this spring lesson, Paula Berger asks her students to say the word formed by the sounds she articulates as she reads from *Just Grandpa and Me*. She begins by saying, "Who is ready for a challenge as we reread our book today? As I give you the sounds to a word, I want you to tell me the word." After she reads about Little Critter needing a new suit, she stops and says, /n/ /ē/ /d/, and students call out *need*. She has students slide their hand down their opposite arm from their shoulders to their elbows to their wrists as they say the beginning, middle, and ending sounds of *need*, /n/ /ē/ /d/, *need*. She repeats this exercise with the word *big* when she reads the next page, which is about going to a big department store. When she comes to the word *me*, she stops to ask, "How do you spell *me*?" Students quickly call out, *m e*. After reading the page about getting the new suit, she stops and says, /s/ /ü/ /t/, and students come up with *suit*. She praises, "I just can't stump you today!"

Phonics and Decoding

Recognizing Letter-Sound Correspondence

The EIR lessons include frequent but fast-paced reviews of letter names and letter sounds as students enjoy humorous alphabet books. Sixteen of the twenty-seven weekly lessons focus on multiple letters and their corresponding sounds. Some students will need little or no practice, but the ones who do can get more support from you during the small-group follow-up lessons.

see it in action



Learning Letter-Sound Correspondence

Nancy Sharp works on letter-sound correspondence and phonemic awareness as her students look for alphabet book pictures that begin with the letter *b*. “The letter *b* is the first letter we’ll look at and the sound for *b* is

/b/.” Nancy reads, “Boris the bull waits for” She asks, “Can you see a blue butterfly? What words begin with */b/*?” One boy offers, “Butterfly.” Nancy coaches them to come up with *blue* as well. They look for pictures of words that begin with */b/* and find one of a bull. Nancy says, “Let’s try it, slide your hand down your other arm as we say the word, */b/ull*. Does it start with */b/*? Yes it does.” They move on to the sound */k/* for the letter *c*. They start with *cow*, sliding their hand down their arm as they say */k/ow*. Next, one girl points to the spider on the page. Nancy says, “Let’s try it—*/s/pider*, */k/ow*. Is it the same or different?” The little girl says it is different.



It’s hard to say the sounds in isolation of consonants that are stop sounds (*b, c, t*) rather than continuous sounds (*f, m, s*). Avoid a distinct and prolonged */uh/* at the end of the sound, as in */buh/*, because it makes it difficult for students to hear the sound you are trying to say. Also, saying */buh/ a/ /tuh/* makes it hard for students to segment sounds into the word. In the video clip, Nancy says */b/* quickly several times to avoid saying a longer */buh/*. This is one way to handle the issue. Another is to say the sound once, but quickly.

Interactive Sentence Writing

Listening carefully for the phonemes in words and then writing them down is important for students' phonemic awareness development and their emerging knowledge of sound-symbol correspondences. In interactive writing the teacher usually asks the children for ideas, then skillfully but quickly comes up with a sentence for the group to write. Often students come up with a sentence that is too long or difficult; in this case, their ideas need to be shortened and simplified into a similar but reasonable sentence.

Beginning in week 16, the children help the teacher come up with the sounds they hear in words in a sentence they are writing about a story. Later, the children each write the same sentence on their own, saying each word, listening for the sounds in sequence, and writing the letters that go with these sounds. The teacher can write the sentence as well, but should try to be a step behind the children so they don't simply copy. Instructional examples are provided in the winter and spring lessons in Chapter 4.

If children get stuck on a short vowel sound spelled with a single letter, don't just tell them the letter; teach them to use a short vowel chart (see Figure 3–4) to figure out how to spell a word with a particular short vowel sound. For example, help them figure out that the second sound in *bus* is the sound that is heard at the beginning of *umbrella*. Make sure the short vowel chart is available as you teach. Also, keep an alphabet card with both upper- and lowercase letters on each table in case a child forgets how to write a particular letter.

Since the purpose of writing sentences is to develop children's phonemic awareness, phonics knowledge, and reading ability, and since they will be rereading their sentences at school and perhaps at home, I recommend correct spelling. This is relatively easy to do when everyone is writing the sentence together. However, when children are writing on their own, they will probably use approximate spellings.

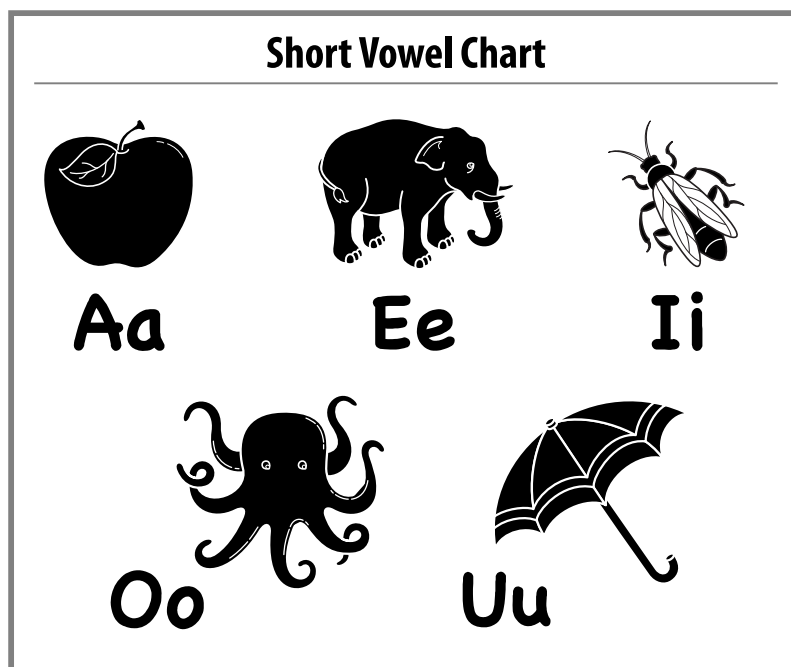


Figure 3–4 Short Vowel Chart

✓ tip

Saying the word they are trying to write helps children focus on the phonemes. Write along with the children so they can check their work but try to stay a step behind so they don't simply try to copy. Your goal is for the children to be actively trying to hear the sounds in the words as they are writing them.

✓ tip

Let children do as much as they can on their own and provide support as needed. Paula provides a good example of this here. The students were able to come up with the letters for the sounds in *he* and *went* and knew *to* and *the* on sight. They needed some help with the letters for some of the sounds in *store* and did not know that *store* had a silent *e* at the end.

see it in Action



Interactive Sentence Writing

Paula Berger works with her students on writing a sentence about their story *Just Grandpa and Me*. Each student has a whiteboard and marker. Paula begins, "Tell me a sentence about the story. Let's talk about

where he was going." A student says, "He went to the store." Paula says, "Let's say *he*. How do we spell *he*, /h/ /ē/? Students call out *h e*. Paula writes *He* on the classroom whiteboard as students write the word on their own whiteboards. (They are writing on their own, not waiting to copy what Paula has written.) Paula moves on to *went*. "What does *went* start with, /w/? Students come up with *w*. Paula moves on to /e/, then /n/, and finally /t/. Students call out *e, n,* and *t* as Paula gets them to focus on the different sounds in the word. Students quickly spell *to* and *the*, because these are basic sight words on their word wall. Paula helps them with the *or* in *store* and tells them there is a silent *e* at the end of the word. She asks them to watch as she tracks the words while she rereads the sentence. She also asks them to hold up their whiteboards so she can take a quick look at how they have done.



✓ tip

It is much more powerful if children write as you are writing rather than simply watch you write.

✓ tip

In addition to developing her students' phonemic awareness and letter-sound knowledge, Paula also models tracking the words as they reread the sentence, another important emergent reading ability.

Sound Boxes

Begin this activity during week 19. As you say the sounds that make up two or three words from the story, have students point to and trace the letters you have written in the sound boxes (see the example in Figure 3–5). Then have them say the word they have traced. (Do this with each word at least twice.)

During week 20, have the children write the letter or letters for each sound, one sound per box, in two or three words from the story. After writing the words in boxes, children should touch the letters with their finger as they reread the words. This helps them make the transition from hearing the sounds in words and writing the letters for these sounds to reading the words. This activity helps children hear the sounds in words, develops their phonemic awareness, and helps them learn symbol-sound correspondence.

Sound Boxes for *Wild Bears* by Seymour Simon

1.	r	u	n	
2.	f	r	n	
3.	n	u	t	s

Figure 3–5 Sound Boxes for *Wild Bears* by Seymour Simon

As students become more adept, pull back on exaggerating the sounds for them (let them do this on their own if they need to). They are often more successful if they say the words themselves. Asking them how many sounds they hear in a word lets them know how many boxes to use. To help students become more independent, use a short vowel chart in which the vowels and pictures starting with each short vowel sound are displayed: *a*—*apple*, *e*—*elephant*, *i*—*insect*, *o*—*octopus*, *u*—*umbrella* (see Figure 3–4).

Concepts of Print and Decoding: Tracking Print

Accomplished kindergarten teachers frequently help their students track print while reading from a big book, chart, or individual books (Taylor et al. 2000). During weeks 22 and 23 support children as they track while they read with you (examples are included in the spring lessons in Chapter 4). Remember, this activity is done from the perspective of exposure, not mastery.

see it in action



Tracking Print

Nancy Sharp and her students work on hearing and identifying the number of words in a sentence. They also talk about reading from left to right with a return sweep down to the next line of text “as readers need to do.” Nancy begins, “Today we are going to talk about how many words there are in a sentence and how we can tell where each word is in a sentence.” One boy ventures, “There are spaces.” Nancy coaches him to elaborate, but he is unable to, so she does it for him, “There are spaces between the words.” Nancy models, tracking the words as she reads aloud a sentence from the story that she has placed on a chart in front of the group: *I’d like a ride*. She has students read it again with her as they clap for each word and then tell her how many words there are in the sentence. Next, she has a student come up and track the words as she rereads the sentence. The tasks are not easy for these students, but they read through two more sentences from the story and are doing quite well by the end of the clip.



Comprehension Strategies: Summarizing Narrative and Informational Text by Engaging in Interactive Writing

In the winter and spring, you use interactive writing to teach students about summarizing narrative and informational texts. With narrative texts, you write one sentence a day that tells about the beginning (main character or characters and problem), middle (events, more on the problem), and end (resolution to the problem) of a story. You can talk about the author's message with a book such as *The Little Red Hen* (see week 21 in Chapter 4).

With informational books, you teach students about summarizing the big ideas. For example, for a book about what animals need to survive you can write two sentences together on two different days about main points in the book (see the lesson for week 22 in Chapter 4): *Animals need food, water, and safety. Baby animals need care.*



The EIR small-group lesson should be taught by a licensed teacher. Children who are having trouble learning to read need extra quality instruction from those who have the most expertise.

Daily Opportunity for Small-Group Practice

In addition to working with you daily as part of the whole group, students who are having difficulty with emergent literacy skills should also work on the whole-group activities again in a small-group follow-up lesson. Each sample weekly lesson in Chapter 4 includes examples of what should be covered in these practice sessions.

Professional Development

Each month, the new activities to be covered in the lessons for the following month are discussed in EIR professional learning sessions. Agendas for these monthly professional learning sessions are presented in Chapter 7. You may wish to review this section and the examples in Chapter 4 when you meet monthly with other teachers who are using the kindergarten program. In addition, you should discuss the lessons for the month just completed and children's successes and difficulties with these skills.

DISCUSS WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES

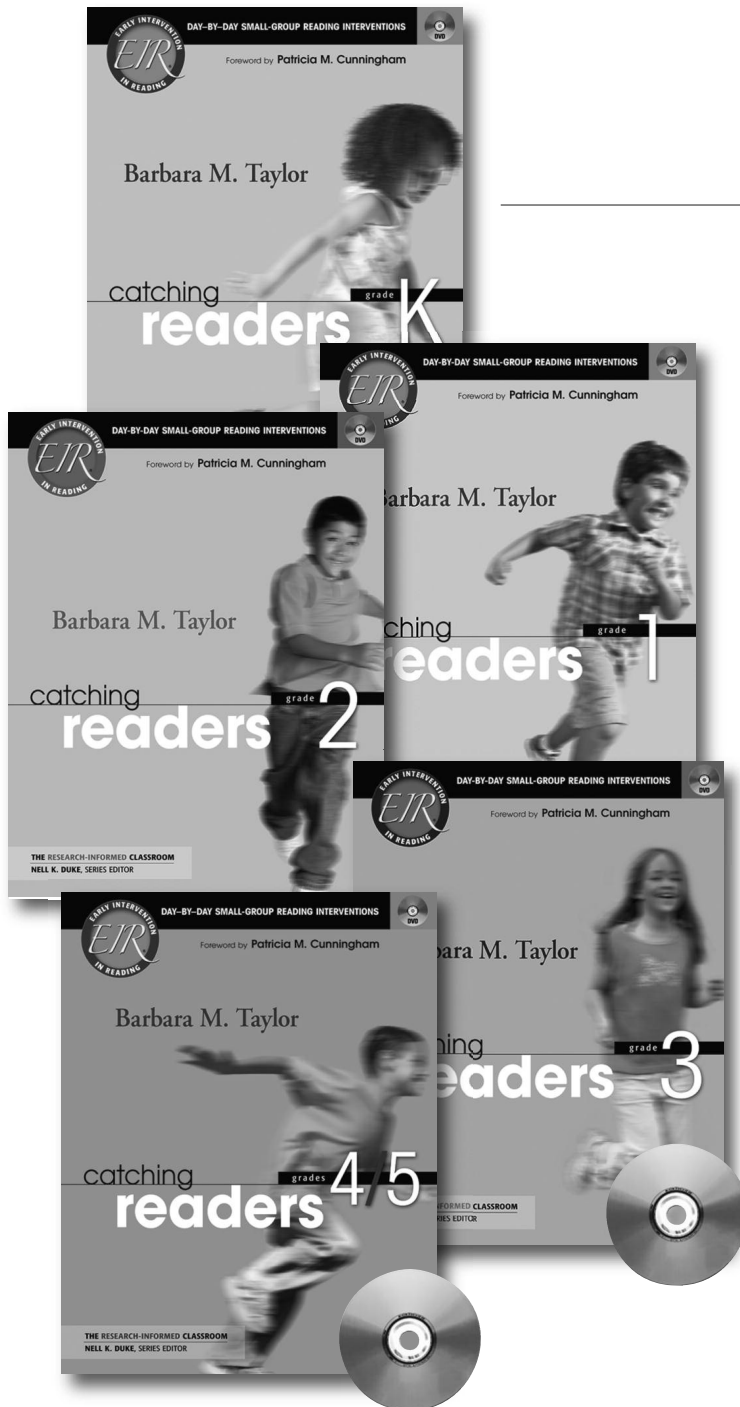
Discuss the idea of exposure, not mastery, which is an important underlying concept behind the EIR kindergarten program.

Discuss different ways in which you will be able to give the target children additional help with the activities covered in the whole-class weekly lesson. This instruction should be provided by a teacher, not an aide, since these children are at greatest risk of failing to learn to read in grade 1.

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