

The Teacher To Teacher Initiative was created by the US Department of Education to provide the latest strategies and research on educational practices that work inside a classroom. Well, good morning everyone, my name is Susan Smith and today we're going to be talking about phonics; which is one of the building blocks of reading. So if they understand how words are put together; they then can apply these strategies to harder words that they might not recognize the first time. When we talk about vowels, we can actually find out a lot of how a word is spelled by the shape of our mouth when we make the vowel sound. This series features teachers from across the country presenting techniques that can be used with students of all ages. It's just one way the Department of Education is helping teachers get the support they need so that no child is left behind.

(MUSIC)

Well good morning everyone. My name is Susan Smith and today we're going to be talking about phonics, which is one of the building blocks of reading. I feel like phonics is something that we've all had quite a bit of training in and have something to bring to the table. How many people have had extensive experience in teaching phonics? Just so I can see who's out there in the audience. So I'm really talking to a network of experts here. What we're going to be doing today is reminding ourselves about why phonics is so important to include in our curriculum and we're going to include some strategies for energizing our phonics programs. Not everything that publishers give us is as conducive to teaching good decoding as some of the strategies that we'll talk about today. So I'm hoping that even though there are some people who are even teaching phonics at the university level, there will be something that you can take away with you to your classroom to help your children decode more effectively. So our outcomes today are really to develop a deeper understanding of the concepts of the English spelling system, so we aren't just going to be talking about reading today, we're going to be talking about reinforcing the use of good reading in spelling. We're also going to become familiar with using explicit systematic instruction. There are many ways to introduce students to letters and sounds. However, there are differing distances between points A and B and we are going to be looking at the shortest point between being introduced to a letter and mastering it. We'll also talk about the developmental progression in which orthographic knowledge is acquired, and that's just knowing how words are put together and spelled and knowing how to decode words in the English language. So let's talk about where does decoding fall in the continuum of reading. And this is a framework for reading that was put together by John Shefelbine, who is a professor at Sacramento State in California, and he says that there are many, many things that go into effective reading. In fact, he's even added one more layer to the structure, which is student motivation to learn how to read. So really we're going to be talking about the decoding section here. But, really, if students aren't really solid in how to decode, then they aren't

going to have the opportunities for comprehension. So, what looks like a very small leg on a large table, is really a very important support for all of the things that go into learning how to read and comprehend. Now, today, even though we're focusing on phonics, we're also going to be talking a little bit about phonic awareness, sight words and automaticity, because what we want students to do is to be able to recognize words as quickly as possible so that they can become fluent readers and be more effective comprehenders. So what is phonics? A lot of people ask what is phonics. It's so important – can you articulate what it is? Well there are a couple of different definitions. And the first comes from Louisa Motes, who is one of the primary authors of phonics research, and it's the pairing of a sound with the letter or letters that represent that sound. Now they also call this pairing sound symbol correspondence, so there's the sound and they're linking it to the letter, which is the symbol. Now, there are many times when we are asked well why do I have to teach phonics to kids who come to kindergarten already reading? Well, it's wonderful when children come to kindergarten and 1st grade already reading, but it really is important for them to understand how words are put together. First of all, we know that phonics instruction helps all readers, and that means high readers, readers who have taught themselves to read, and very low learners – students who we call instructionally naïve. And instructionally naïve students don't always bring language with them to the classroom, so we want to make sure that they have as good of a chance of learning how to decode as every other child in the classroom. Also, many children – even good readers – read more effectively with explicit systematic phonics instruction. So, students who have taught themselves to read often don't understand what they did in order to get there. They just got it – but they don't understand why they got it. So, if they understand how words are put together, they can then apply these strategies to harder words that they might not recognize the first time. So it's a really important thing for everyone to be able to do. Most importantly, if students don't have phonics instruction in the beginning, poor readers or at-risk students are not likely to learn to read at all. We want students to understand how to decode words easily, fluently as early as possible, because we know that if they don't learn to do it well before the end of 3rd grade, then chances are they'll never catch up. So we really want those at-risk students to understand how to take words apart and put them together very quickly. Now, there are many different ways that phonics can be taught. There have been a multitude of strategies for teaching phonics all across the decades. Sometimes teachers will say this is your name, you need to understand the letters – these are the sounds they make. Sometimes it's based on storybooks and sounds that animals might make. But what we want to do is introduce students to words, sounds and letters in a systematic manner. That means there is a system, there's a reason that we're using the strategies that we do. First of all, we want the skill sequence to be preplanned. It's not just letter of the day, or letter of the week. It's not A, B, C order

anymore. We want to progress from easier sounds to more difficult sounds. So think about sounds that are easy for you to make. Think about sounds that you can make and keep making. For instance, mm – everyone can you say mmm? Mmm, mmm, mmm. Is that a difficult sound to make in your mouth? No, it isn't – you can really get into mmm and you can mmm as long as you want. In fact, if you have great lung capacity, you could mmm for an hour. However, there are other sounds that are more difficult to make. Try to make the p sound. p, p, p. It's really difficult thing to make the true p sound, because what people want to do is put an uh on the end of it. That way it's easier to articulate when you have something that you can stretch. So the sounds that cause us to stop at the end of the sound are more difficult, so we would want to start with the easier sounds and move on to the more difficult ones. Also, we don't want to spend a lot of time with sounds that aren't often used. There are letters which are what we call high utility. High utility letters are very useful in making words. Letters like M, S, A, H, N, T – those are all letters that are very useful for students. So if we introduce those first, they'll be able to make more words and read more words than if we teach them less common sounds like X or Q. We want them to be able to make a lot of words and sounds right away and be able to read them also. Now, we also want to separate letters that have similar shapes and sounds, and we're going to spend a little time right now thinking about how students might confuse different sounds, based on where they're made in their mouths. And it's an important thing for teachers to know and understand in order to teach their students how to think about the sounds that they make when they're reading. It also helps teachers understand problems that students have when they're spelling. Sometimes students will substitute a letter that happens in the same place in the mouth, that's made the same way, and actually have their temporary spelling be incoherent because you don't understand why they've made that mistake. So we're going to talk about letters and how some of them are more similar than others. We're going to start with what we call a stop sound – and a stop sound we talked about is a hard sound to make in the mouth. And this is the letter P – it makes the p sound. Now p, p, why is that so difficult? You can't keep getting air. You have to keep going back to get your air - p, p. Also, it's hard to say without putting a vowel on the end of it. And P is what we call a stop sound in that you're thinking about you just want to make the p sound and not put anything else on it. I have students think of an enormous pair of scissors where we cut off everything after the p. Now, one thing that we want students to notice is whether a sound is voiced or what we call a voiceless sound. Voiceless means it's a quite sound. Now you can't go around going p, p, p and say that it's quiet. However, you can check for voiced and voiceless very easily. Take two fingers and put them at the base of your throat. Now, if you have an Adam's apple, you're going to be able to feel it, if you don't you won't. Make the p sound - p, p, p. Do you feel any buzzing going on in your throat? That's a voiceless sound. A voiceless

sound is quiet and it doesn't cause a buzz to be made in the throat. Now let's look at a letter which is very similar to p. This is the letter B, which is b, b. Now take your fingers and make the b sound. Hmm, what do you notice there? It's got a little bit of a buzz there, and that's what we call a voiced sound. So there are a couple of reasons that you wouldn't teach P and B together. First of all, you can take your B and make it look like a backwards P. Second of all, they're made in just about the same place in the mouth, and they have the same difficulty with having to stop, you're popping your lips, you're not able to force air out each time. So these would be two letters that you separate in your instruction. Now, there's another stop sound. The letter T which makes t. Now your tongue is going to be doing something different than what it was doing with the P sound, with the p. With the p sound your lips were popping. Think of what's happening with the t, so the letter T has a noisy twin, which is the D or the d sound, so if you take two fingers, put them on your throat, d, d, d – voiced or voiceless? It's voiced, it's the noisy twin. Now you often will find that students, who are making mistakes in spelling, will substitute the d for the t or vice versa, because they're made in such a similar way, they sound very similar in many words. Now the next pair that's something that I have a lot of personal experience with – I have a daughter – she's 11 – she speaks beautifully now. But when she was in kindergarten she did not make the k sound or the g sound – she substituted t. And it wasn't really a big issue for her until we got a cat, and she went around calling kitty, kitty, kitty, but imagine kitty with a t in the beginning. My husband said we'll get her help and we'll get it now! So, they referred us to the speech therapist, and the speech therapist said that the k sound and the g sound were made in the same place in the throat, using the soft palate. And she said that many times students with strong gag reflexes have difficulty with these sounds because they're made so far back in the throat, that sometimes students who have difficulty keeping things down sometimes feel like it's a gag reflex when they're making the sound. And think about it. Do that – k, k, k – feel how far back that is? And let's try the g, g, g – so these are the gag sounds. I personally named them that, and do you know what you can do for a child who can't say their gag sounds in kindergarten? You can have them lay on the floor – that forces the tongue to the right spot in the throat where students aren't feeling like they're going to throw up and they can make these sounds. By knowing that they can make the sounds, you can begin to expect them to start generalizing that into their everyday language. So, once she actually got it – figured out that she wasn't going to throw up – she was able then to call kitty, kitty, kitty. Now the next group of sounds we're going to talk about are the nasal sounds. So what does that tell you? You're going to use your nose – yes! The first nasal sound is one that you make with your lips and that's the mm sound, which is spelled with the letter M – m and we talked about m, but there's a trick that you can show children with the m sound. Say m, and in the middle pinch your nose – m – what happens? You stopped the m sound. If you

don't have a clear nasal passage, you can't articulate your nasals. That's something that's useful for knowing with students who have problems with allergies and things like that. It's something that makes it worthwhile to take that allergy medication, because you want to be able to articulate those sounds. Now the next nasal sound spelled N – go ahead and go n. Now pinch off – oops – also a nasal sound. Now, one thing that you'll find with M and N is that not only do they look very much the same, and feel very much the same, a lot of times students have problems differentiating between them and spelling, because they sound very much the same. So, you're making them in the same place in the mouth, they look very much the same, they sound very much the same, so it's something that you need to be cognizant of in watching students making their M and their N sounds. Now there's something else that's a little interesting about your nasals is that if you feel for your voice – m and n – you'll find that they're both voiced. Now, there's also a nasal sound that I don't have a card for. And the reason that I don't have a card for it is that you hear it quite a bit at the end of words, but you don't very often hear it at the beginning of words, except in Asian languages. And so you'll find that your children who are from different parts of Asia will be very good at this sound and that is the ng sound. Can you make those together? ng. NG – ng, ng, but try not to put anything in front of it so that it's a ng. That's very typical of what we hear in Asian languages, and that's also something that you need to think about is being a nasal sound. And is it voiced? ng. Almost double-voiced, isn't it? Now, there are also some sounds where you're using friction with your lips and your tongue and the rest of your mouth. Those are also voiced and unvoiced. The first one is the letter F, which makes the f sound. Try f – I call this a lip tickler, because you're blowing air over your lip. Voiced or unvoiced? f. now think about how this letter and the next one could be confused. They certainly don't look alike, but I want you to make the v sound, and feel it. v, this is really a lip tickler, isn't it? v and f – very similar in the mouth and you'll see that sometimes when students are writing they'll use the letter V and you can't figure out why. You say gosh, I taught that 3 weeks ago, why is he or she using this in the writing. That's probably the problem. The letter F sometimes is not as easy to remember, because it isn't voiced and it's harder to make than the v – the v. So think about separating these two based on where they're made in the mouth. Now there are two sounds for this, and this is a very special kind of a sound – it's two letters together that make a different sound than each of the letters apart, and they call this a digraph. Di, meaning two, graph, meaning writing – two pieces of writing. So this would be the TH which is the most common digraph. Now think about the two different ways that you can say this sound – the first one is a quiet sound and it requires your tongue. Go th, th – now you can feel the air going over your tongue – is there a voice? No. That's the most common way that we make this sound. Now there's another way that we make this sound in the English language, and that's the th sound, such as in these, that, the

other – sometimes we thu, sometimes we the – it depends on where you're from. Sometimes you go thu and the at the same time. Okay, so you've got your TH. Now th voiced, th unvoiced. So that's something to think about when you're thinking about letters that use friction in the mouth. Now there are two more that require some friction, and the first one is the letter S, and it's sounded sss sound – voiced or unvoiced? It's not voiced. A very high utility sound, so it's something that we want kids to really understand. Now, its twin is less high utility, but you'll see that students do substitute the Z for this S at some times. The Z is articulated zzz, zzz – check – zzz – you expect that to make a buzz in your throat. And so here you go – the zebra and the seal, which should be separated. Now I have another digraph for you and this one is the shh sound. S and H stick together and they make shh. Now would you expect shh to buzz in the throat? sh. You wouldn't expect it and it doesn't. However, there's a sound that's hard to spell that goes along with SH, and I don't have a card for it because we don't spell it the way we say it, and it's the zh sound – like Gigi or treasure. Try to make that sound in your mouth. zh, zh – voiced or unvoiced? zh – it comes from French, and although we don't spell it zh, that's the way it's articulated. So anytime we're talking about SH in the middle of words that have TION, sometimes you have the zhun, which is spelled differently and students will make mistakes with those words – and it's worthwhile to know that there's that zh there that's just waiting to mess us all up. Now, we also have got some words that cause the mouth to glide, and when you glide that means you go from one position to another, and our first glide sound is the Y. Now the Y is very commonly misunderstood, because it really only makes its own sound at the beginning of words. If it's at the end of the word, chances are it will take on the sound of another letter. So this would be a glide sound in that you have to move your mouth. Try ya, ya, ya – it's kind of a bucktooth sound I tell kids. ya, ya. Luckily it doesn't have a twin; however there are others that cause you to glide your mouth. Now this one – the letter W – is pronounced wa, wa, wa. It has a twin, and it's pronounced almost the same way where I live. Where you live it may be pronounced differently. That would be the WH digraph, such as in where, wheel. There are parts of the country where people say w-heel or w-hite. They actually take on the H that's attached to the W. Now it depends on where you're from. How many people actually do pronounce the plain W and the WH differently? Usually people who are very well-versed and well-read will make that differentiation. Sometimes we call people like that splitters. Splitters are people who are very detail-oriented, and you see that with their articulation. Now, sometimes we have people who don't differentiate in their articulation – we call those lumpers. I guess it's more glamorous to be a splitter than a lumper. In California we're lumpers, so we have a tendency to just say w and that's it. Now there's another sound that we make in the mouth that causes our mouth to glide, and this is what I call to children the bad breath sound, because it really comes from the lungs and it's spelled H and it's sounded ha, and if

you're embarrassed because you've been drinking coffee you might want to put your hand in front of your mouth, but put your hand in front of your mouth anyway, because you'll be able to feel your breath – ha, ha. Students who are having trouble with the spelling of ha will be able to feel for that sound when they're writing it. Now the last two sounds that I would like to talk about are the most difficult sounds for English learners to make. Also, they're sounds that even speech therapists don't treat until about 2nd grade, and these are called liquid. Just by calling them liquid kind of raises our elevator of anxiety – the liquid sound. You're thinking of your classroom of kindergarteners and 1st graders – there's going to be some kind of liquid going on. Anyway, this is the letter L, and it's pronounced ll. Think about where your tongue is – ll. That's it – right behind your teeth. But where does the air come from? Way in the back. And so it's such a hard sound to really pinpoint where it's made in the mouth, so ll, but it's almost like you have to gargle in order to make it. The other liquid sound is the letter R, and it makes the rr sound. Now it's nothing like the L. They're twins only because they're difficult to make and floating in the mouth. Make the rr sound. Think about rr, rr. If we went around saying rr all day our faces would freeze like that. It would be a terrible thing. So rr is also very hard because there isn't any real concrete way to make that in your mouth. So a lot of times students who are learning English, or students who are just coming to school and are having articulation problems will have trouble and sometimes even substitute the ll and the rr, and that kind of thing happens often and it's something that you can actually help students with by knowing that these are very difficult sounds to make, and of course then to read and to write. Now there are two sounds that make two sounds apiece. Let me rephrase that – there are two letters – we're talking about letters now – and each of these letters there's two sounds that are borrowed from other letters. Now, this is the X card – fox is the animal that goes with it and you can hear the X sound at the end – ks. The X is stealing two sounds – what sounds is it taking? The K and the S – the K and the S – and so we call that the redundant sound. Now here's another one – doesn't she look like she'd steal the pants right off of you? This is the Q card – and the Q card also has two sounds – make the kw sound – kw, kw – so what does it take? Takes the K and the W – that K – when you think about what C does to K also, that K is very heavily borrowed. And this is a redundant sound also. So that's basically what you really need to know about separating and systematically teaching the letters – the sounds and letters. Now when you think about what you're teaching right now – could you use the mouth placement and the little stories and things about the letters to help students to be more metacognitive about how they use and read the sounds? It's just one more thing that publishers don't always tell you – they know, secretly, but they don't always tell you. Now there's also something that you need to know about vowels – we're not finished here. First of all, there are two kinds of vowels. Now, when I was a kid I learned that there was the long vowel and the short vowel.

They've renamed them, but continue to refer to them as long vowels and short vowels. The long vowels are what they call tense, because your mouth is tense when you say them. And the lax vowels are the short vowels, and your mouth tends to be more lax when you say them. There are also vowels that stick together, and we call them diphthongs. Now it's actually spelled diphthong, but we call them dip thongs – I mean doesn't that sound like something you'd call your brother? Anyway, these are dip thongs and these dip thongs stick together. You've got an O and a W, and the sound that the O and the W make when they stick together is ow. Now, ow is basically a compilation of parts – different parts – of the two letters that stick together. So we've got ow – oy is another common dip thong. I want to talk to you a little bit about what we call the vowel circle. And what many people don't know – particularly children – is that when we talk about vowels we can actually find out a lot about how a word is spelled by the shape of our mouth when we make the vowel sound. And the vowels actually cause our mouth to make a circle. And when you think about what your mouth is doing when you make certain words, it can help students understand which family of spellings to choose from. Now, let's talk about the very first vowel in the vowel circle. We're going to go through and note how our mouth changes shapes as we say these vowels. The first one is E – now this is a smile sound, it's made in the front of the mouth. So everyone say ee, ee, ee – it's a very happy letter, or a smiling, made in the front of our mouth. There are a whole lot of different ways to write E, but E is very similar to i, i. Make the i sound. i. Notice that you're not smiling as broadly? You've got your e, i – your face begins to fall. Still in the front of the mouth, still smiling, but not as broadly. The next one is a, a, a – a gives you a quizzical look – a. And then your mouth shifts from a – we're starting now to begin to make sounds further back in the throat – eh, eh. You know when you're reading and you see the word eh, eh? Now this is what your mouth looks like when you're saying it – eh? So it really is – it really does – it's very telling – eh? So that's a kind of confused sound. And then aah, aah – your mouth is beginning to open – aah. I, I, I, and then we're going to go down to having your mouth completely open – ahh, ahh – so we've gone from a smile, and our face has fallen all the way down to the ahh. So you can see that there's a mixture of tense and lax vowels here, and there are some diphthongs that can be found along the way. So now we've gone from the smile to the – we're going to go back up again – we're going to go from happy to odd and then we're going to be a little bit confused – okay? So we've gone to ahh, now what about uh – sort of like eh – uh. Okay, you've got that look on your face. Ahh, ahh – now really these two are the same – ahh and ahh. It depends on which part of the country you're in. There are some people who say uhh – that's where you start to see the differences – and ahh. I had a lady once tell me that frog and dog don't rhyme in New York. Then there is the uh, uh, and then finally ooh. So let's do it again, really quickly and we're going to take it from the smile to the ooh. Everyone – ee, eh, aa,

aah, ahh, ii, oh, uh, aah, ahh, uh, ooh. So you can see the circle, and it's helpful for students to understand how by feeling their vowel in their mouth that they can help choose what family of letters to choose from in their spelling. So that's the vowel circle.

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Explicit instruction – explicit instruction is really important because it used to be that sometimes we would expect students to get what they got. And we just don't have time to do that anymore – to wait for students to get it. So we want to make sure that they get it, and we really want to make sure that they get it and they do it well the first time. So, in explicit instruction, the teacher actually explains and models what it is that we want students to do. So there's a whole teacher part. However, the teacher involves the students so that the students are practicing at the same time right after the teacher has modeled. And so while the teacher is explaining and involving the students, it begins the guided practice piece of learning sounds and letters. And that's really important, because we want students to have a lot of practice before we ever ask them to apply anything. During the guided practice – this is an important time for teachers to give corrective feedback, because we don't want students to practice doing things the wrong way. So, this is what you're going to be doing when you're looking – you're teaching phonics to kids. You want to watch their mouths, because there are a certain number of students in every classroom that aren't as motivated as other students. And your very motivated students they'll be aahing and ahing just like everybody else, but there are some students who aren't as enthused about it, and they have a tendency to be a little bit passive about their learning. They understand what you want them to do, however, it's a lot of work to be able to switch thinking and to switch mouth positions quickly. So you want to watch for students who look like they're chewing – students who are avoiding the task, avoiding the practice, have a tendency to do this. So if you notice that everyone else is going mm, aah, t, and you notice that there are a few students chewing in the back – that means that those are the students that you want to either call on – if you feel like they know it you can call on them, or they'll be in your group that needs to practice a little more – they would benefit from a small group. So, be sure that you are watching for kids who are chewing and give corrective feedback. Also listening. Usually as you're listening for students who aren't getting it, you'll be able to pick out who's got it and who doesn't have it. And then – that extended practice on skills – that's as needed by individuals. So you'll spend less time on the kids who come in and have already got it than those students who are going to take a little while longer to get it. Now, the elements of a phonics lesson typically start with a phonemic awareness piece. Phonemic awareness is just gymnastics with sounds, and students don't need to know any letters in order to

participate in phonemic awareness. So if you're introducing a letter, chances are the students could have played with the sounds a million times before they ever saw what the letter looked like. So the phonemic awareness piece is important so that students can practice with the sound before they ever see the letter. For instance, they can practice listening for sounds. If you're introducing the aah sound, they can listen for it first, and you can play games with them. For instance, if I say a word that has the aah sound, I want you to say aah. But if I say a word that doesn't have the aah sound, don't say anything. So if I say a word like math that has the aah sound, what will you say? And if I say a word like knit that doesn't have it, what will you say? Nothing – very good. Okay, so let's listen for some of those sounds. If we're listening for the aah sound – mat (aah) – bat (aah) – man (aah) – mat (aah) – nut (silence) – boy, didn't fool you. And you can do that for a few minutes before you ever introduce the sound. Now another thing that students need to understand – especially instructionally naïve students – is that if this is aah, this is also aah, and this is aah, and if I switch the color it continues to be aah. It's worthwhile to use different fonts in different colors if you have very instructionally naïve students so that they understand that all of these different ways of writing A are different ways of writing aah – they're all the same – and you might then ask students to differentiate. For instance if they already knew R, if they already knew M, if they already knew Y, you might throw in an ice cream cone. And ask them to distinguish between aah and things that aren't aah. So what we're going to do is an activity that shows me that you can recognize the letter A, no matter what color, or what font, or how big it is. Now it's going to be a similar activity to the phonic awareness activity, however when I point I want you to say aah if it's aah, but what if I point to something that isn't aah. Don't say anything! Now, if you had students who were very familiar with the other letters, then you could have them say the names of the other letters, or the sounds of the other letters. However, this time we're going to assume that you don't know. So, get ready, think about it, say it. (aah) Good. Think about it, say it (aah). Think about it, say it (ahh). Think about it, say it (ahh). Think about it, say it (silence). And then they laugh when you point to this one. That's the ice cream cone. Anyway – that's one step back you can take from your publisher materials. Your publisher materials will give you the phonetic awareness piece, they'll give you letter-sound association, but often this part is missing, and if you have students who didn't ever know what the letter before they came to school, then this is one way that you can help them understand, that even though you write it differently, it's still the same thing. Now the next piece would be blending and word building, and you can do that with just a piece of paper and ask students to help you blend the sounds into words, or you can actually have students manipulate pieces of cardboard or pieces of paper in order to build words. Then, once they got good at that, you would ask them to read some decodable text. Now decodable text, when I was going to school, was thought of as evil. And it was really

a very useful piece in learning to read, because students need to practice putting letters together different ways just to get that fluency – just to be automatic that way. And then they could apply it in another context. So, in order to read that decodable text, they have to be very automatic with their decoding, and then it's really important to take them beyond the decodable text. Well, this is what I can do with what I know in a real story book, and it helps build a bridge between real reading and just decoding. Okay, now as far as the direct instruction of sounds and symbols go – basically when the teacher is teaching, the link to prior knowledge might be talking about a letter that was similar and how this letter is different. The purpose and importance of the learning is it's very clear with phonics is you're going to need to know these letters and sounds in order to decode words and become a good reader. And then the teacher models the learning. Now, the "let's do" I think is misleading sometimes. This is highly structured practice where you're making sure students are doing it the right way. Chances are they will be either in a small group or a large group, but this is when you're watching their mouths. This goes on for a long, long, long time before we ask them to apply it. Now certainly there are students that you will differentiate for because they're ready to apply, but its many repetitions that students need in order to cement that first sound/letter connection in the brain. So, one thing that we can ask them to do is that after they've practiced, practiced, practiced, is then apply the skill and use the new learning to decode new words. Now, one of the differences between explicit instruction and implicit instruction would be that explicit instruction might go like this. After a lesson in which students isolate words that begin with the k sound, that would be Karen saying cracker and you'd say k, she'd say crunch you'd say k, and she'd say bunch and you wouldn't say anything. The teacher links the sound to the letter by showing students the letter, telling them it stands for the k sound, and using the letter c to practice making words that begin with k – that would be a reasonable sequence. Might not happen all in one day, but that would be the sequence that a child – almost any child – could learn the letter C says k. Now, there are other ways of teaching which are less effective. We want to avoid being implicit. If a child had never seen the letter C, or was unfamiliar with letters and sounds, this wouldn't be a great way to introduce it. After reading stories about animals, the teacher asked the students what sound does cow begin with? Do you see any other animals with names that begin with that sound? Sound familiar? What letter says k? Can you write the letter k? And I think that sometimes in higher level areas where it isn't as important for students to learn so quickly this kind of thing happens. And so sometimes you get very fluent readers who can't spell. Now the blending of words – this is really, really important. Blending can be done a couple of different ways. And blending is just when you take different sounds and you make them into words. Now there's sound-by-sound blending – sound-by-sound blending will kill you if you do it all year. It's a good thing to start out with, but then we need to move students along to whole-word-

blending as soon as possible. And then for students who are older, who are reading longer words, you need to teach them syllable by syllable. So, let's talk about sound-by-sound. This is the word cat. If you were blending sound-by-sound, you would say the sound, c. say the sound, a. blend, say the sound, t. blend, cat. So that would be sound-by-sound. This is annoying sometimes to students who have already got it, but think about all the times that you ask students to decode a word and they say sounds that aren't even there? That's because they've forgotten what they figured out already. So with trip they might say cupcake because they don't remember what they decoded so far, so sound-by-sound is great to begin teaching students how to decode. Okay, so let's try the next one. This is a harder word – it has a blend in the beginning. A blend is when two consonants stick together. Okay, sound, t. Sound, r. Blend, tr. Sound, i. Blend, tri. Sound, p. Blend, trip. So you can see that it gets old, but it reminds students of what they've already decoded, so that they can go ahead and make it to the end of the word. And you can use that sound-by-sound decoding all the way through – even different kinds of words that aren't easy to decode. For instance, here if I said say the sound, b, but then the oy would be really hard to do a sound-by-sound decoding. So it would have to point out to students – look at the O and the Y – what do we know it says – oy, blend. Now, whole word blending is less annoying for students who have already got it, because then you take each sound separately and blend the word. So sound, h; sound, o; sound, t; blend, hot. Sound, d; sound, r; sound, a; sound, g; blend, drag – okay, so you can see that there are two different ways of doing that – one that you would use with very, very beginning decoders and one that you would teach children how to do quickly. Now, what happens when students then become better readers and start to encounter longer words? Those are words that we use the same strategies with but we have to break up the word. We actually have to, “hi-yaa”, break down the word so that they can apply their decoding skills to smaller pieces. Luckily it's pretty easy to do this. And one way is to break words down into syllables. And syllables are pretty easy to identify because if you hold your hand underneath your chin and you say a word like “hanky”. Han-kee. How many downs do you get. So, there are two syllables there.

And there are basically two types of syllables. One ends with a vowel and we call that an open syllable. Usually those syllables have a long vowel. For instance, the one we're going to start with first is humor. Okay, so say humor – hu mor – okay how many pieces? Two. Okay, it seems to break after the hu, and then you've got the mor. Okay. An open syllable is one that has a vowel at the end. Most of the time those are long vowels. With the end here we've got some mor. Now humor is a weird word. We don't say humore very often. You might get kids who are coming from another country and have learned that word. But we're lazy and we have turned this O into an uh, so we use what we call a schwa sound. And a lot of times people here the word schwa and they don't know what it is. Well the schwa sound is basically when we

take a vowel that should be pronounced a different way and we de-accent it. And so it usually sounds like uh. For instance, look at this word. Potato – do we all say potato no matter where we’re from? Okay. Well, look at this. Poe ta toe. How many people do you know who actually say it that way? Very few. We usually say puh ta toe – that’s an instance of the schwa sound. That happens really often with the different kinds of syllables. Now if you have m-o-r, it ends with a consonant – we call that a closed syllable. Now R is a special kind of a consonant, so it’s going to give us some exceptions, but if it ends with a consonant, chances are the vowel is either going to be a schwa or it’s going to be lax – or short. Now there are some exceptions – some things that mess up these rules. Wouldn’t it be great if this could be a rule, but these are most of the times. First of all, any time a syllable that ends with silent E – that technically is an open syllable, isn’t it? But it doesn’t act like an open syllable – that E stays silent. Syllables that end with LE – now have you ever heard of the bossy L’s. Bossy L has a tendency to change the vowel that it’s attached to. So LE at the end typically wouldn’t have the same rule as an open syllable. Usually the syllable there is short. R controls – you’ve probably heard of the Bossy R – these are examples of R controlled vowels. What the R does is it takes over – AR says R, IR says er, OR, or – what it does is it takes over the vowel. So any time you have an R, your syllables may be an exception. Also, syllables that have two vowels – they call those vowel teams – like E and A – they stick together, but only one of the vowels says its name – only one of the vowels is emphasized. So a word like beach would be an exception also. And then of course there’s the famous schwa – uh. Okay, so let’s take a look at some words. We’ve done humor – let’s take phoneme – try it out. The first thing I’m going to do – pho neme – so I know I have two parts. And I’ve got pho and I’ve got neem. Okay, right away I notice that my first chunk here is open and it does have a long vowel, “o”, so there’s nothing that I need to worry about there. What do I need to worry about in the end? I’ve got a silent E, so I don’t know what’s going to happen here. I look, and it just so happens that this E says its name – it’s a long E – so phoneme pretty much follows the rules. What about combine? So I check it – combine – two parts. I have a silent E, so I know it’s going to impact whatever that vowel is, and this is a closed syllable – COM. I don’t have anything there that’s going to stop that from being a short vowel sound. So do you see how that works – just knowing open and closed is really going to help students break up words and then have an easier time decoding them. Now what about a word like “few” – it doesn’t need any breaking up. So if you look at it – F E W – that’s tough for kids because they need to know that the E and the W stick together, and they make a different sound. So how did you fare with the word “table”? Does the first part follow the rule? Yes, it’s an open syllable. And what about the ble? LE at the end. How about eager? So you’ve got a vowel team here, but it is also open, and so you’ve got a long vowel – vowel team – and then what about the ger? R control – got that R. Now

furniture is one that throws people for a loop. What have you got first? Right, you've got a closed R control, but then what happens here? This should say ni – fur ni ture – hum. But what's happened here? We de-accent it and it's become a schwa. So we say fur na ture, more than furniture. And then with the "ture" we've got the silent E at the end. So you can see how just knowing about these different kinds of syllables is really going to help students decode longer words more easily. Now think about – how are the strategies for decoding longer words similar to decoding a single syllable word? Think about that. It really is the same process, isn't it? You just have to break it up first. Now, for advanced decoding, what we do is we teach groups of letters that are commonly occurring in English, and sometimes these letters have meaning. So we break down words into syllables, we break them down to roots, prefixes and suffixes. And we eventually teach students that certain parts of words carry meaning. Now take a look at this word – that is what I call a humdinger! Would that be easy for students to read just cold? No, there are so many parts to it. But, if they understood the syllabication process and understood that each piece of a word may have meaning, it makes it a little easier. Now it's not traditionally syllabicated. However, all of these pieces have meaning, and I'll bet that some of you with a science background can kind of figure out what this is going to say. So you've got "pneumono" related to the lung, "ultra" - beyond and exceeding, "micro" – very small and "scopic" so by putting these together you've gotten ultramicroscopic – exceedingly small to the sight – and then you've got "silico" – related to hard stone, "volcano" is related to volcanic dust, "con"- dust , and the "osis" is disease. Now put all that together – its black lung disease, isn't it? So that would be the next step. First of all it's sound the letters, then it's syllables, and then we've got what we call morphemes which carry the meaning, and by breaking down words we can actually figure out what their meaning is without even knowing in the first place. So all of those things are important for kids to know. And I hope there was something new that you could take back with you, because really phonics has really been studied and we know how important it is. So when you think about English learners it's important for you to understand the kinds of things that they need in order to learn. And the first thing is that they do need the same direct explicit and systematic instruction as English-only students. They need it, they need to participate in that learning. It's important for them to understand the sounds and letters in English at the same time as they're learning English. We don't want to wait until they're fluent speakers. We want them to learn to read right away. Now, we also know that they're not going to get it as fast as the other kids, because there are so many barriers to that instruction. So we know that they're going to need additional instruction in language structure before, so that they have access, and after, to make sure that they got it – regular instruction, in addition to their language program. Teachers also need to be aware of the differences between English and children's primary language in order to help teach English, phonics and pronunciation. Many

times if we don't correct students, they will continue to make the same mistakes over and over again. When they get up into adulthood and they're making the same mistakes – even though they might be fluent speakers – this really affects their participation in society. We really need for them to be able to speak both their dialect and standard English so that they can be competitive in the job market. So it really is important to correct students when their articulation is incorrect. We also need to understand that sometimes we need to be aware of where students will make their mistakes, because of differences in their languages. So in summary, phonics is really important. We know that research has found that the ability to apply letter/sound correspondences is fundamental to independent recognition. We know that even good learners – good readers – rely on phonics more than they do to context or pictures. We know that it's important for students to be very automatic when decoding. And it's fostered by the ease in which students recognize and connect sounds and letters, so that initial instruction is important. And that they learn best when teachers teach explicitly and systematically. Automatic word recognition, as we know, is fostered by a student's ability to break things up, for instance with the syllables, and read longer words accurately, and that as they understand syllabication they need to begin to link spelling patterns and roots into that so they can understand what words mean once they've decoded them. And again, there's a lot of modeling and extensive practice that happens before students are independent. Thank you.

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