



Phonological Awareness and Phonics Instruction Rubric

The What Works Clearinghouse™ is a federally funded source of scientific evidence for what works in education. The What Works Clearinghouse aims to disseminate findings from rigorous education research to the education community. One mechanism for accomplishing this aim is the production of practice guides. Panels of national content experts, including both researchers and practitioners, create practice guides by systematically reviewing existing research on a topic and making recommendations based on both the best available research and their expertise. The practice guides contain evidence-based recommendations for instructional practices.

The What Works Clearinghouse has produced multiple practice guides on the topic of literacy.¹ The rubric discussed in this document—the Phonological Awareness and Phonics Instruction Rubric—focuses on two of the four recommendations (recommendations 2 and 3) from the What Works Clearinghouse practice guide, *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade*. The rubric was authored by literacy experts from the Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest.²

Recommendations 2 and 3 were selected as the focus for the rubric because they are closely tied to skills in phonological awareness and phonics:

- Recommendation 2: Develop awareness of the segments of sound in speech and how they link to letters.
 - 2.1. Teach students to recognize and manipulate segments of sound in speech.
 - 2.2. Teach students letter–sound relations.
 - 2.3. Use word-building and other activities to link students’ knowledge of letter–sound relationships with phonemic awareness.
- Recommendation 3: Teach students to decode words, analyze word parts, and write and recognize words.
 - 3.1. Teach students to blend letter sounds and sound–spelling patterns from left to right within a word to produce a recognizable pronunciation.
 - 3.2. Instruct students in common sound–spelling patterns.

¹ Students in kindergarten through grade 3 require instruction in both foundational reading skills and reading comprehension to be successful readers. To learn more about experts’ recommendations for instructional practices in reading comprehension, see the What Works Clearinghouse practice guide, *Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade*. To learn about recommendations pertaining to oral language, academic vocabulary, and reading fluency, see recommendations 1 and 4 in *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade*.

² There is no overlap between the authors of this rubric and the authors of the *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade* practice guide.

- 3.3. Teach students to recognize common word parts.
- 3.4. Have students read decodable words in isolation and in text.
- 3.5. Teach regular and irregular high-frequency words so that students can recognize them efficiently.
- 3.6. Introduce non-decodable words that are essential to the meaning of the text as whole words.

The rubric contains items associated with each part of recommendation 2 (2.1., 2.2., and 2.3.) and recommendation 3 (3.1., 3.2., 3.3., 3.4., 3.5., and 3.6.). School leaders—including principals, assistant principals, and literacy coaches— can use this rubric to measure whether teacher instruction is aligned with these What Works Clearinghouse recommendations and the instructional practices discussed in the practice guide. This document provides information about the purpose and audience for the rubric, the content of the rubric, and instructions for rubric use and scoring.

Why this rubric?

Recommendations 2 and 3 from the What Works Clearinghouse practice guide *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade* are backed by strong evidence. Strong evidence, according to What Works Clearinghouse guidelines, is present when “positive findings are demonstrated in multiple well-designed, well-executed studies, leaving little or no doubt that the positive effects are caused by the recommended practice.”³ To generate these two recommendations, the panel reviewed studies about interventions conducted in English in kindergarten through grade 3 classrooms where 50 percent or more of the students were in general education and native English speakers.

Based on the rigor of the evidence, experts reached consensus that these recommendations should be implemented as part of high-quality instruction in primary grades. Panel members recommend implementation of instructional practices related to recommendation 2 (*Develop awareness of the segments of sound in speech and how they link to letters*) starting in kindergarten with continued implementation during grade 1 and implementation of instructional practices related to recommendation 3 (*Teach students to decode words, analyze word parts, and write and recognize words*) starting in mid-kindergarten through the end of grade 3. However, teachers should address all recommendations that are developmentally appropriate for the students in their classrooms based on assessment of their students’ current skill levels.

The purpose of the rubric is to provide a tool for school leaders to support the implementation of these recommendations in their schools. School leaders can support implementation by setting clear expectations and providing instructional coaching on phonological awareness and phonics. The rubric—and the recommended process for its use detailed in this document—will enable school leaders to communicate with teachers about the need to incorporate recommended instructional practices into primary classrooms and then to measure how teachers implement instructional practices in phonological awareness and phonics. After observation, school leaders can meet with teachers to discuss the ratings on the rubric and set goals for improvement. The rubric is designed to scaffold collaboration between school leaders and teachers and is not designed for use in formal teacher performance evaluations or as an accountability metric.

What does this rubric measure?

This section describes what the rubric is designed to measure. The rubric is divided into two sections: one related to recommendation 2 (*Develop awareness of the segments of sound in speech and how they link to letters*) and one related to recommendation 3 (*Teach students to decode words, analyze word parts, and write and recognize words*). The school leader may choose to use one or both sections of the rubric with the teacher depending on what practices the leader will observe. Within each section, the rubric includes measures of the extent to which instruction is systematic, explicit, and data-driven.

³ Definitions of evidence levels can be found on page 49 of the practice guide, *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade*. Details about the studies supporting these recommendations are available in appendix D of the same practice guide.

Experts agree that high-quality instruction should be systematic, explicit, and data-driven (Gersten et al., 2008; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Systematic and explicit instruction in phonological awareness and phonics is essential for most students to become successful readers. Students who receive systematic and explicit instruction in phonics in kindergarten and grade 1 progress more in reading than those who do not (Ehri et al., 2001; Foorman et al., 1998). Data-driven instruction allows teachers to be more efficient in serving students because it enables teachers to differentiate instruction to meet students' reading needs (Gersten et al., 2008). Definitions of these key concepts are as follows:

- **Systematic instruction** involves teaching a carefully ordered set of letter–sound correspondences sequentially. The set includes teaching individual letters and corresponding sounds, consonant patterns, vowel patterns, and syllable-construction patterns. The *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade* practice guide includes suggestions on how to order instruction on individual letters and sounds (see pages 18 and 19 of the practice guide) and consonant, vowel, and syllable-construction patterns for systematic phonics instruction (see example 3.3. in the practice guide).
- **Explicit instruction** is just as important for students' success in reading and is especially beneficial for students at risk for reading difficulties (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). In explicit instruction, teachers offer explicit modeling of skills and then guide student practice by offering specific and timely corrective feedback.
- **Data-driven instruction** also is a key element of any effective reading instruction. School leaders and reading teachers can learn more about data-driven instruction by reading the What Works Clearinghouse practice guide, *Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades* (Gersten et al., 2008). Effective teachers screen all students for potential reading problems at the beginning and middle of the school year, and then provide differentiated instruction that is responsive to student needs. In addition, effective teachers regularly monitor the progress of students receiving interventions to determine if students are making adequate progress or if a change in the intensity or focus of the instruction or intervention is needed.

Instructions for rubric use

This section provides instructions for how to use the rubric, including activities to conduct before, during, and after classroom observations. The rubric is designed as a tool to help school leaders and teachers to work collaboratively towards improving instruction in phonological awareness and phonics. Before and after classroom observations, the school leader will meet with the classroom teacher to discuss expectations.

Before the observation

- **Review the Pre-Observation Checklist of Recommended Instructional Strategies (see appendix A).**
- **Become familiar with the rubric** (see appendix B) and the recommendations outlined in the What Works Clearinghouse practice guide.
- **Share the rubric and the Pre-Observation Checklist of Recommended Instructional Strategies** with teachers in advance so that they are familiar with both resources and can ask any questions they have ahead of time.
- **Discuss goals for the observation with the teacher.** During meetings with teachers prior to classroom observations, the school leader will determine which parts of the recommendation the teacher plans to cover in the observed lesson and how. The school leader will place a check next to these activities in the *Pre-Observation Checklist of Recommended Instructional Strategies*. If the teacher employs instructional

strategies associated with only one part of one recommendation (for example, 2.1., 2.2., or 2.3.), then the rating should be based only on items pertaining to that part.

- **Request a copy of the lesson plan** that the teacher will follow to understand which aspects of the recommendations the teacher will cover during the observation.
- **Select a date and time for the observation** and determine which instructional activities will occur during this classroom period.
- **Schedule time to meet with the teacher** after the observation to ask any follow-up questions.
- **Gather materials** needed for the observation, such as the rubric, a clipboard, extra paper, and pens.

During the observation

- **Use the *Pre-Observation Checklist of Recommended Instructional Strategies* (see appendix A)** completed in advance of the observation to monitor implementation of instructional activities. Note and describe any additional activities that may not be included in the checklist.
- **Focus on observing and taking notes.** The notes will serve as evidence to inform the rubric scoring process after the observation is completed. Notes may include details about the instructional practices that teachers are using and how students respond to this instruction.

After the observation

- **Review the gathered evidence** and generate follow-up questions for the teacher.
- **Meet with the teacher to ask follow-up questions.** School leaders may need to ask follow-up questions to assign ratings for all items. Follow-up questions could elicit additional information that is hard to collect during observations alone. For example, school leaders may ask the following questions:
 - How did you provide feedback to students during guided practice?
 - How did you know if students understood the targeted skill?
 - Can you tell me some of the ways, in general, that you help students who struggle to develop awareness of the segments of sound in speech and how they link to letters?

School leaders can use teacher responses to these questions to inform their ratings. If relevant, the teacher might choose to bring artifacts of student work or artifacts from lesson planning.

- **Consider all evidence and assign a score for each row** on the rubric using the following 5-point implementation scale:
 - 5 = The criterion was completely met.
 - 4 = The criterion was substantially met.
 - 3 = The criterion was adequately met.
 - 2 = The criterion was partially met.
 - 1 = The criterion was not met.
- **Complete the scoring for the rubric.** If the teacher only used instructional activities pertaining to one of the recommendations, sum the scores for the 10 rows pertaining to that recommendation and divide by 10. If the teacher used instructional activities pertaining to both recommendations, sum the scores for all 20 rows and divide by 20.

- **Discuss the rating with the teacher.** Talk to the teacher about the observations and decision points that determine ratings. Consider asking the teacher to rate himself or herself using the rubric to ensure the teacher is understanding the goals of using this rubric. Use the discussion to revise the rating on the rubric if needed.
- **Set goals for improvement in practice.** School leaders can set goals through a collaborative conversation with teachers. To start this conversation, school leaders may ask the following types of questions:
 - What are some ways that you could improve your instructional practice in phonological awareness and phonics?
 - How can I support you in improving your instructional practice in phonological awareness and phonics? How can others in our school or district support you in reaching these goals?
- **Use the rubric again to measure whether goals have been met.** To foster professional growth over time, school leaders may decide to collect multiple measures across activities that are intended to address the same recommendation. In this scenario, school leaders may decide to complete the rubric independently or collaboratively the first time, share feedback with the teacher, and complete a second observation to assess whether the feedback has informed changes to the teacher’s instructional practice.

References

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- Foorman, B. R., Francis, D. J., Fletcher, J. M., Schatschneider, C., & Mehta, P. (1998). The role of instruction in learning to read: Preventing reading failure in at-risk children. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 90*(1), 37. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ571169>
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- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: Reports of the subgroups* (NIH Publication No. 00-4754). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Appendix A. Pre-observation checklist of recommended instructional strategies

Directions for school leaders using this pre-observation checklist: *Meet with the teacher in advance of the observation to share the rubric and set expectations for what you will observe. Place a check mark next to the instructional activities you will have the opportunity to observe.*

Recommendation 2. Develop awareness of the segments of sound in speech and how they link to letters.

2.1 Teach students to recognize and manipulate segments of sound in speech.

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|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>Teach students how sentences can be broken into words and that some words can be broken into smaller words orally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students practice identifying unique words in sentences or compound words (see example 2.1. in the practice guide for an example exercise). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>Teach students how words can be broken into syllables.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students practice identifying and manipulating syllables within familiar words by placing their hands on their chin and paying attention to the number of times their chin moves down as they say words slowly. • Have students hold up a finger for each syllable as they say a word. • Have students blend syllables articulated by the teacher into a word. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>Teach students how to recognize smaller units within a syllable called onsets (initial consonant, consonant blend, or diagraph in a syllable) and rimes (vowel and the remaining phonemes in that syllable).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students segment familiar one-syllable words into their onsets and rimes and manipulate the onsets and rimes to make new words (see example 2.2. in the practice guide for example exercises). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>Teach students how to isolate and segment words into their smallest units of sound (individual phonemes). At first, have students practice isolating and manipulating individual phonemes using two- or three-phoneme words (for example, <i>dig, sun, at</i>). Then, have students practice with more advanced words (for example, <i>splash, brick, party</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can practice this skill using Elkonin sound boxes (see example 2.3 in the practice guide for an example exercise). Students can use colored discs or letter tiles to mark the unique sounds they hear in words using the Elkonin sound boxes. • Students also can sort pictures based on the beginning, middle, or ending sounds of words that the picture represents. |

2.2. Teach students letter–sound relations.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> | <p>Teach students consonants and short vowel sounds represented by single letters first. Teach students the letters and their corresponding sounds. For example, the first group of phonemes could be /s/, /m/, /d/, /p/, /a/.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each phoneme, begin by naming the letter and then introduce the letters in uppercase and lowercase. • Show a memorable picture of a familiar word containing the phoneme (for example, <i>pig</i>). For each picture, incorporate the corresponding sound of the letter so that students remember the character and sound when they see the letter in print (see example 2.4. in the practice guide). • Say the sound that the phoneme makes and have students repeat it. • Review the phoneme and have students practice writing the phoneme in meaningful contexts, such as their names or familiar words. |
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Directions for school leaders using this pre-observation checklist: *Meet with the teacher in advance of the observation to share the rubric and set expectations for what you will observe. Place a check mark next to the instructional activities you will have the opportunity to observe.*

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Teach consonant blends (for example, <i>fl, sm, st</i>) and common two-letter consonant digraphs (for example, <i>sh, th, ch</i>). Each sound in the consonant blend can be taught, and then the teacher can model how to blend the sounds together. The digraph makes a single sound and must be taught as a unit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each phoneme, begin by naming the letters and introduce the letters in uppercase and lowercase. • Show a memorable picture of a familiar word containing the phoneme (for example, <i>flag</i> or <i>chip</i>). For each picture, incorporate the corresponding sound of the letters so that students remember the character and sound when they see the letter in print. • Say the sound that the phoneme makes and have students repeat it. • Review the phoneme and have students practice writing the phoneme in meaningful contexts, such as their names or familiar words.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Teach long vowels with the silent <i>e</i> (for example, <i>cane, lake</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each phoneme, begin by naming the letters and introduce the letters in uppercase and lowercase. • Show a memorable picture of a familiar word containing the phoneme (for example, <i>bike</i>). For each picture, incorporate the corresponding sound of the letters so that students remember the character and sound when they see the letters in print. • Say the sound that the phoneme makes and have students repeat it. • Review the phoneme and have students practice writing the phoneme in meaningful contexts, such as their names or familiar words.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Teach two-letter vowel teams (vowel digraphs; for example, <i>ea</i> and <i>ou</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each phoneme, begin by naming the letter and introduce the letters in uppercase and lowercase. • Show a memorable picture of a familiar word containing the phoneme (for example, <i>team</i>). For each picture, incorporate the corresponding sound of the letters so that students remember the character and sound when they see the letters in print. • Say the sound that the phoneme makes and have students repeat it. • Review the phoneme and have students practice writing the phoneme in meaningful contexts, such as their names or familiar words.
<p>2.3. Use word-building and other activities to link students’ knowledge of letter–sound relationships with phonemic awareness.</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Teach students how CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words are composed and how each letter or phoneme in a word contributes to its spelling and pronunciation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with a set of letter tiles or magnetic letters and have them add or remove letters to create words or to change one word into a different word (see example 2.5. in the practice guide).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Teach students about the composition of more advanced words using advanced phonemic patterns, such as CVC words with a silent <i>e</i> or with two consonants for the initial or final sounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with a set of letter tiles or magnetic letters and have them add or remove letters to create words or to change one word into a different word (see example 2.5. in the practice guide).

Directions for school leaders using this pre-observation checklist: *Meet with the teacher in advance of the observation to share the rubric and set expectations for what you will observe. Place a check mark next to the instructional activities you will have the opportunity to observe.*

Recommendation 3. Teach students to decode words, analyze word parts, and write and recognize words.

3.1. Teach students to blend letter sounds and sound–spelling patterns from left to right within a word to produce recognizable pronunciation.

- Teach students how to blend simple CVC words (see exercise 3.1. in the practice guide) by using **chunking** (reading the sounds from left to right but adding each sound to the previous sound before going on to the next sound in the word) or **sounding out the word** (saying each letter or letter combination one by one until the end of the word and then saying them all together again quickly).
 - Have students use a pocket chart or an Elkonin sound box with letter tiles to manipulate letters as they make sounds (see examples 3.1. and 3.2. in the practice guide).
- Teach students to blend more advanced words (for example, words that have consonant blends) using chunking or sounding out, as described above.
 - Have students use a pocket chart or an Elkonin sound box with letter tiles to manipulate letters as they make sounds (see examples 3.1. and 3.2. in the practice guide).

3.2. Instruct students in common sound–spelling patterns.

- Teach students how letters are often combined to form unique sounds that appear in multiple words.
- Teacher can teach spelling patterns by:
 - Giving students words cards with and without the target pattern and asking them to sort cards into groups or sort them on a word wall in the classroom.
 - Asking students to think of words that use a given spelling pattern and pronunciation. If these words are at the students’ reading level, teachers can ask students to try writing them.
 - Using Elkonin sound boxes to build words with specific sound–spelling patterns (see example 3.4.).
- Offer instruction on the following **consonant patterns**:
 - **Consonant digraphs** (for example, *th, sh, ch, ph, ng*) and **trigraphs** (for example, *tch, dge*), which are multi-letter combinations that stand for one phoneme).
 - **Blends**, which are two or more consecutive consonants that retain their individual sounds (for example, *scr, st, cl*).
 - **Silent-letter combinations**, which are two letters, with one representing the phoneme and the other not pronounced (for example, *kn, wr, gn, rh, mb*).
- Offer instruction on the following **vowel patterns**:
 - **Vowel teams**, which are a combination of two, three, or four letters standing for a single vowel sound (for example, *ee, oo, ao, igh, eigh*).
 - **Vowel diphthongs**, which are complex speech sounds or glides that begin with one vowel and gradually change to another vowel within the same syllable (for example, *oi, ou*).
 - **R-controlled vowels or bossy r’s**, which are vowels making a unique sound when followed by an *r* (for example, *ar, er, ir, or, ur*).
 - **Long e** (for example, *ee, ie, ea, e_e, ey, ei, y, ea*).
 - **Long a** (for example, *a_e, ai, ay, a_y, ei, ea, ey*).

Directions for school leaders using this pre-observation checklist: *Meet with the teacher in advance of the observation to share the rubric and set expectations for what you will observe. Place a check mark next to the instructional activities you will have the opportunity to observe.*

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Offer instruction on the following syllable-construction patterns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed syllables have a short vowel spelled with a single vowel letter and ending in one or more consonants (for example, <i>in-sect</i>, <i>stu-dent</i>). • The VCe pattern has a long vowel spelled with one vowel + one consonant + silent <i>e</i> (for example, <i>com-pete</i>, <i>base-ball</i>). • Open syllables end with a long vowel sound and are spelled with a single vowel letter (for example, <i>pro-gram</i>, <i>tor-na-do</i>). • Vowel team, or multiple letters spelling the vowel (for example, <i>train-er</i>, <i>neigh-bor-hood</i>). • Vowel-r words have a vowel pronunciation that changes before /r/ (for example, <i>char-ter</i>, <i>cir-cus</i>). • Consonant-le words have an unaccented final syllable containing a consonant before <i>l</i> followed by a silent <i>e</i> (for example, <i>drib-ble</i>, <i>puz-zle</i>).
<p>3.3. Teach students to recognize common word parts.</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Teach students about suffixes (for example, <i>-s</i>, <i>-ed</i>, <i>-ing</i>, <i>-est</i>) and prefixes (for example, <i>dis-</i>, <i>mis-</i>, <i>pre-</i>), and how to combine them with basic roots (for example, <i>aqua</i>, <i>cent</i>, <i>uni</i>) to form words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students practice new word parts by writing words or manipulating parts of words to create new words and then reading the words aloud. • Have students practice building and modifying words by adding suffixes to words using Elkonin sound boxes (see example 3.5. in the practice guide). • Help students decode more complex words by teaching a word-analysis strategy: identify the word parts and vowels of the target word, say the different parts of the word, and repeat the full sentence in which the word appears (see example 3.6. in the practice guide).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Teach students about contractions (for example, <i>aren't</i>, <i>it's</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students practice new word parts by writing words or manipulating parts of words to create new words and then reading the words aloud. • Help students decode more complex words by teaching a word-analysis strategy: identify the word parts and vowels of the target word, say the different parts of the word, and repeat the full sentence in which the word appears (see example 3.6. in the practice guide).
<p>3.4. Have students read decodable words in isolation and in text.</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Give each student a copy of a word list for the letter combination being taught. Ask students to underline the letter combination in each word in the word list (see example 3.7. in the practice guide).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Give each student a connected text passage for the letter combination being taught. Ask students to underline the letter combination in each word in the connected text passage (see example 3.7. in the practice guide).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Write or display the words and passage on a board for the whole group to read together.</p>

Directions for school leaders using this pre-observation checklist: *Meet with the teacher in advance of the observation to share the rubric and set expectations for what you will observe. Place a check mark next to the instructional activities you will have the opportunity to observe.*

3.5. Teach regular and irregular high-frequency words so that students can recognize them efficiently.

- Teach irregular words (words that have exceptions to the typical sound–spelling patterns and are not easy for early readers to decode) as whole words rather than as a combination of sound units. Have students practice reading the words frequently until they learn to recognize them quickly.
- Use flashcards to directly teach any new words. Show students a word and pronounce it. Have students repeat the word, spell the word, and say the whole word again. Then mix up the cards and provide practice so that students learn to recognize the words quickly.
 - Select a small number of high-frequency words that students have just encountered in a text. Read a word aloud and then ask students to point to the word in the text, spell the word, and repeat the word aloud.
 - Create a word wall of high-frequency words in the classroom. Have students read the word wall with a partner. Refer to the wall often and ask students to point out a word on the wall when they come across it.
 - Present students with a list of new high-frequency words to learn. Teach each word. Then ask students to write the words on large cards or construction paper, with different students writing different words. Have them add the words to the word wall in the classroom.
 - Write the words on flashcards and have students practice them in small groups, as in example 3.9. in the practice guide.
 - Have students practice their high-frequency words outside of their regular literacy instruction, as in example 3.10. in the practice guide.

- Teach regular words by having students apply their letter–sound skills—for example, using Elkonin sound boxes—to identify the word initially. Have students practice reading the words frequently until they learn to recognize them quickly.
- Use flashcards to directly teach any new words. Show students a word and pronounce it. Have students repeat the word, spell the word, and say the whole word again. Then mix up the cards and provide practice so that students learn to recognize the words quickly.
 - Select a small number of high-frequency words that students have just encountered in a text. Read a word aloud and then ask students to point to the word in the text, spell the word, and repeat the word aloud.
 - Create a word wall of high-frequency words in the classroom. Have students read the word wall with a partner. Refer to the wall often and ask students to point out a word on the wall when they come across it.
 - Present students with a list of new high-frequency words to learn. Teach each word. Then ask students to write the words on large cards or construction paper, with different students writing different words. Have them add the words to the word wall in the classroom.
 - Write the words on flashcards and have students practice them in small groups, as in example 3.9 in the practice guide.
 - Have students practice their high-frequency words outside of their regular literacy instruction, as in example 3.10. in the practice guide.

3.6. Introduce nondecodable words that are essential to the meaning of the text as whole words.

- Before introducing a new text, identify any **nondecodable words** (words composed of irregular sound–spelling patterns or sound–spelling patterns that students have not yet learned) that are repeated often within the text, that are meaningful, and that students will encounter in future texts or settings. Introduce these nondecodable words to students before reading the new text, including their spelling and meaning.

Appendix B. Phonological awareness and phonics instruction rubric

Directions: In each row record findings based on the extent to which the criterion is met using the 1–5 rating scale. Sources of information for filling out the rubric may include, but are not limited to, conversations with the teacher, artifacts (for example, lesson plans or student work), and observation of instruction.

The criterion was ...						
1 not met	2 partially met	3 adequately met	4 substantially met	5 completely met		
Recommendation 2. Develop awareness of the segments of sound in speech and how they link to letters.						
Systematic	Row 1: Teacher can articulate how instruction fits into a carefully defined, ordered sequence of letter–sound relationships rooted in a scope and sequence.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 2: Instruction builds upon mastery of earlier skills.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 3: Teacher uses the recommended sequence of instructional activities from the practice guide while teaching the targeted skill or skills (see appendix A).	1	2	3	4	5
Explicit	Row 4: Teacher models skills through a demonstration or think-aloud.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 5: Teacher provides clear and specific directions for student practice of the targeted skill or skills.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 6: Teacher explicitly states the rules or patterns related to segments of sound in speech and how they link to letters.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 7: As needed, teacher offers timely corrective feedback during students’ practice.	1	2	3	4	5
Data-driven	Row 8: Instruction is responsive to students’ skill levels shown in recent data.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 9: Teacher uses at least one type of formative assessment to gauge student understanding of the targeted skill or skills.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 10: Teacher can articulate a plan for using data to identify students who need additional support or an intervention related to developing awareness of the segments of sound in speech and how they link to letters.	1	2	3	4	5
Recommendation 3. Teach students to decode words, analyze word parts, and write and recognize words.						
Systematic	Row 11: Teacher can articulate how instruction fits into a carefully defined, ordered sequence of letter–sound relationships and spelling patterns rooted in a scope and sequence.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 12: Instruction builds upon mastery of earlier skills.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 13: Teacher uses the recommended sequence of instructional activities from the practice guide while teaching the targeted skill or skills (see appendix A).	1	2	3	4	5
Explicit	Row 14: Teacher models skills through a demonstration or think-aloud.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 15: Teacher provides clear and specific directions for student practice of the targeted skill or skills.	1	2	3	4	5

	Row 16: Teacher explicitly states the rules or patterns related to decoding, analyzing word parts, and writing and recognizing words.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 17: As needed, teacher offers timely corrective feedback during students' practice.	1	2	3	4	5
Data-driven	Row 18: Instruction is responsive to students' skill levels shown in recent data.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 19: Teacher uses at least one type of formative assessment to gauge student understanding of the targeted skill or skills.	1	2	3	4	5
	Row 20: Teacher can articulate a plan for using data to identify students who need additional support or an intervention related to developing awareness of the segments of sound in speech and how they link to letters.	1	2	3	4	5
Scoring directions: All rows should be completed within recommendations 2 and 3. Add up the total score across rows 1–10 and divide by 10 to produce a subscore corresponding with recommendation 2. Add up the total score across rows 11–20 and divide by 10 produce a subscore corresponding with recommendation 3. Add up rows 1–20 and divide by 20 to produce an overall score related to both recommendations.						
Score for recommendation 2:						
Score for recommendation 3:						
Overall score for recommendations 2 and 3:						