

Teaching and Learning

K-2 Literacy Skills Lesson Preparation Protocol

Guidance for K-2 teachers to design and enhance core literacy skills lessons

PHASE ONE: Designing Effective Instruction	
Step	Preparation Guidance
STEP 1 Connecting to Prior Learning and Targeted Skills	- What literacy skills and standards will be targeted in the current lesson, and how do they connect to previous lesson(s) and the unit's goals? - Are the skills being taught for the first time or reviewed? - How are letter sounds and spelling patterns articulated? - What is an exemplar student response to the question(s) and tasks noted above, and what does "mastery" look like in this lesson?
STEP 2 Delivering Effective Instruction	- What materials do I need to prepare for this lesson? - According to the lesson's scope and sequence, how many minutes will I allocate to each part of the lesson to ensure I can complete everything in the allotted time? - What explanations of rules for sound and spelling patterns need to be articulated to students? - In what ways do the direct and explicit routines, such as modeling and guided practice, lead to the understanding of the skills for students?
STEP 3 Determining Level of Transfer	- How will I check for understanding of objectives (reading, writing, listening, speaking), and how will I use the data collected to guide next steps? - What specifically will I look for during guided and independent practice as evidence of mastery? - How does each independent practice activity allow students to develop mastery in the target skills and competencies in the lesson? - How do the practice activities allow teachers to assess and provide targeted feedback on individual students' understanding of the target skills of the lesson?

STEP 1: Connect to Prior Learning and Targeted Skills

Begin by reviewing the [Unit Preparation Tool](#) to clarify the key goals, standards, and literacy skills for the current unit. Determine how these connect to previous lessons and support the broader goals of the unit. Clarify whether the skills are being introduced for the first time or serve as a review or extension of prior learning. Examine how letter sounds and spelling patterns will be explicitly taught, including how to model correct sound articulation and explain new sound-spelling correspondences or phonics rules. Identify what an exemplar student response would look like for the key questions or tasks in the lesson, and define what mastery looks like in relation to the lesson's objectives. Use this information to ensure instruction builds coherently and sets clear expectations for student success.

STEP 2: Instructional Delivery

Gather all required materials for the lesson, including decodable texts, whiteboards, manipulatives, and any visual or digital tools needed for modeling and student engagement. Identify how much time to allocate to each lesson component, such as explicit instruction, guided practice, independent work, and assessment, to ensure the full lesson can be delivered within the scheduled block. Prepare clear, student-friendly explanations for any new or review sound-spelling patterns, and plan how you will model them with accurate articulation. Identify the teacher-directed routines needed to make the lesson explicit, such as “I do, we do, you do.” Ensure these routines provide students with repeated opportunities to observe, practice, and internalize the skills. Structure the lesson so students actively engage in applying the target skill through reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities that build understanding and fluency.

STEP 3: Determining Level of Transfer

Identify the guided and independent practice activities that will allow students to apply the skills taught and begin demonstrating mastery. Consider how each activity reinforces the targeted literacy skills and supports students in achieving the lesson objectives. Plan how to check for understanding within the materials across reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and determine what specific evidence is needed to assess mastery. Think through how to observe and gather this evidence during practice and how to use it to make immediate adjustments and provide targeted feedback. Identify what student work to collect to review after the lesson, and how that work will inform the next instructional steps. Pay close attention to signs of partial or emerging understanding, as these signal which students may need additional support or reteaching in the next lesson. Ensure practice activities not only engage students but also give actionable insight into each student's grasp of the skills being taught.

PHASE TWO: Enhancing Effective Instruction	
Step	Preparation Guidance
STEP 4 Planning for All Students	- What does recent assessment data reveal about students' current skill levels? - What specific challenges do I anticipate my students may have within this lesson? - Which students do I need to monitor and support more closely during student practice? - What differentiated supports and strategies are needed to ensure all students have the opportunity to master the lesson's objectives?
STEP 5 Strengthening and Enhancing Instruction	- What is the format of each practice opportunity (whole group, small group, independent)? - Where in the lesson might I evoke student inquiry and curiosity? - How might I integrate visuals, manipulatives, or technology into this lesson?

STEP 4: Planning for All Students

Begin by analyzing recent assessment data and classroom observations to understand where students currently stand in relation to the lesson's targeted skills. Identify specific areas where students may struggle, such as blending, decoding, or applying spelling patterns, and consider how these challenges could impact their ability to engage with the lesson content. Determine which students will require more focused attention and support during guided and independent practice. Plan differentiated strategies, such as scaffolded tasks, strategic prompts, additional modeling, or small-group instruction, to ensure every student has access to the content and can work toward mastery. Throughout the lesson, use student responses and formative checks to monitor progress and make timely adjustments to instruction.

STEP 5: Strengthen and Enhance Instruction

To strengthen and enhance instruction, thoughtfully identify the format of each practice opportunity, such as whole group, small group, or independent, based on the skill being taught and the level of support students need. Use whole group settings to introduce and model new concepts, small groups to provide targeted instruction and feedback, and independent practice to reinforce and extend learning. Determine moments in the lesson to spark curiosity and inquiry, such as posing open-ended questions, presenting a real-world problem, or encouraging students to make predictions. Intentionally integrate visuals, manipulatives, or technology to deepen understanding and increase engagement. Tools like anchor charts, graphic organizers, virtual whiteboards, interactive apps, or hands-on materials can help students visualize abstract concepts and apply skills in meaningful ways.

Note: At times, teachers may need to make adjustments to a lesson to meet the needs of students. When these changes are made, teachers should provide a rationale for the adjustments. See a sample [annotated skills teaching guide](#).