

## 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
<p><b>STEP 1</b></p> <p>Connecting to Prior Learning and Targeted Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What <b>literacy skills</b> and <b>standards</b> will be targeted in the <b>current</b> lesson, and how do they connect to <b>previous</b> lesson(s) and the unit's <b>goals</b>?</li> <li>• Are the skills being taught for the first time or reviewed?</li> <li>• How are letter <b>sounds</b> and spelling <b>patterns</b> decoded and encoded?</li> <li>• Are there any <b>language conventions</b> or <b>writing skills</b> explicitly targeted or reinforced in this lesson, and how do they connect to the unit goals?</li> <li>• What is an <b>exemplar</b> student response to the question(s) and tasks noted above, and what does "mastery" look like in this lesson?</li> </ul>
<p><b>STEP 2</b></p> <p>Delivering Effective Instruction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What <b>materials</b> do I need to prepare for this lesson?</li> <li>• According to the lesson's scope and sequence, how many <b>minutes</b> are allocated to each part of the lesson to ensure I can complete everything in the allotted time?</li> <li>• What <b>explanations of rules</b> need to be articulated to students for sound, spelling, language conventions, or writing skills?</li> <li>• In what ways do the <b>direct and explicit routines</b>, such as modeling and guided practice, lead to the understanding of the skills for students?</li> </ul>
<p><b>STEP 3</b></p> <p>Determining Level of Transfer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does <b>student success</b> look like throughout this lesson?</li> <li>• How will students <b>demonstrate mastery</b> of the objectives, and how will I use the information to guide immediate instructional decisions and next steps?</li> <li>• What specifically will I look for during <b>guided</b> and <b>independent</b> practice as evidence of <b>mastery</b>?</li> <li>• How does each <b>independent practice</b> activity allow students to develop mastery in the target skills and competencies in the lesson?</li> <li>• How do the practice activities allow teachers to <b>assess</b> and provide <b>targeted feedback</b> on individual students' understanding of the target skills of the lesson?</li> </ul>

## 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. Additionally, identify any language conventions or writing skills that are explicitly taught or reinforced within the lesson, and consider how these connect to the unit's goals and support students' overall language development. 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 is 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. Additionally, prepare clear explanations for any language conventions or writing skills that are explicitly taught or reinforced in the lesson, ensuring students understand how these rules support accurate reading and writing. 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 skills 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. This includes identifying evidence of students accurately applying sound-spelling patterns as well as any targeted language conventions or writing skills in their responses. 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
<p><b>STEP 4</b></p> <p>Planning for <b>All Students</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does recent <b>assessment data</b> reveal about students' current skill levels?</li> <li>• What specific <b>challenges</b> do I anticipate my students may have within this lesson?</li> <li>• Which students do I need to <b>monitor</b> and <b>support</b> more closely during student practice?</li> <li>• What <b>differentiated supports and strategies</b> are needed to ensure <b>all</b> students have the opportunity to master the lesson's objectives?</li> </ul>
<p><b>STEP 5</b></p> <p>Strengthening and Enhancing Instruction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the <b>format</b> of each practice opportunity (whole group, small group, independent)?</li> <li>• Where in the lesson might I evoke student <b>inquiry and curiosity</b>?</li> <li>• How might I integrate <b>visuals, manipulatives, or technology</b> into this lesson?</li> </ul>

## 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. Also consider potential challenges related to language conventions or writing skills, particularly when students are expected to apply these skills in reading or written expression. 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 core small-group instruction as needed, to ensure every student has access to the content and progresses 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. These enhancements may also include opportunities for students to apply language conventions and writing skills in meaningful and engaging ways. 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 help students visualize abstract concepts and apply foundational, language, and writing 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](#).