

CHAPTER 13 – Teaching Phonics

Practical Activities: Phonics from stages 1–5

Stage 1: Learning the letter–sound connection

Letter hunt

Give children a copy of a familiar text. It could be from a language experience story the class has written or from a book that the class has read many times. Have children circle certain letters in the text. When they reread the story in the reading group, draw their attention to the letters that are circled.

Word hunts

In this activity, the children search for and circle or cut out words that contain the sounds they are learning. The words can then be written on index cards or the cut-out words can be pasted onto paper.

Variations include having children hunt for pictures that contain sounds they are studying, or searching for words that have the same middle sound. For example, ask a child to find words that sound like *sad* in the middle and then add the words to lists of words on the classroom wall (word walls that are grouped according to *sound*—not spelling).

Star for the day

Write the children's first names on cardboard strips. Cut the strips so that long names have long strips and short names have short strips. Choose a new name each day—this child becomes the star for the day, and the child's name becomes the focus of many activities. This is a good activity for the beginning of the year.

Day 1

Put all the names in a container, and choose one to be the star. Have the other children interview this child to find out about him or her (hobbies, favourite books). You could have a list of predetermined questions that each child will be asked, written on a piece of paper. Then write the answers that the child gives on the experience chart for use in making a class book later on. Point to the child's name on the strip (e.g. Sam). Point out the letters needed to make the word *Sam*. Talk about how the letter 'S' is a capital letter. Have the children chant the name. Write the name on another strip and cut it up into letters. See if someone can put the name back together correctly. Put Sam's name up in the room.

Day 2

Choose another child and do the interviewing and chart-making as for Day 1. Focus the children's attention on the name. Count the letters and discuss which letter is first and last. Point out any letters that are the same.

Day 3

Draw out a third name. Do the interviewing and chart-making, following the same procedures as before. Write the name again, cut it up and do the letter arranging. Begin comparing the names up on the board so far. You might want the class to practise reading the class interviews written as language experience stories.

Day 4 and beyond

Follow this procedure until all the children have been interviewed, charted, chanted and had the letters of their names arranged.

Variations

- Write the letters of the alphabet across the board and count to see how many names contain each letter. Make tally marks or a bar graph and decide which letters are included in most of the names and which letters are in the fewest names.
- Make up riddles about children's names. (This is a girl's name. She has six letters in her name. She has two 'e's and two 'b's.) Let the children make up riddles as well.
- Pass out laminated letter cards—one letter to a card, lower case on one side and upper case on the other side. Call out a name from the bulletin board and lead the children in chanting the letters in the name. Then the children who have those letters come to the front of the room.