



# Sound Walls

## Why Do We Need Them and How Do We Use Them



**Office of Elementary Education and Reading**  
Division of Literacy

[mdek12.org](https://mdek12.org)



MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

Fall 2021



## VISION

To create a world-class educational system that gives students the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and the workforce, and to flourish as parents and citizens



## MISSION

To provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global community



1

**ALL** Students Proficient and Showing Growth in All Assessed Areas



2

**EVERY** Student Graduates from High School and is Ready for College and Career



3

**EVERY** Child Has Access to a High-Quality Early Childhood Program

**EVERY** School Has Effective Teachers and Leaders

4



**EVERY** Community Effectively Uses a World-Class Data System to Improve Student Outcomes

5



**EVERY** School and District is Rated “C” or Higher

6



- Silence your cell phones
- Check and respond to emails during scheduled breaks
- Be an active participant
- Do not hesitate to ask questions



- **Understand** the importance of phonology and how it affects learners
- **Identify** what a sound wall is and why we use them to support student learning
- **Review** the phonemes and their qualities
- **Learn** to plan and prepare for the use of sound walls with strategies and activities



# Phonology

## The Importance and How It Affects Learners



When children struggle to read, it is most often a deficit within the phonological processing part of the brain.

- Segmenting sounds
- Blending sounds
- Manipulating sounds
- Phonological working memory



If you do not know the phonology of a word, you will have a hard time accessing that word and filing it in your lexicon.

You cannot represent a phoneme if you have no awareness of it.

Phonemes are mental parking spots for a grapheme.

Phonology is the mental Velcro with which we attach graphemes.



# Word Walls

What We Are Used To...

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**Respond to the questions below with your table. Record your responses on a post-it note and add it to an anchor chart near you.**

**Elect someone from your table to share your thoughts.**

- 1. How are word walls currently used at your support schools?**
- 1. How could word walls be better utilized to support student learning?**



A word wall is organized alphabetically using all 26 letters of the alphabet. We generally place sight words, high frequency words, and content/Tier 2 words under each letter based on the first letter of each word.



- As teachers, we know and understand all the different spellings of sounds, and so we place the words under the letter a word begins with because we can locate the words that way. This isn't the case for students. If students do memorize a word, they are able to read and spell only that word. The process does not help students learn to read new, unfamiliar words.
- Working with **word walls is print to speech**. We find the print/letter first and then we match the sound. Our **language is speech to print**. We hear speech sounds before we learn to match the sounds to a particular letter or letter patterns.

\*Traditional Model\*

Aa

avion  
anestezija  
alternator  
antika  
astronomija  
astal

Bb

baba  
banja  
beba  
bina  
brada

Cc

carica  
carević  
ceponica  
cigla  
crep

Čč

čanak  
čas  
čamac  
česma  
čelo

Ćć

ćata  
ćebe  
ćelav  
ćirili

Dd

dan  
dar  
deda  
divan

Dž dž

džak  
džarati  
džep  
džip

Đđ

đak  
đurđevak  
đizgija  
đambur  
đevdir

**? THINK ABOUT IT**  
Imagine you are a student learning content AND language. How much would you learn from this traditional word wall?

\*Synonym-Antonym Model (content-area specific)\*

Our Math Vocabulary

NOTE: Synonym-Antonym walls are easiest if done by content area (and even within a specific unit or theme). Encourage students to add to the growing word lists.

even 2,4,6,8...  
odd 1,3,5,7,9...

total  
calculate  
add +  
subtract -  
remove  
deduct  
take

correct  
true 1+1=2  
false 1+1=3  
inaccurate  
incorrect

like  
equal  
equivalent  
comparable  
same oo  
different oa  
contrasting

beginning  
front  
initial  
first i i i i i  
last i i i i i  
end  
final

over  
high  
above  $\rightarrow \square$   
below  $\leftarrow \square$   
beneath  
under  
down

overhead  
over  $\rightarrow \frac{x}{x}$   
under  $\leftarrow \frac{x}{x}$   
underneath  
beneath  
down

**\* Content - Specific Model \***

<b>Aa</b>	<b>Bb</b>	<b>Cc</b>	
addition 12+3=15	base ten 	clock 	cone 
addend 	bar graph 	counting 1,2,3,4,5,...	circle 
		cylinder 	

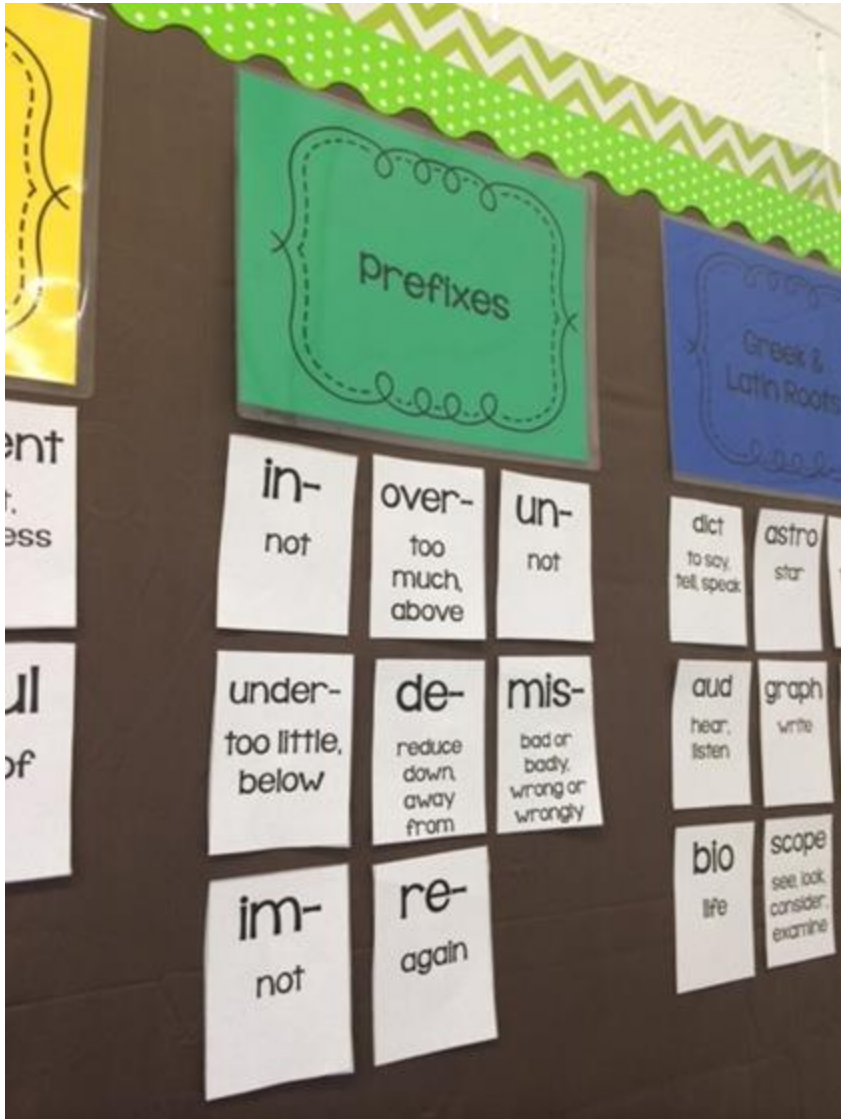
  

<b>Dd</b>	<b>Ee</b>	<b>Ff</b>
dinosaur 	Earth 	fossil fuel 
distance 	electricity 	friction 
direction 		

**Note:**  
Content-specific word walls can be done many different ways. Based on space available, you can choose to have a wall for each content area, or you can color-code by are. Use a key if you color-code!

# Morphology Word Wall

Greek Roots	Latin Roots	Affixes	
		Prefixes	Suffixes
<p>Root: graph Meaning: </p> <p>write</p>	<p>Root: mater- Meaning: </p> <p>mother</p>	<p>Root: multi- Meaning: </p> <p>many</p>	<p>Root: -ful Meaning: </p> <p>full of</p>
<p>Root: aqua Meaning: </p> <p>water</p>	<p>Root: fract Meaning: </p> <p>break</p>	<p>Root: auto Meaning: </p> <p>self</p>	<p>Root: tri- Meaning: </p> <p>three</p>
<p>Root: cent Meaning: 100</p> <p>hundred</p>	<p>Root: geo Meaning: </p> <p>earth</p>	<p>Root: bio Meaning: </p> <p>life</p>	<p>Root: -er Meaning: </p> <p>more</p>



# What Is a Sound Wall?





- A sound wall is set up according to the articulation of speech sounds (arranged by sounds made in the front of your mouth moving to the back of the throat).
- They approach things from a learner's viewpoint rather than a teacher's viewpoint.
- Sound walls help anchor learning to teach letter-sound knowledge using articulatory gestures.
- They attach phonemes to orthographic patterns (this has everything to do with print).



# SOUND WALL

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## Consonants

**Stops**

p pig	b ball	t turtle walked	d dog sailed	k kite car black Christmas	g goat ghost
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**Liquids**

l leaf llama	r rabbit write
--------------------	----------------------

**Nasals**

m monkey	n nose gnat know pneumonia	ng king
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**Affricates**

ch chair catch	j jellyfish gym edge jiged
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**Glides**

wh whale	w watermelon	y yo-yo
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**Fricatives**

f fish phone	v volcano love	th thumb father they	s sun foxes princess cycle slander	z zebra nose buzz	sh sheep special chat partial mission	zh treasure kiss beige vesture	h hat
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## Vowel Valley

**ē**  
we, bee, each,  
thief, these,  
sandy, seize

**ā**  
cake  
pain  
day  
steak  
table  
weight  
vein  
they

**ē**  
bed  
head

**ā**  
apple

**ī**  
bike  
my  
cried  
light  
silent

**ō**  
octopus  
calm  
swamp

**oi oy**  
boy  
boil

**ou ow**  
cow  
house

**ē**  
banana  
banana  
reason  
elect  
cover  
preparation

**ū**  
cube, new,  
unicorn, feud,  
fuel

**ō**  
boot  
note  
toe  
snow  
go  
over

**aw**  
claw  
cause  
ball  
water  
ought

**oo**  
book  
put  
should

**yū**  
glue  
tube  
tooth  
drew  
juice  
soup

**er**  
her  
bird  
fur

**ar**  
car

**or**  
corn

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Delilah Orpi, 2021

# VOWEL VALLEY

**ALL VOWEL SOUNDS ARE VOICED**

*Mrs. Winter's Bliss*

**Vowel Sounds and Examples:**

- /ē/**: bee, see, these, time, sea, key, happy, field, ie
- /ī/**: i
- /ā/**: a, ay, ai
- /ē/**: e
- /ā/**: a, e
- /ī/**: i
- /ē/**: e
- /ō/**: o
- /ū/**: u
- /e/**: banana
- /ə/**: a, e, i
- /ōo/**: oo
- /ō/**: o
- /aw/**: aw, au, al
- /ū/**: u
- /er/**: er, ir, ur
- /ar/**: ar
- /or/**: or
- /ū/**: u
- /yū/**: yu
- /oi/**: oi, oy
- /ou/**: ou, ow
- /er/**: er, ir, ur
- /ar/**: ar
- /or/**: or

Bliss, 2021

## Sound walls focus on phonemes and articulation:

- Hearing sounds in words
- Articulatory gestures or the "mouth movements"
- Sounds last a short time and disappear as soon as they are heard
- Mouth positions are tangible and can be felt, viewed in a mirror, and analyzed by learners (Ehri, 2014)

With the cards provided, sort the characteristics of word walls and sound walls utilizing the knowledge gained thus far.



**Word Wall**

**Sound Wall**

## Word Wall

- Organized A-Z, alphabetical
- Teacher's point-of-view
- Print- Speech
- Dependent upon teacher support
- Focused on letters
- Focused on one word

## Sound Wall

- Organized by speech sounds
- Student's point-of-view
- Speech- Print
- Independent
- Focused on phonemes and articulation
- Focused on transfer of skills to multiple words



# Why Should I Use A Sound Wall?

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Teach students explicitly to hear the individual phonemes in the words they hear in language.



Assist students in producing the individual phonemes in words.



Support students in recognizing how their mouth looks and feels when producing sounds, it helps connect speech to print.



Organize words by sounds to help young students connect phonology and orthography.



Assist students in anchoring letter-sound knowledge and articulatory gestures.

- Students need an accurate depiction of speech to print.
- Each element can be learned like multiplication tables or chemistry charts.
- Our language is more understandable if it is organized by sound.



- Grouping words by their sounds is an effective strategy for teaching reading and spelling.
- Students learn that one sound can be made using different graphemes, and it helps to teach spelling patterns.
- In 2000, The National Reading Panel found that explicitly teaching phonemes was a critical component of effective reading and spelling instruction.
- "Without awareness of the speech sounds that letters represent, one cannot match letters to sounds and read unfamiliar words."  
(Louisa Moats)

- Supports explicit instruction of phonics
- Builds orthographic mapping
- Provides consistent review of sounds
- Gives visual reference for students in the classroom
- Improves spelling and decoding



# Sound Production

Review of Sounds and Their Qualities

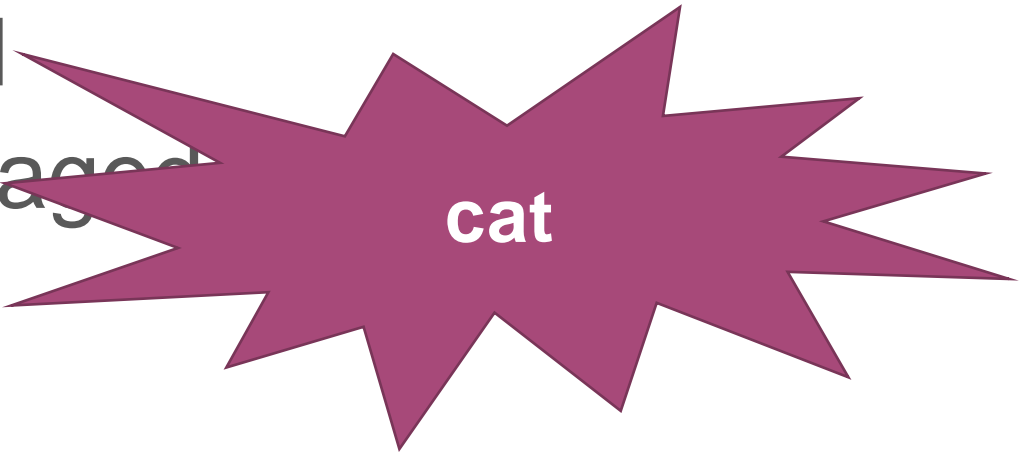
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	Lips Together	Teeth on Lip	Tongue between Teeth	Tongue on Ridge behind Teeth	Tongue Pulled Back on Roof of Mouth	Back of Throat	Glottis
<b>Stops</b> Unvoiced Voiced	/p/ /b/			/t/ /d/		/k/ /g/	
<b>Nasals</b>	/m/			/n/		/ŋg/	
<b>Fricatives</b> Unvoiced Voiced		/f/ /v/	/θ/ /ð/	/s/ /z/	/ʃ/ /ʒ/		/h/
<b>Affricates</b> Unvoiced Voiced					/tʃ/ /dʒ/		
<b>Glides</b> Unvoiced Voiced	/wʰ/ /w/				/j/	(/wʰ/ (/w/)	
<b>Liquids</b>				/l/	/r/		

	Lips Together	Teeth on Lip	Tongue between Teeth	Tongue on Ridge behind Teeth	Tongue Pulled Back on Roof of Mouth	Back of Throat	Glottis
<b>Stops</b>							
Unvoiced	/p/			/t/		/k/	
Voiced	/b/			/d/		/g/	

- Made with one burst of sound
- Unvoiced: vocal cords disengaged
- Voiced: vocal cords engaged



	Lips Together	Teeth on Lip	Tongue between Teeth	Tongue on Ridge behind Teeth	Tongue Pulled Back on Roof of Mouth	Back of Throat	Glottis
<b>Nasals</b>	/m/			/n/		/ng/	

- Articulated with air stream directed through the nose







## Let's Try It!

/ng/

/n/

/n/

/ng/

/ng/

	Lips Together	Teeth on Lip	Tongue between Teeth	Tongue on Ridge behind Teeth	Tongue Pulled Back on Roof of Mouth	Back of Throat	Glottis
<b>Fricatives</b>							
Unvoiced		/f/	/th/	/s/	/sh/		/h/
Voiced		/v/	<u>th</u> /	/z/	/zh/		

- Hissy sounds
- Audible friction is created when the air is forced through small spaces in the mouth during articulation
- Continuants: can be said until one runs out of breath
- Unvoiced: vocal cords disengaged
- Voiced: vocal cords engaged

	Lips Together	Teeth on Lip	Tongue between Teeth	Tongue on Ridge behind Teeth	Tongue Pulled Back on Roof of Mouth	Back of Throat	Glottis
<b>Affricates</b>							
Unvoiced					/ch/		
Voiced					/j/		

- Combine features of stops and fricatives
- Made with tongue pulled a little farther back and placed on the hard palate on the roof of the mouth
- Different from fricatives because they stop air before releasing it
- Unvoiced: vocal cords disengaged
- Voiced: vocal cords engaged

	Lips Together	Teeth on Lip	Tongue between Teeth	Tongue on Ridge behind Teeth	Tongue Pulled Back on Roof of Mouth	Back of Throat	Glottis
<b>Glides</b>							
Unvoiced	/wh/					(/wh/)	
Voiced	/w/				/y/	(/w/)	

- Have vowel-like qualities and combine with vowels readily
- Always followed by a vowel phoneme that literally glides right into that vowel

	Lips Together	Teeth on Lip	Tongue between Teeth	Tongue on Ridge behind Teeth	Tongue Pulled Back on Roof of Mouth	Back of Throat	Glottis
<b>Liquids</b>				/l/	/r/		

- . Slippery consonants to describe, imitate, produce in isolation, or separate from vowels that precede them
- . float in the mouth
- . influence vowels that come before them
- . pronunciation changes somewhat according to the sounds that surround them



English Vowel Phonemes by Order of Articulation

<b>e</b> see these the set hey happy chief either	<b>i</b> at gym	<b>a</b> man can play great baby right yet this	<b>ɛ</b> bed break	<b>æ</b> cat	<b>ɪ</b> time bit city right little	<b>o</b> fox woman about	<b>u</b> cup two good though	<b>aw</b> law saw call wall bought	<b>ō</b> note boat toe more open go	<b>oo</b> two put could	<b>ū</b> two blue blue cheek kiss soup	<b>yū</b> cute few yours fluid
<b>oi</b> oil, boy	<b>ou</b> out, cow	<b>er</b> her, far, air	<b>ar</b> car	<b>or</b> hor								

Choose **ONE** of the **THREE** choices below to share out your aha moment.

1. Add a sticky note to an anchor chart near you with an aha moment.
2. Add an additional comment to an already existing one.
3. Use an exclamation mark to show that you agree with something stated or you find it interesting.

Ex. I really loved how it is set up in a v-shape to represent how the chin moves throughout each pronunciation.





# Sound Wall

## Plan and Preparation

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Identify a space for the sound wall.



Determine the materials needed to build the sound wall.



Choose how the sound wall will be organized and displayed.



Devise a plan for revealing new sounds.



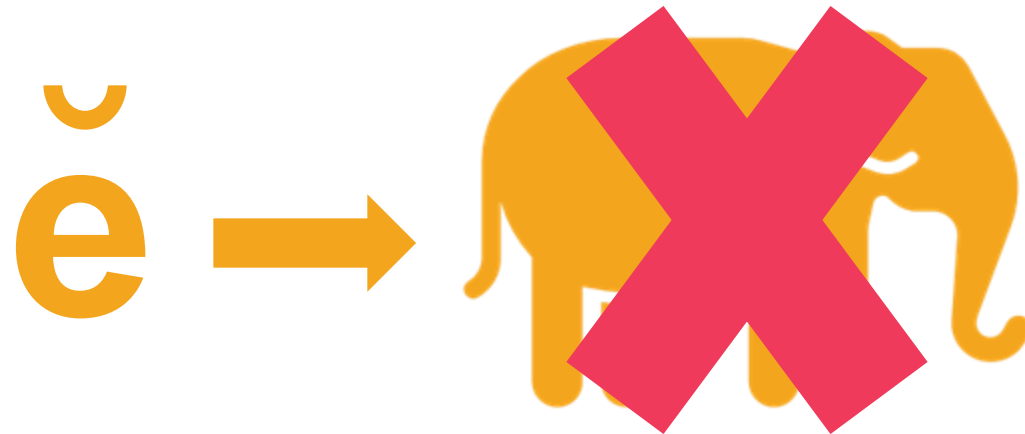
Establish a time during the day to interact with the sound wall.

## Questions to Consider:

- ✓ Is the location easily accessible for both my students and me?
- ✓ Will this location be readily available for daily teaching?
- ✓ Do I have a large enough space to place both a consonant and vowel wall in my class?
- ✓ What materials can I use to incorporate a smaller sound wall in my room?
- ✓ Will I have to rearrange materials already on the wall to accommodate this space?

Questions to Consider:

- ✓ Do I have cards with keywords for consonants and vowels?
- ✓ How will I lay out my consonant sound wall? Clusters? Horizontal line?
- ✓ Do I want to include pictures to help students?



Questions to Consider:

- ✓ Do I have a program with an explicit, systematic scope and sequence?
- ✓ Am I going to cluster the consonant sounds?
- ✓ Does my plan include a *v* shape for the vowel sounds?



# VOWEL VALLEY

**ALL VOWEL SOUNDS ARE VOICED**

*Mrs. Winter's Bliss*

**Vowel Sounds and Examples:**

- /ē/**: bee, see, these, time, sea, key, happy, field, ie
- /ī/**: i
- /ā/**: a, ay, ai
- /ē/**: e, ea
- /ā/**: a, a\_e, ai, e, ea
- /ī/**: i, i\_e, igh, ie
- /e/**: banana, a, e, i
- /ə/**: a, e, i
- /ū/**: u, u\_e, ew, ue
- /yū/**: u, u\_e, u
- /ōo/**: oo, u\_e, oo, ew, ue
- /ō/**: oo, oul, u
- /aw/**: aw, au, al, o, o\_e, oa, ow, oe
- /ū/**: u
- /er/**: er, ir, ur
- /ar/**: ar
- /or/**: or
- /oi/**: oi, oy
- /ou/**: ou, ow

Bliss, 2021

**STOPS**

- /p/ /b/**: p, b
- /t/ /d/**: t, d
- /k/ /g/**: c, k, ck, g

**AFFRICATES**

- /ch/ /j/**: ch, tch, j, ge, dge

**NASALS**

- /m/ /n/ /ng/**: m, mb, mn, n, gn, kn, ing, \_n\_

**FRICATIVES**

- /s/ /z/**: s, ce, ss, ci, cy, z, s, zz
- /th/ /th/**: th, th
- /sh/ /zh/**: sh, ge, ci, ti, s, si
- /f/ /v/**: f, ph, ff, v, ve
- /h/**: h\_

**GLIDES**

- /y/**: y\_
- /wh/ /w/**: wh\_, w\_

**LIQUIDS**

- /r/**: r, wr\_
- /l/**: l, ll

**2 SOUNDS**

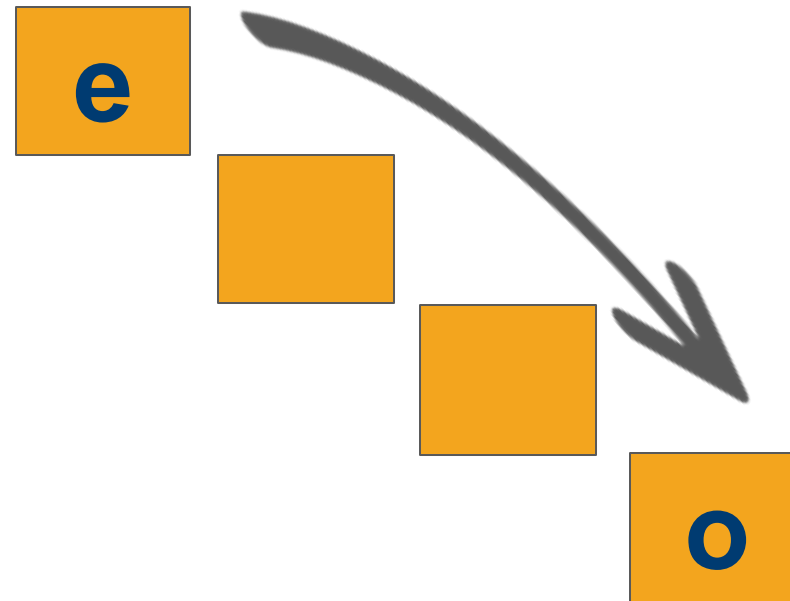
- /x/**: \_x
- /qu/**: qu\_

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Questions to Consider:

- ✓ Will I place cards on the wall prior to teaching the sounds?
- ✓ Should I turn untaught sounds over until explicitly taught?
- ✓ If sounds are not yet covered explicitly, will they be visible to students the whole time?





1. Introduce one sound at a time.
2. Do not introduce similar sounds in sequence.
3. Display only the sounds you have taught.
4. Add words with the different spellings of that sound, but only the spelling patterns students have learned.
5. Use the sound wall for quick daily review.
6. Show students how they can use the sound wall as reference for reading and writing.



What  
are my  
lips  
doing?



What  
are my  
teeth  
doing?



What is  
my  
tongue  
doing?



What is  
my  
voice  
doing?



How is  
the air  
flowing?

- ✓ Have I thought about when I will introduce new sounds?
- ✓ How will I introduce the sounds using the sound wall?
- ✓ Will the students place the sound on the sound wall or will I?
- ✓ What will my plan be to review the sounds on the sound wall?  
Will this be sporadically during the day, a part of your literacy block, or a part of a morning routine?

# Daily Review for Sound Walls

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- Point to all the sounds on the consonant chart and ask students to repeat them after you.
- Point to all the sounds on the vowel chart as you say them and ask children to repeat each sound.
- Determine the differences in sounds, if applicable.
- Use the sounds to determine spelling choices that have been introduced.
- Ask questions.




# Consonant Sound Wall




## STOPS

 /p/  /b/  /t/  /d/  /k/  /g/




















## NASALS




 /m/  /n/  /ng/








## FRICATIVES



 /s/  /z/  /th/  /th/  /sh/  /zh/










 /f/  /v/  /h/









## AFFRICATES

 /ch/  /j/

## LIQUIDS

 /r/  /l/

## GLIDES

 /wh/  /w/  /y/







Respond to the questions below with your table. Be prepared to share your thoughts.



1. How are the students actively engaged during the sound wall review?
1. What is an additional way to engage students with sound walls?

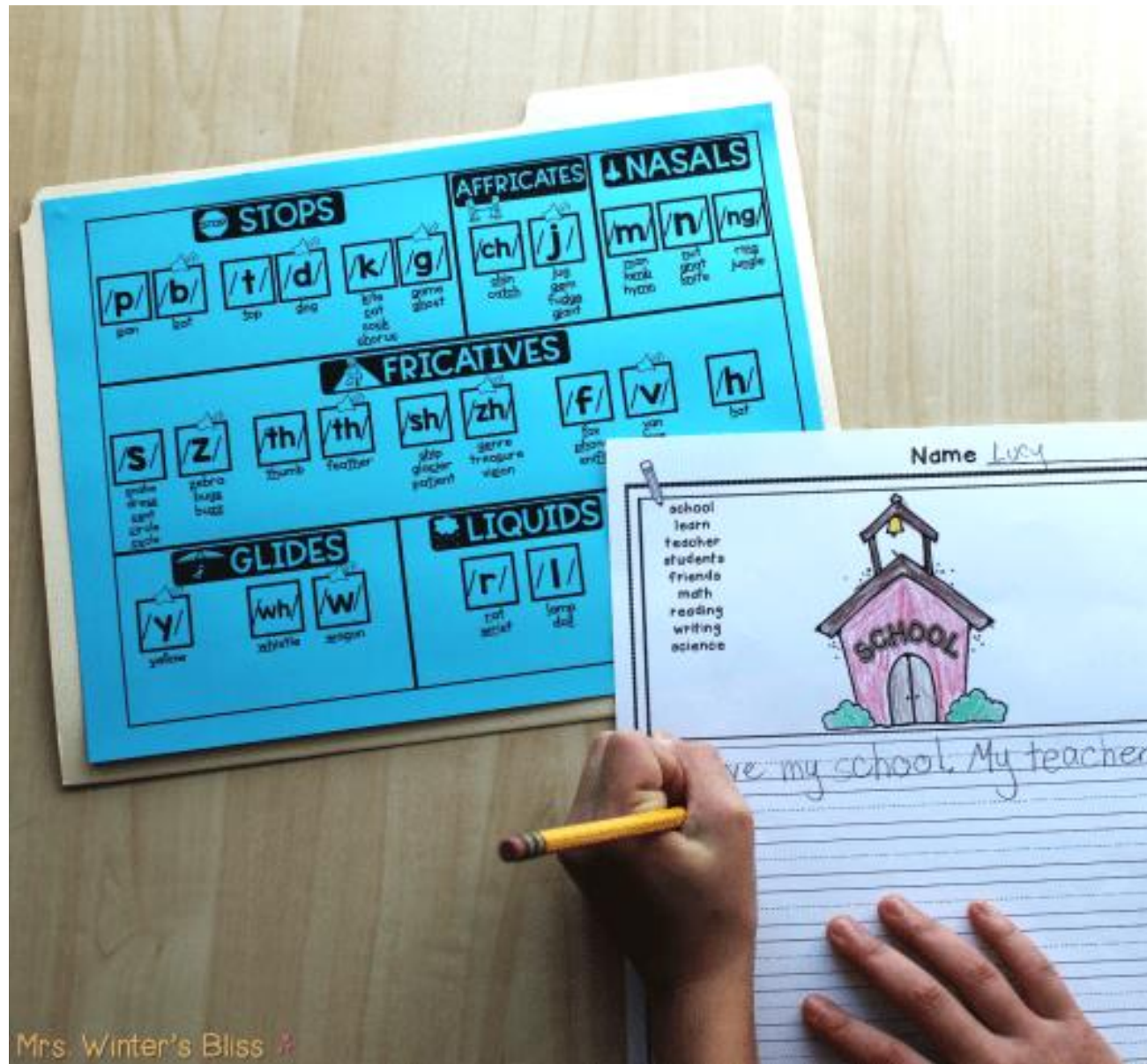


# Using a Sound Wall

## Implementation Strategies and Activities

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Winters, C., 2021



- Students imitate the sounds and/or look in a mirror to answer questions about the sound wall.

Which sound is made with the lips—/p/ or /k/?

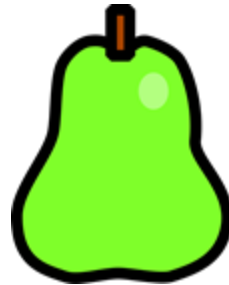
Which sound is made with the mouth wide open—/ō/ or /w/?

Which sound is made with the tongue between the teeth—/f/ or /th/?



- Engage students in picture sorts with confusing sounds.

/p/

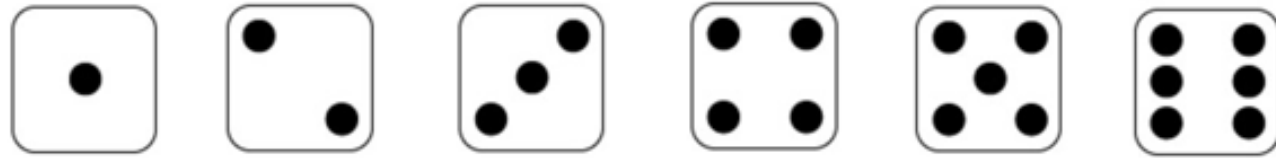


/b/



Dahlgren, M.E., 2020

## ROLL A SOUND



/b/	/ă/	/f/	/v/	/ī/	/p/
		frog			
		phone			
		puff			

- Students roll the die or number generator and spell words containing the sound rolled.



- Turn out the lights.
- Repeat the poem “Flashlight, flashlight, oh so bright. Shine a sound with your light.”
- Shine the flashlight on a sound from the sound wall.
- Have the students state the sound, spellings, and the attributes.



When students ask how to spell a word...



- Ask them to segment the sounds in the word and ask them to find the sound they are struggling with on the sound wall.
- Example: When a student asks how to spell "*meet*," ask them to find the /ē/ and look at the choices for spelling that sound.



When students struggle to read a word...



- Point to the spelling on the sound wall and ask them what they know about that spelling.
- Example: If a student stumbles on the word “*night*” while reading, point out the *igh* and direct them to the long *i* card on the sound wall. What do we know about this spelling *igh* and the sound it represents?

# Reflection

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Do not be afraid to begin!



Make it a learning experience for everyone.



Keep the focus on the phonemes rather than the graphemes.

**Take a few minutes to personally reflect on the new knowledge you have gained from today's presentation.**



- What is something new you learned about sound walls?
- What is one takeaway from today's presentation that will support you in your coaching practices?



# Resources

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- Bottari, M. (2020, November 6). *Why Make the Switch? Transitioning from Word Walls to Sound Walls*. Heggerty. <https://heggerty.org/blog/sound-walls/>
- Dahlgren, M. E. (2020a). *Tools 4 Reading - Educational Materials*. Tools 4 Reading. <https://www.tools4reading.com/>
- Dahlgren, M. E. (2020, May 20). *Implementing a Sound Wall: Because We Need to Distinguish Between Sounds and Letters*. Voyager Sopris Learning. [https://www.voyagersopris.com/blog/edview360/2020/05/20/implementing-a-sound-wall?utm\\_source=news&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=edview360\\_052120](https://www.voyagersopris.com/blog/edview360/2020/05/20/implementing-a-sound-wall?utm_source=news&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=edview360_052120)

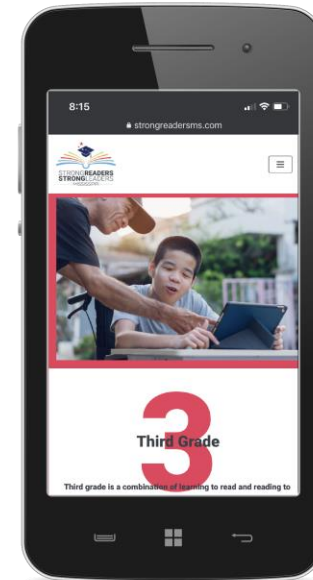
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**If you have questions,**  
please email  
[askacoach@mdek12.org](mailto:askacoach@mdek12.org).

The "***Ask A Literacy Coach***"  
button is also available on the  
MDE 'resources for administrators'  
page.



**Strong Readers Strong Leaders Mississippi**  
Strongreadersms.com website developed to help families assist children with building their reading skills. The site provides activities, resources and information for children from birth through grade 5 to become strong readers.



# Office of Elementary Education and Reading

Division of Literacy

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