

# Language and Literacy for Young Learners Seminar



## Alphabet Knowledge

University of Utah

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UNIVERSITY OF UTAH READING CLINIC  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Professional development for educators

Research-based intervention

Developmentally appropriate instruction



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# Quick Review . . .



**Phoneme awareness is the foundational base for more complex phonological skills:**

Phoneme Segmentation

Phoneme Blending

Phoneme Manipulation

Follow the order of skill development.

Begin with easiest tasks and build on these skills as concepts are mastered.

Focus on speech sounds and acquiring memory for sounds before focusing on letters.

# Alphabet Knowledge Seminar:

- Empirical Research Informs Instruction
- Standards and Guidelines for Pre-K
- Why Learning the Letter Names & Letter Sounds Can Be Difficult
- Diagnostic Assessment to Guide Planning/Instruction/Pacing
- Advantages to Introducing/Grouping Letters & Sounds Together
- Enhancing Alphabet Instruction
- Activities & Planning
- Follow-up Assignment

# National Early Literacy Panel

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**National Early Literacy Panel (2003-2008) reviewed research on the teaching of reading in preschool and kindergarten**

**Largest meta-analysis of research data on the teaching of reading during these years (examined more than 7000 potential studies, about 400-500 were included in the final review)**

**Set out to determine which skills needed to be taught early on and what confers literacy learning advantages to young children**

# National Early Learning Panel (NELP)

6 Variables Strongly Correlated with Later Literacy 2008

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These 6 variables not only correlated with later literacy... but maintained their predictive power even when the role of other variables were accounted for.

- Alphabet Knowledge
- Phonological Awareness
- Rapid Automatic Naming
  - letters and digits
- Rapid Automatic Naming
  - objects and colors
- Writing or Writing Name
- Phonological Memory

# Alphabet Knowledge (AK)

“knowledge of names and sounds associated with printed letters”

-NELP 2008

- **Early alphabet knowledge is one of the best predictors of later literacy achievement** (Hammill, 2004; Schatschneider, Fletcher, Francis, Carlson, & Foorman, 2004)
- **Challenges in acquiring alphabet knowledge are indicative of later literacy difficulties** (\*Snowling, Gallagher, & Frith, 2003; Torppa, Poikkeus, Laakso, Eklund, & Lyytinen, 2006).
- **Automatic single-letter recognition is essential if students are to benefit from further reading instruction** (Berninger et al., 2002; Vellutino, Scanlon, & Jaccard, 2003).
- **The benefits of alphabet instruction appear to extend beyond alphabet learning. Research suggests greater impacts on children’s reading and spelling when instruction includes an alphabet component than when it does not** (Ehri et al., 2001; NELP, 2008).

\* Included in the NELP report

# Guidelines For Learning

## Utah's Early Childhood Core Standards

-Reading Standards for Foundational Skills (RF)

### Phonics and Word Recognition (RF3)

With guidance and support, recognize that words are made up of letters and their sounds

### Preschool Foundational Standards

**Recognize that letters have names and sounds**

**Recognize own name**

**Distinguish between items that are the same or different, such as pictures, objects, and letters**

### Kindergarten Readiness Standards

**Begin to associate names of letters with sounds of the alphabet**

**Begin to recognize some words that are seen frequently**

**Distinguish between letters and words that are the same or different**

# Guidelines for Learning

## Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework

### Developmental Progression

**36-48 Months**

**48-60 Months**

**Indicators ⇨ By 60 Months**

Shows an awareness of alphabet letters, such as singing the ABC song, recognizing letters from one's own name, or naming some letters that are encountered often.

Recognizes and names at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the letters in the alphabet, including letters in own name, as well as letters encountered often in the environment. Produces the sound of many recognized letters.

- Names 18 upper- and 15 lower-case letters
- Knows the sounds associated with several letters

# Acquisition of Letter Names

-18 uppercase and 15 lowercase

O B A C X

Uppercase letters are usually recognized before lowercase letters

o b a c x

Children's experience with letter names precedes their experiences with letter sounds

/s/ /b/ /p/  
/m/

LN knowledge generally outpaces LS knowledge

# What is so difficult about learning the letter names?

b p q d g

o a *a* g g *g*

A V W N L M

A letter's name is its only stable property, as the shape may change forms, and the speech sounds represented by letters may change. This means that letter names anchor the other properties of letters. (Cox, 1992)

# Acquisition of Letter Sounds

-making connections between letter names and the sounds they make

Easier to more difficult

b, d, i, k,  
p, t, v, z

Letter sound is the initial sound  
heard in the letter name









f, l, m, n,  
r, s

Letter sound is the final sound  
heard in the letter name

h, w, y  
a, e, i, o, u  
c, j

Letter names have no, or ambiguous,  
association with letter sound

# What is so difficult about learning the letter sounds?

Say:  = /**b**/ + /ē/   
 = /ě/ + /**f**/   
 = /s/ + /ē/   
 = /ě/ + /k/ + /s/ 

What comes 1<sup>st</sup>



Phonemic  
Awareness

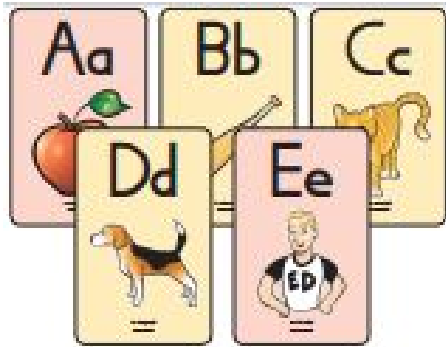
...or



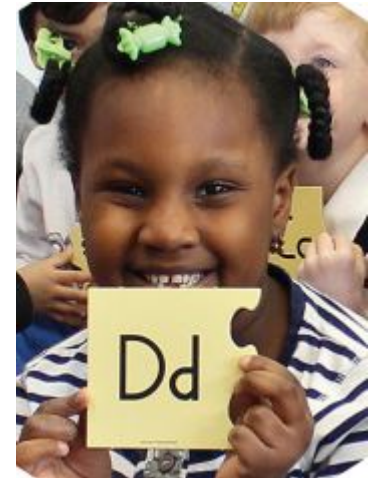
Alphabet  
Knowledge

# Alphabet Knowledge + Phonemic Awareness

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d – dog - /d/



Letter Name – Keyword – Letter Sound

**T.** “Tell me the story for ‘d’.”    **S.** “d – dog - /d/.”

# Differences across children....

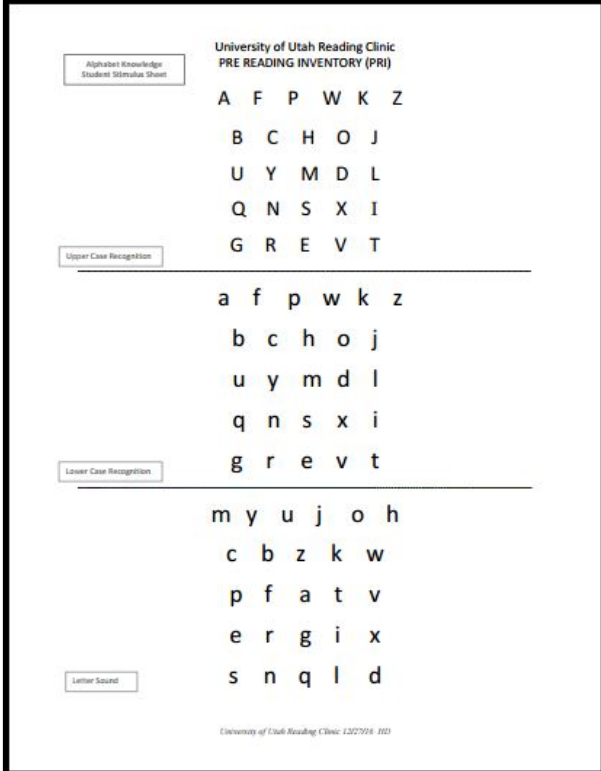
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- Children will demonstrate a broad range of alphabet knowledge in a Pre-K classroom at the beginning of the year.
- Students will demonstrate differences in how readily letters and letter sounds are learned.

# Pre-Reading Inventory (PRI)

## -Information to guide intentional instruction

- Conduct a diagnostic alphabet assessment
- What do they know? What don't they know?
- Note other information
- Look for patterns across children in your classroom
- Develop individual and class composites
- Use results to plan your alphabet instruction



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PRE READING INVENTORY (PRI)

Alphabet Knowledge  
Student Stimulus Sheet

A F P W K Z  
B C H O J  
U Y M D L  
Q N S X I  
G R E V T

Upper Case Recognition

a f p w k z  
b c h o j  
u y m d l  
q n s x i  
g r e v t

Lower Case Recognition

m y u j o h  
c b z k w  
p f a t v  
e r g i x  
s n q l d

Letter Sound

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# Diagnostic Assessment Results

PRI - Diagnostic Assessment Results Date \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_  
Upper Case Lower Case Sound\*

Andy	Beth	Colin	Darius	Emilio	Fiona	Gio	Heidi	Izzy	Jenna
Aa*	Aa*	Aa*	Aa	A	Aa*	A	absent	A	Aa*
Bb*	Bb*	Bb*	Cc*	B	B	B*		B	Bb*
Cc*	Cc*	Cc*	D*	C	Cc	Cc*		C	Cc*
D	LI*	Dd*	F*	D	F*	Dd*		I	Dd*
Nn	Oo	Ee*	Kk*	E	li	F*		K	Ee
Oo	Uu	Ff*	LI*	F	Kk	G*		L	Ff*
Pp*	Yy	Kk*	M*	G	LI	H		M	Gg*
Ss*	Zz	LI*	N*	i	Oo	li		N	Hh*
Tt*		Mm*	Pp*	J	Pp	K		Pp	Ii*
Yy		Oo*	Q	K	Ss	L*		R	Jj*
		Pp*	R	L	Vv	Mm*		S	Kk*
		Qq*	Ss*	M*		Nn*		Z*	LI*
		Ss*	T*	N*		Oo*			Mm*
		Tt*	Vv*	Oo		P			Nn*
		Zz*	X	Pp		Z			Oo
			Zz*	Q					Pp*
				R					Q*
				Ss					Rr*
				T					Ss*
				Uu					Tt*
				Vv					Uu
				Xx					Vv*
				Zz					Xx*
									Y
									Zz*

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Letter Recognition Student \_\_\_\_\_  
Upper- Lower-Case

Student Assessment Results Date \_\_\_\_\_

Unknown	Partially Known	Known

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# Explicit AK Instruction – Lesson Components

-Engagement is key and attention of young children is limited!

Component	Time in minutes	Description
Identify the letter name	1 - 2	T. demonstrates and C. practice naming the targeted upper- and lowercase letters.
Identify the letter sound		
Recognize letter in text		
Produce the letter		

Adaptation of Jones & Reutzel, 2012 (pg. 463)

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Identify the letter sound	1-2	T. provides sound of letter and demonstrates how it is formed in mouth. C. practice making the sound and matching it to upper- and lowercase letters. Keywords and various activities manipulating sound are provided. Short vowel sounds are taught.
Recognize letter in text		
Produce the letter		

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Recognize letter in text	3	C. locate the upper- and lowercase letter in letter assortments, words, and connected text. They make the sound when they find the letters.
Produce the letter		

Adaptation of Jones & Reutzel, 2012 (pg. 463)

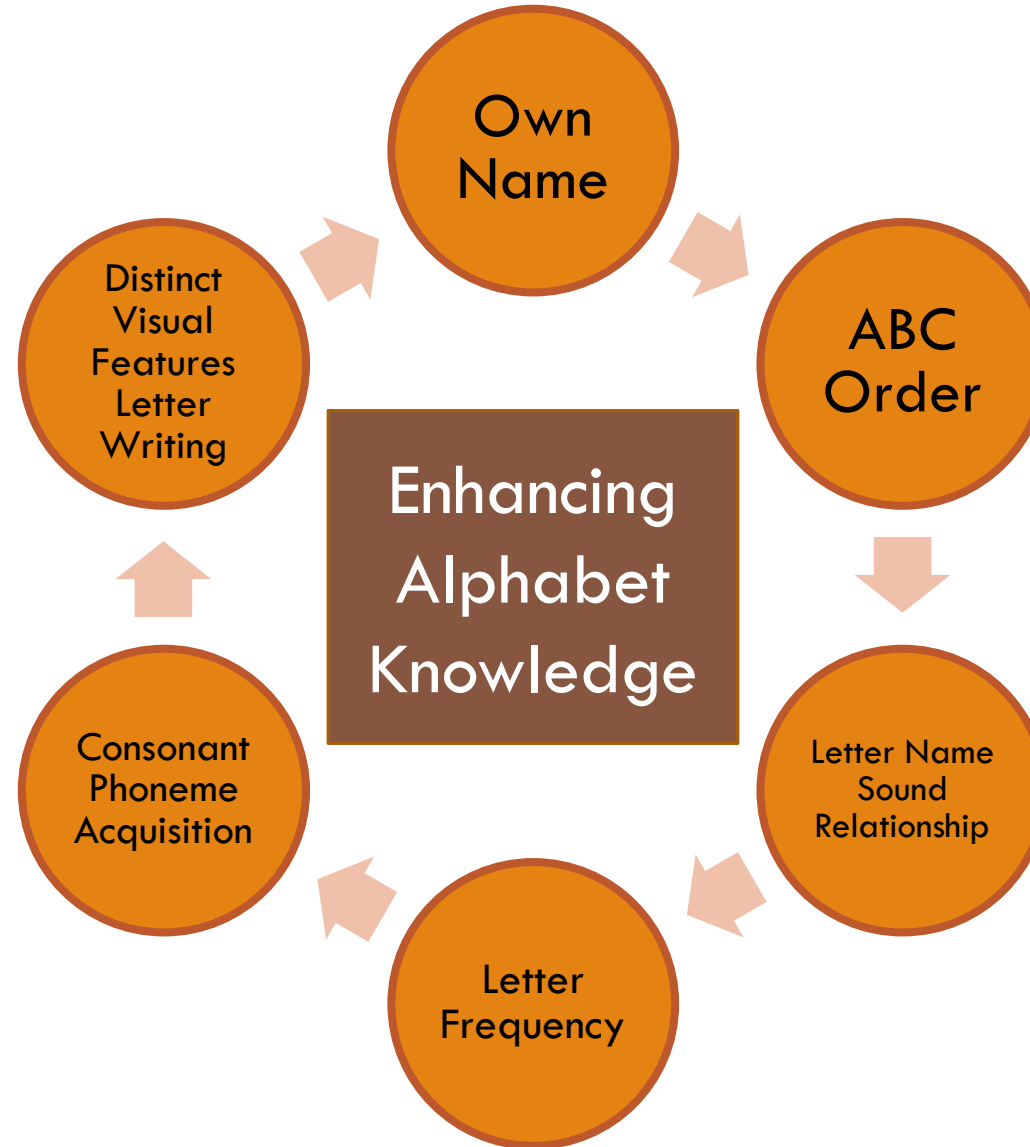
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Recognize letter in text	3	C. locate the upper- and lowercase letter in letter assortments, words, and connected text. They make the sound when they find the letters.
Produce the letter	4-5	T. demos & provides a verbal description explaining how to make the letter. C. practice forming letters on paper and/or whiteboards and/or with clay, pipe cleaners, or Wikki Stix.

Adaptation of Jones & Reutzel, 2012 (pg. 463)

# There are certain advantages to introducing and grouping certain letters together



Jones, C.J., Reutzel, D.R. 2012

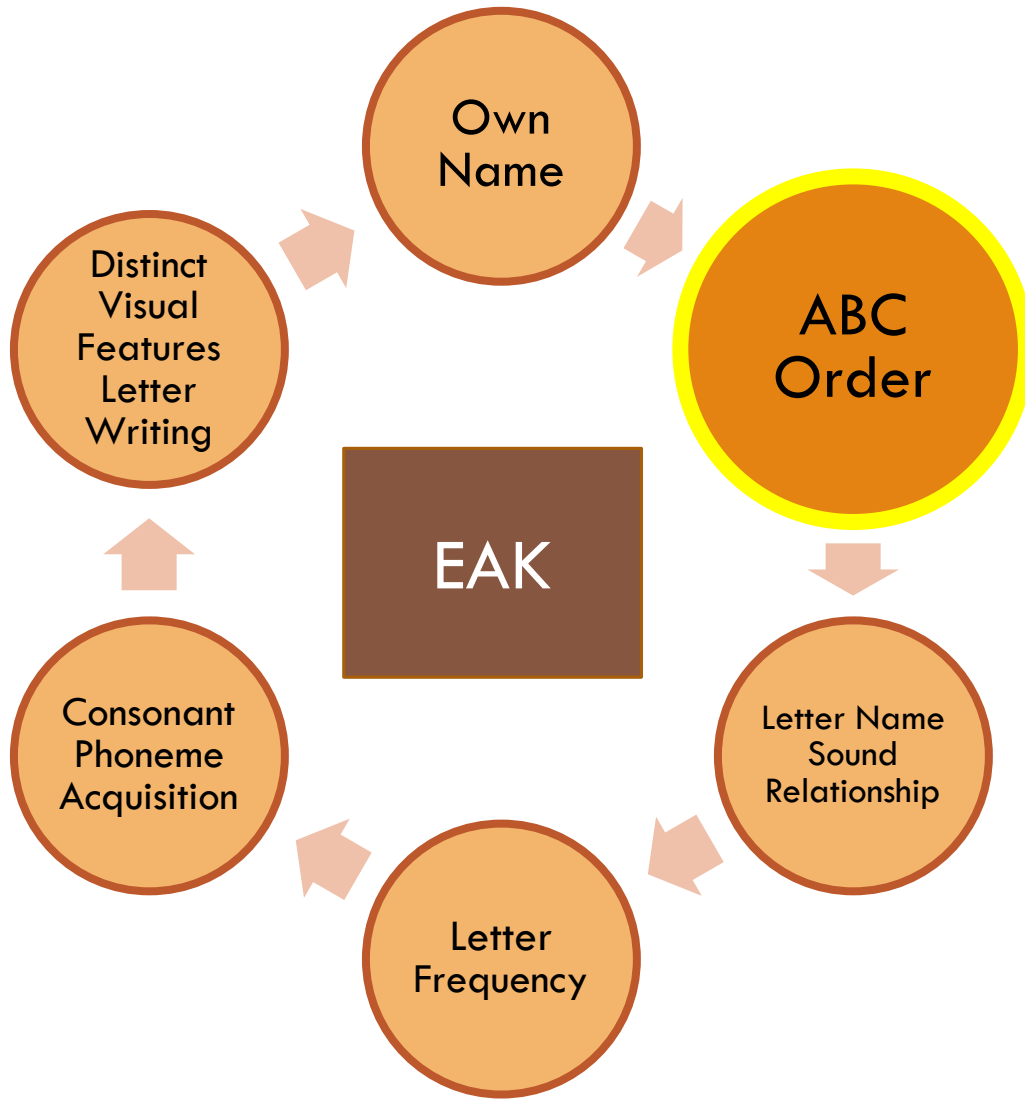


## Own Name Advantage

Builds upon children's experiences with their own names

*Example-*

- Alphabet "name wall"

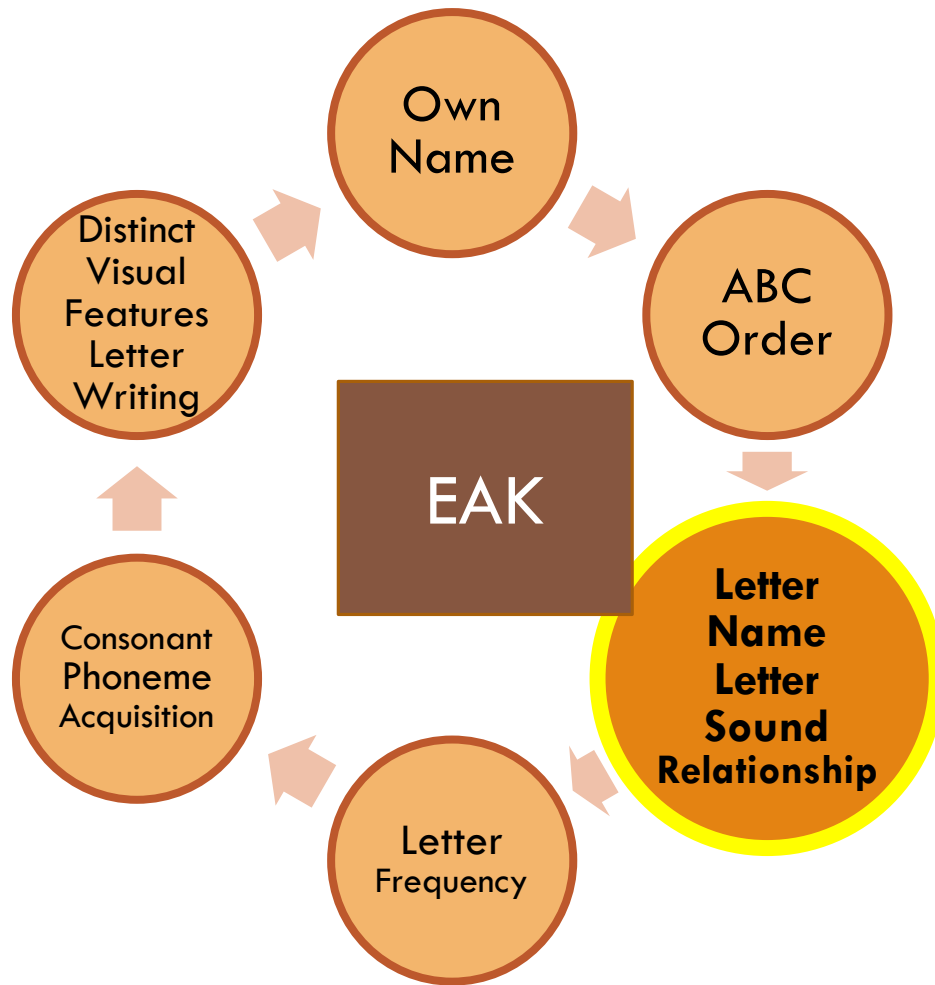


## Alphabetical Order Advantage

Teaching the letter names in alphabetic order

*Examples-*

- Traditional alphabet song
- Children's books that present alphabetic order



## Letter Name-Letter Sound Relationship Advantage

Teach the letters first that have their sound in their letter name.

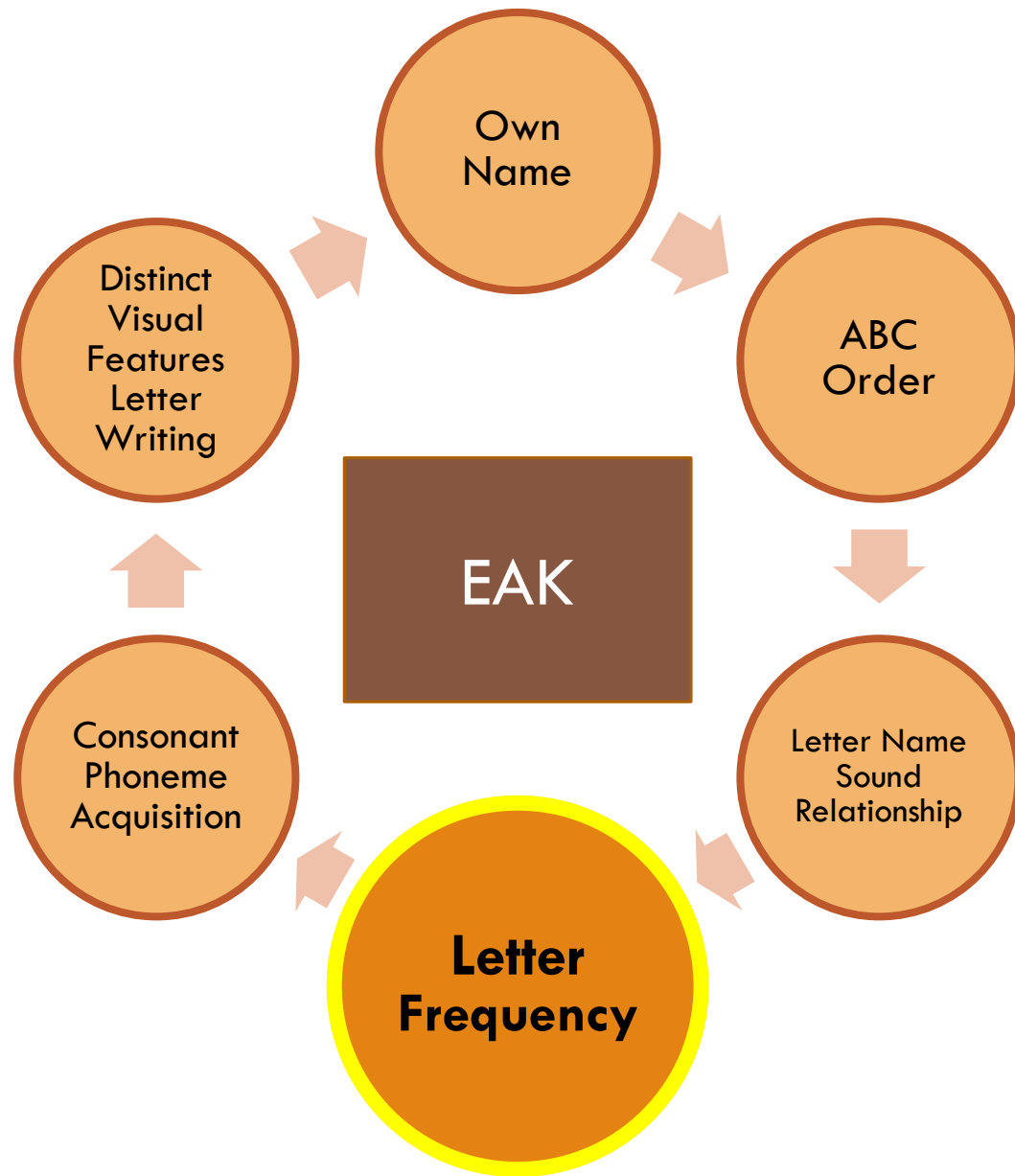
- *Examples-* b, p, f, m

Letter sounds that are associated with the letter's name in the onset of the first syllable.

- *Examples-* b, d, j, k, p, t, v, z
- **Non** *examples-* f, l, m, n, r, s

Letters whose names have no relationship to the sounds represented are the most difficult to learn

- *Examples-* h, q, w, y



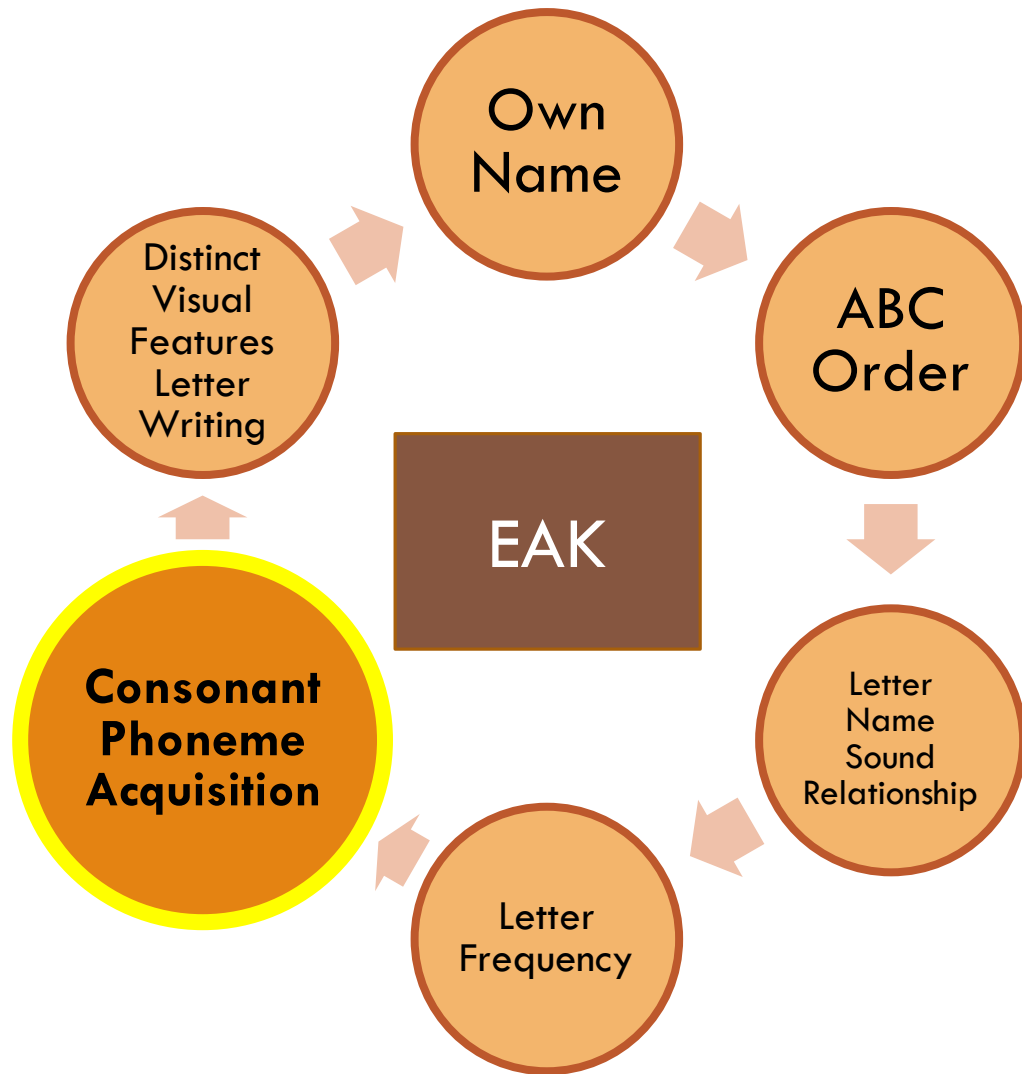
## Letter Frequency Advantage

Takes into consideration the potential difficulty of learning a specific letter based on it's frequency in print.

*Example-*

- Letters such as q, w, y appear less frequently in printed language and therefore require more amount of time to learn.

These should be taught first in the cycle so they can be included in review during this instructional cycle.



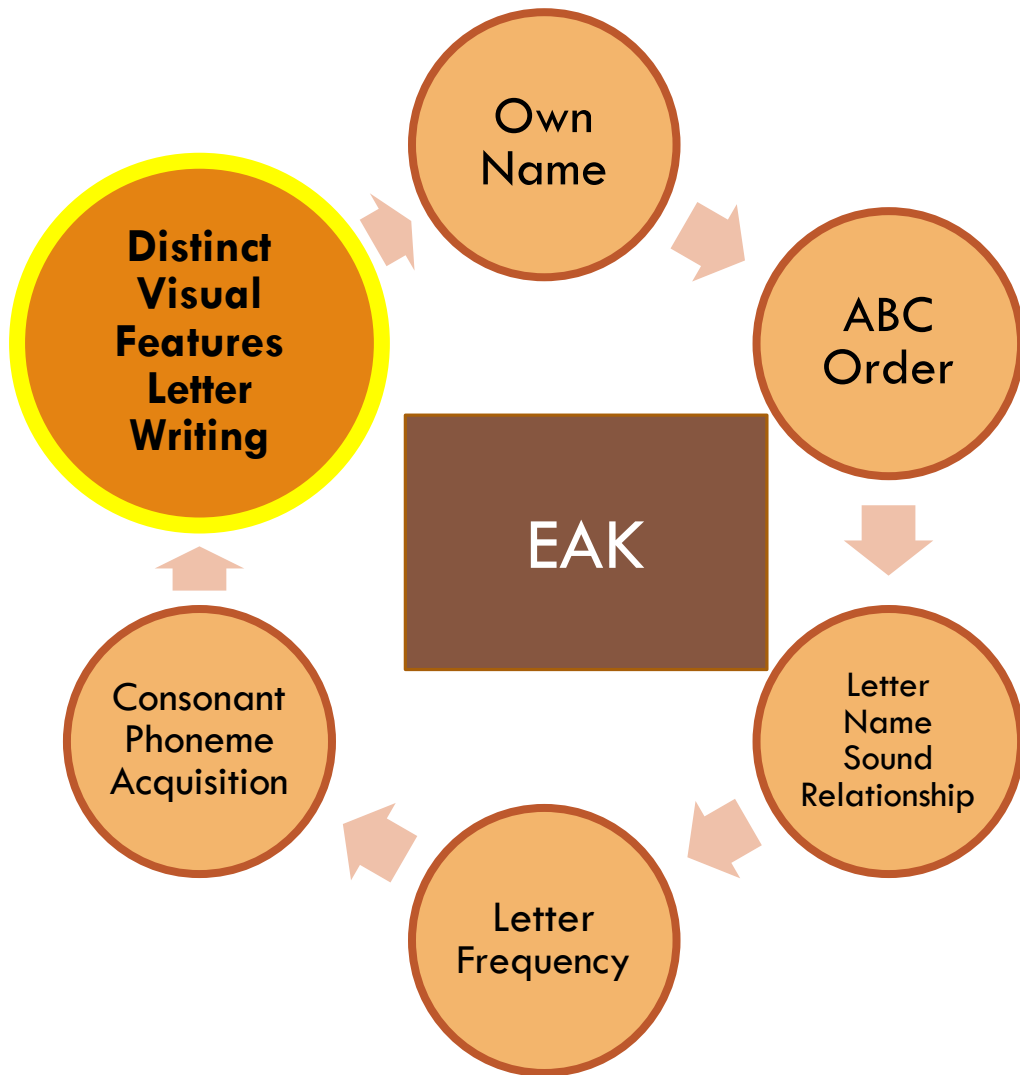
## Consonant Phoneme Acquisition Order Advantage

The acquisition of letter sounds during language development- vowel sounds are acquired before consonant sounds. Earlier acquired sounds are easier for children to learn.

*Example-*

- Troublesome letter sounds acquired after age four are l, r, v, z, j

These may require multiple learning sessions.



## Distinctive Visual Features Letter Writing Advantage

Focuses on the features of written letters. The greater the number of distinctive features shared by letters, the more difficult it is for young learners to distinguish between the letters.

*Examples-*

- M/N/W b/d/p/q C/G

Begin by presenting letters that have fewer distinctive features in common and then move to small clusters of letters with similar features to emphasize the critical differences

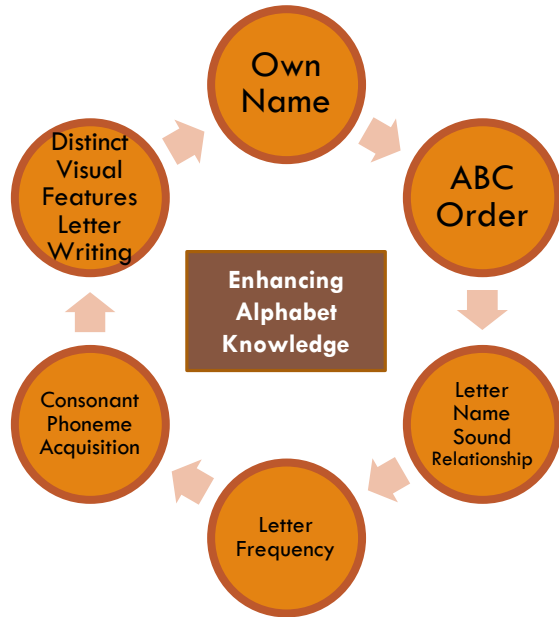
Verbal mnemonics of the motor sequence can be helpful

- to write a *t*, “straight line down and then a line across the center” \*

\* letter formation & path of movement

Jones, C.J., Reutzel, D.R. 2012

# Instructional Cycles



Think Aloud

## Do's . . . . .

- use assessment to guide instruction
- teach easier unfamiliar letters first
- vary amount of instruction by the difficulty of the letter
- teach both names and sounds
- teach upper/lowercase simultaneously
- integrate alphabet & phonological awareness instruction
- provide multi-sensory instruction
- lessons 10-15 minutes
- I do, we do, you do!

## Don'ts . . . . .

- teach a letter a week
- treat all learners the same
- treat all letters the same
- neglect practice and repetition
- forget that small group instruction will be needed

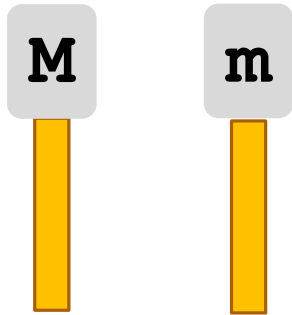
The ABC's are  
**fun**  
to learn!



# Activity: Letter Name Identification

Materials for Instruction:

2 sets of Alphabet cards (uppercase & lowercase) for teacher and students

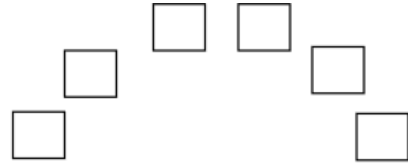


1. This is the letter \_\_\_\_\_. This is the uppercase letter \_\_\_\_\_.  
Say it with me, \_\_\_\_\_. **Show me** the uppercase letter \_\_\_\_\_.  
This is the letter \_\_\_\_\_. This is the lowercase letter \_\_\_\_\_.  
Say it with me \_\_\_\_\_. **Show me** the lowercase letter \_\_\_\_\_.  
2. Let's practice naming this letter. What is this letter? \_\_\_\_\_.  
**Let's Skywrite the letter \_\_\_\_\_. Write this letter on the rug.**

\*letter formation using verbalization to direct students.

# Activity: Rainbow Match

Place 6 alphabet letters (2 known & 1 unknown) face up in a rainbow shape



1. T. models pointing to card “The letter is \_\_\_\_\_. Repeat.” S. respond

“The sound is \_\_\_\_\_. Repeat.” S. respond

**Flip the letters cards face down after review-** (review can be faded out)

S. flips card and says letter name & sound, then places cards into columns forming 2x3 matrix. When all cards are in columns S. should....

3. T. trace letter shape say **letter name/sound** (*my turn*)

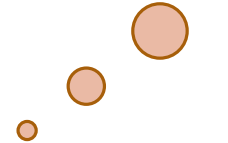
T. & S. say **letter name/sound** (*together*) as S. trace

S. trace letter shape say **letter name/sound** (*your turn*)

4. Alphabet Memory - flip cards over and place in 3x2 matrix.

T. plays against S. ☐ ☐ ☐ Flip 2 cards “Everybody? The letter is \_\_\_\_\_. The sound is \_\_\_\_\_.”

☐ ☐ ☐ “Is that a match?”



J	j
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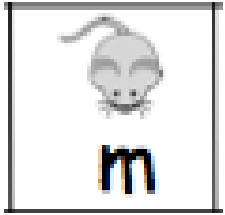
E	e
---	---

R	r
---	---



# Activity: Sound Identification

Materials for Instruction: Letter sound cards with pictures



1. The letter is ***m***. The sound is ***m***.

When I say the sound ***m***, I place my mouth/tongue like this \_\_\_\_.  
Try it with me. Show your neighbor.

**\* Share the story: letter name – keyword – letter sound**

2. Let's practice the story.

**Everybody, say 'm'**

**Everybody, say 'mouse'**

**Everybody, say /m/ Let's tell the story. \* m-mouse-/m/**

**I DO  
WE DO  
YOU DO**

# Activity: Recognizing the Letter in Text

Materials for Instruction: Alphabet Wall Chart



1. Now let's see if we can find letter \_\_\_\_\_.

- Have students identify the letter of classmates' names posted under the Alphabet Wall Chart by the beginning letter in name.
- Each time the letter is located in text, say the students name the letter name - keyword - sound.

# Extension Activities

1.



Is the letter  
\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_'s  
name?

2.

I have  
the first card.  
  
Who has  
a

I have  
a  
  
Who has  
z

I have \_\_\_\_\_.  
Who has \_\_\_\_\_?

I have  
z  
  
Who has  
m

I have  
m  
  
Who has  
b

3.



Show the  
letter \_\_\_\_\_.  
Tell me the  
story for \_\_\_\_\_.

# More Activities. . .

## Letter Recognition



**Children hunt for letters in their name**

## Letter Matching



**Children match upper- and lowercase letters**



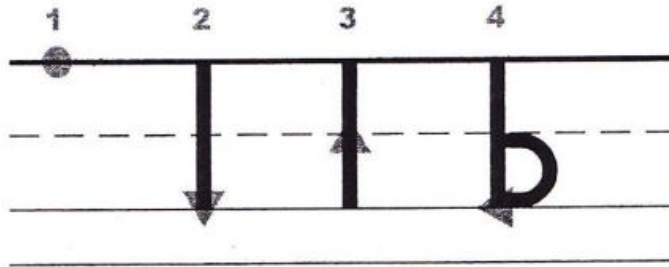
**Children see how quickly they can place the letters on the mat.**

# Letter Formation-Path of Movement

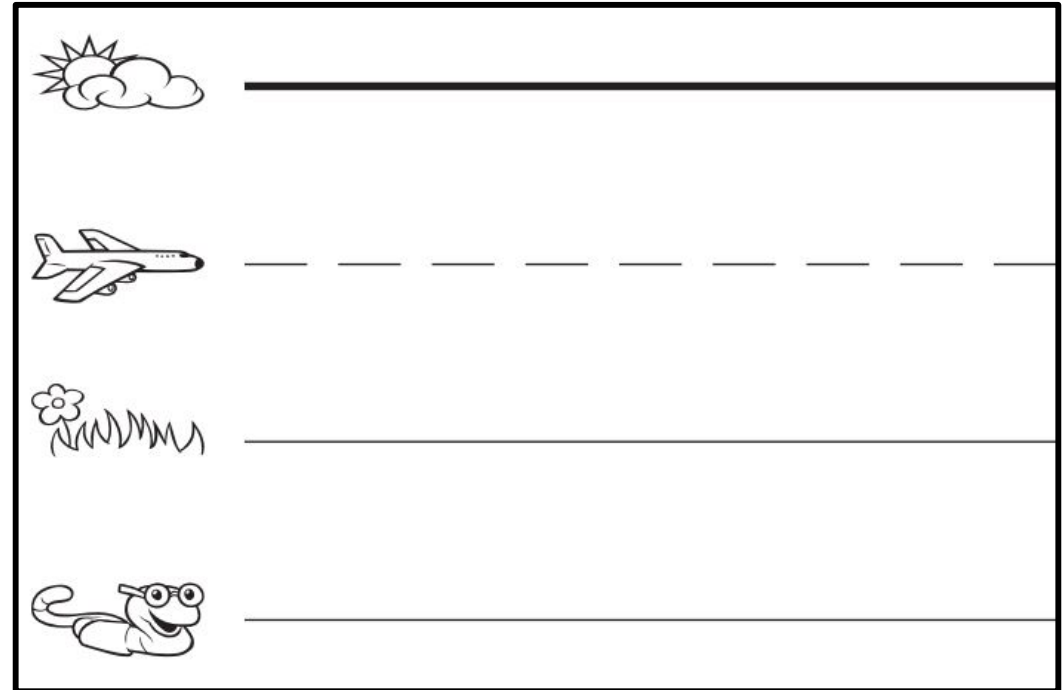
## Letter Formation for **b**

**b** is a sky line letter.

It starts on the (sky line).



1. Point to the sky line.
2. Go down to the grass line.
3. Trace up to the plane line,
4. and go around to the grass line.



# Additional thoughts about AK instruction

## -the need for small group

Start with first initial of name for children who come to you with little or no experience.

Select easier, unknown letters to teach first.

If students know the uppercase letter- but not the lower case letter – start here. Try to move partially known letters into the known column.

Use what the children know to build on - let letter name knowledge support letter sound acquisition.

Letter Recognition Group: *Analy, Beth, Fabian, Evelyn, Ignacio*

Upper- Lower-case Date: September 4

Group Assessment Results

Unknown	Partially Known	Known
D	B	Aa
F	E	Cc
G	Q	Ii
H	T	Kk
J		Ll
M		Oo
N		Ss
P		Uu
R		Xx
V		Zz
Y		

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# Parents and Foundational Literacy Skills

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Insert Parents and Alphabet Knowledge from Video File

# Alphabet Knowledge Seminar Assignment

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## **Develop an alphabet learning activity for Pre-K**

- State the lesson objective
- Identify the area of development your lesson targets
- Plan the steps for implementing your activity

## **Execute the activity**

- Video your lesson with children

## **Write a reflection of the experience**

- What went well? What did you learn? What would you change?

# Some Resources

University of Utah Reading Clinic

<http://www.uurc.utah.edu/>

Reading Rockets

[http://www.readingrockets.org/teaching/prek\\_guide](http://www.readingrockets.org/teaching/prek_guide)

Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR)

[http://www.fcrr.org/resources/resources\\_vpk.html](http://www.fcrr.org/resources/resources_vpk.html)

Neuhaus Education Center

<http://library.neuhaus.org/home>

National Association for the Education of Young Children

<http://www.naeyc.org/>

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# A Quick Review of AK.....

## A Letter & Sound Evaluation



- allows you to plan and guide instruction

## Some Letter Names are Easier to Learn



- uppercase names  $\Rightarrow$  lowercase
- first letter in their name

## Some Letter Sounds are Easier to Learn



- first sound in their name
- the letter sound is in the letter name

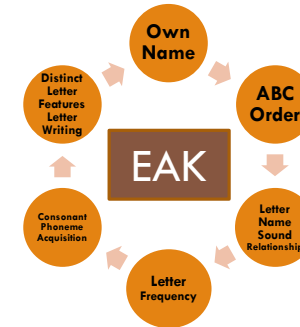
## Teach PA and AK Together

- teach them 'the story'

d-dog-/d/



## Enhancing Alphabet Instruction



- teach these advantages in cycles