

# Ways to Promote the Reading, Word Study, and Writing Practices Students Need

Watching students as emergent readers and writers is the most rewarding part of being a kindergarten teacher. Helping students to grasp the huge concept that consonants and vowels make up words is a tall order. To assist students to become successful and independent readers, you need a well-rounded daily English language arts block. *Puzzle Piece Phonics* is one component of that English language arts block. However, as Wiley Blevins said in his 2016 International Literacy Association presentation, “It takes four to six weeks to master any phonics skill, and the mastery won’t happen unless students apply the phonics skills in their own reading and writing each day.” The other components of English language arts, reading and writing, are important pieces of the puzzle as well.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

READING	WORD STUDY	WRITING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upper- and lowercase letters</li> <li>• Sounds of the alphabet</li> <li>• Simple sight words</li> <li>• Read-aloud</li> <li>• Shared reading</li> <li>• Guided reading</li> <li>• Independent reading</li> <li>• Fluency practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phonemic awareness</li> <li>• Letter identification and associated sounds</li> <li>• Direct instruction decoding and encoding letters, then words</li> <li>• Sorting               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sound sorts</li> <li>• Word sorts</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Practice writing letters and words</li> <li>• Reading words in connected text               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluency practice</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Posters/anchor charts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter formation</li> <li>• Simple sentences</li> <li>• Descriptive sentences</li> <li>• Journaling</li> <li>• Shared writing</li> <li>• Independent writing</li> <li>• Writing conferences</li> <li>• Student sharing</li> </ul>

*Puzzle Piece Phonics* gives you all of the resources you need to implement the word study component of the English language arts block. In kindergarten, word study is the most important component of English language arts due to students’ developmental stage as readers and writers. According to the National Reading Panel (2000, <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/Documents/report.pdf>), “Phonics instruction produces the biggest impact on growth in reading when it begins in kindergarten or 1st grade before children have learned to read independently.... [The results indicate that] systematic phonics instruction in kindergarten and 1st grade is highly beneficial and that children at these developmental levels are quite capable of learning phonemic and phonics concepts” (p. 2-93). Word study gives students the foundational skills they need to become readers and writers. However, students also need sufficient time to apply those skills in a variety of settings to reach long-lasting mastery.

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Setting up the English language arts block depends on your teaching style and the constraints of your schedule. For full-day kindergarten, we suggest scheduling a 150- to 180-minute block of time for the following:

ELA COMPONENT	TOTAL TIME	SUGGESTED PRACTICES
Word Study	<b>60 minutes total</b> (30 minutes whole-group instruction; 30 minutes independent practice)	<p><i>Puzzle Piece Phonics</i> Daily Lessons            Whole Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phonemic Awareness (2 minutes)</li> <li>Introduce and Review Phonics Concepts (1–3 minutes)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is the Big Reveal and the Puzzle Piece Review.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Direct Instruction Decoding and Encoding Words (20 minutes)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter Formation—Beginning of Year</li> <li>Supported Blending</li> <li>Dictation and Quick Switch</li> </ul> </li> <li>Sorting (5–10 minutes)</li> </ul> <p>Small-Group or Independent Practice During Centers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice Writing Words (15 minutes)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These are the <i>Puzzle Piece Phonics</i> Practice Pieces.</li> <li>Also look at the “Preparing for Your Week” section for tips on fun with letters.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Reading Words in Connected Text (15 minutes)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These are the fluency chants/poems/passages.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>Note: Set up your schedule in a way that works for your class. You will need 30 minutes of direct instruction, but you can be flexible in how students complete independent practice activities. Some years we have had students complete Practice Pieces and fluency during centers or while pulling reading groups. Other years, we have found a 15-minute block for fluency practice that was separate from direct instruction. Feel free to fit the components in as you can and change your schedule until you find what works for you. If you are in half-day kindergarten, tweak the schedule to work with the amount of time you have with your students.</i></p>
Reading	<b>60 minutes total</b> (30 minutes whole-group instruction; 30 minutes guided and independent practice)	<p>Whole Group (30 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read-Aloud</li> <li>Mini-Lesson/Shared Reading</li> </ul> <p>Small-Group or Independent Practice During Centers (30 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guided Reading</li> <li>Independent Reading</li> </ul>
Writing	<b>30 minutes total</b> (10 minutes whole-group instruction; 20 minutes guided and independent practice)	<p>Whole Group (10 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mini-Lesson</li> <li>Shared Writing</li> </ul> <p>Writer’s Workshop (20 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent Practice</li> <li>Writing Conferences</li> <li>Student Sharing</li> </ul>

See our additional online resources for more in-depth information on each of these components of English language arts.

## Reading Practices Students Need

Students need the following practices to apply the skills they have learned in *Puzzle Piece Phonics*:

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### UPPER- AND LOWERCASE LETTERS

- The teacher reinforces what is taught during the word study block of English language arts by reviewing letter names as a whole class.
- The teacher shows letter note cards and encourages the class to recall the names of the letters (both upper- and lowercase).

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### SOUNDS OF THE ALPHABET

- The teacher reinforces what is taught during the word study block of English language arts by reviewing letter sounds as a whole class.
- The teacher shows letter note cards and encourages the class to recall the sounds of the letters (both upper- and lowercase).

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### SIMPLE SIGHT WORDS

- The teacher reinforces what is taught during the word study block of English language arts by reviewing common sight words as a whole class.
- The teacher shows letter note cards and encourages the class to recall the sight word.

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### READ-ALOUD

- The teacher selects a text that is several levels above students' independent reading level.
- The teacher reads the text aloud, modeling fluency and thinking aloud about the text.
- Students listen to the text and possibly discuss the content to show comprehension.

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### SHARED/ SUPPORTED READING

- The teacher selects a text that is slightly above students' independent reading level.
- The teacher makes the text accessible to all students by either displaying an enlarged version of the text or providing all students with a copy of it.
- The teacher introduces the text, building background and previewing key content.
- The students and teacher work together to read the text and apply key skills.

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### GUIDED READING

- The teacher gathers small groups of students who are similar in their reading ability.
- The teacher selects a text that is at the instructional level of the students in the small group.
- The teacher provides all students with a copy of the text.
- The teacher introduces the text, building background and previewing key content.
- Students independently read the text while the teacher listens to the individual students and supports them as needed.
- The students and teacher respond to the text to demonstrate comprehension.

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### INDEPENDENT READING

- Students self-select texts that match their interest and/or independent reading level.
- The teacher holds reading conferences with individual students.

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### FLUENCY PRACTICE

- The teacher selects a grade-level-appropriate text that highlights key features of reading (a sound-spelling pattern, a sentence structure, etc.).
  - The teacher models fluent reading of the text.
  - Students repeatedly read the text over a period of time, tracking improvements in fluency (rate, accuracy, and expression).
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## Word Study Practices Students Need

Students need the following practices to develop foundational skills:

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### PHONEMIC AWARENESS

- Students practice hearing and manipulating sounds in spoken words.
- See the *Puzzle Piece Phonics* Teacher’s Guide Introduction (page I-15) for more information.

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### DIRECT INSTRUCTION DECODING AND ENCODING WORDS

- **Letter Formation**
  - Students will watch the teacher model writing the letter (upper- and lowercase).
  - Students will practice their letter formation by writing letters in the Learner’s Notebook.
  - See the *Puzzle Piece Phonics* Teacher’s Guide Introduction (page I-20) for more information.
- **Supported Blending**
  - Students look at a word, say the sound of each spelling pattern within the word, and put them back together to decode the word with teacher support.
  - See the *Puzzle Piece Phonics* Teacher’s Guide Introduction (page I-16) for more information.
- **Dictation and Quick Switch**
  - Students hear sounds in words, reference the puzzle pieces, and write the letter(s) that represent the sound(s) they hear.
  - See the *Puzzle Piece Phonics* Teacher’s Guide Introduction (pages I-21 and I-23) for more information.

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### SORTING PICTURES AND SOUNDS WITHIN WORDS

- Students tap out sounds in words, identify focus spelling patterns within words/letters, and connect example words to the puzzle piece headers.
- See the *Puzzle Piece Phonics* Teacher’s Guide Introduction (pages I-25 and I-26) for more information.

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### SORTING WORDS

- Students tap out sounds in words, identify focus spelling patterns within words, and connect example words to the puzzle piece headers.
- See the *Puzzle Piece Phonics* Teacher’s Guide Introduction (page I-27) for more information.

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### PRACTICE WRITING WORDS

- Students read and write weekly words and apply focus spelling patterns to new contexts.
- See the *Puzzle Piece Phonics* Teacher’s Guide Introduction (page I-28) for more information about the purpose of Practice Pieces.
- See the *Puzzle Piece Phonics* Teacher’s Guide Introduction (pages I-37–I-60) for more information about specific Practice Pieces.

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### READING WORDS IN CONTEXT OF CONNECTED TEXT

- Students apply their knowledge of sounds and spellings to decode unfamiliar words within new texts.
- See the *Puzzle Piece Phonics* Teacher’s Guide Introduction (pages I-34–I-36) for more information.

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### CLASSROOM REFERENCE POSTERS AND ANCHOR CHARTS (THE PUZZLE PIECES)

- Students connect to visual representations of the sounds and spellings they are learning and refer to them when reading and writing throughout the instructional day.
  - See the *Puzzle Piece Phonics* Teacher’s Guide Introduction (page I-10) for more information.
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## Writing Practices Students Need

Students need the following practices to apply the skills they have learned in *Puzzle Piece Phonics*:

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### LETTER FORMATION

- The teacher models writing the letter.
- Students practice forming their own letters.

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### SIMPLE SENTENCES

- The teacher gives a sentence starter. For example, “I like \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Students fill in the blank of the sentence starter.
- After becoming comfortable in their writing, students may use their own sentence starter.

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### DESCRIPTIVE SENTENCES

- The teacher models taking a simple sentence and adding some detail to it. For example, “I see a dog” can be expanded to “I see a big dog.”
- Students add descriptive words to their simple sentences.

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### JOURNALING

- The teacher introduces a prompt.
- Students freely write in response to the prompt with letters, words, and pictures.

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### HOLDING STUDENTS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE TRANSFER OF SKILLS LEARNED DURING WORD STUDY

- **Word Wall**
  - The teacher systematically introduces high-use words to students (sight words, words commonly used during writing).
  - The teacher displays the words on a word wall.
  - The teacher teaches students how to reference the word wall.
  - Students use the word wall to correctly spell high-use words when writing throughout the day.
- **Independent Phonetic Spelling**
  - The teacher reminds students of the spelling expectations set in class and encourages students to independently spell words phonetically, rather than correctly.
  - The teacher models how to segment and spell words phonetically.
  - Students apply phonics and reference the puzzle pieces to encode words when writing.

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### WRITER'S WORKSHOP/ WRITING PROCESS

- The teacher models a writing skill in a mini-lesson (sets realistic kindergarten expectation).
  - The teacher creates and displays anchor charts for students to reference.
  - The teacher may provide graphic organizers to guide student work.
  - Students write independently for a period of time (with letters, words, and pictures).
  - The teacher confers with individuals or small groups of students to help students make improvements.
  - Students share their work with partners, small groups, or the class.
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