

Prekindergarten
Letter Knowledge
and Early Word
Recognition

SAMPLE



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Embedded Instruction

Centers

Vignette 2: Mary is playing with a wooden alphabet puzzle. She picks up the letter *W* and tries to fit it in the space for the letter *M*. She becomes frustrated because it does not fit. Ms. Ramos comes over to assist Mary in completing the puzzle. The teacher says, "That looks like the letter *M*, but if you rotate it like this it could also be another letter. Do you know what that letter is? (pause) That's right, it's a *W*. Where does the *W* fit?" Mary smiles and places the *W* in the appropriate location.

José is also working on an alphabet puzzle. He has a floor puzzle in which each letter is surrounded by pictures that begin with the letter's sound. The teacher observes that although José is putting the puzzle together fairly easily, he is not focusing on the letters, but instead randomly fitting pieces together by noticing the colors and the cut-out shapes of the pieces. Ms. Ramos hands an alphabet sentence strip to José to be used as a visual aid while completing the puzzle. She explains that the alphabet sentence strip can be used to figure out what letter comes next. She models for him how to use it. Because José had already put pieces for the letters *M* and *N* together, she asks José to find the *M* and *N* on the alphabet sentence strip and name the letters. José points to the letters and says their names. When asked what comes next, he looks up and says the *O* comes next and then finds the correct puzzle piece. He then places it in its appropriate place. Ms. Ramos stays with José a while longer to encourage him to refer to the alphabet strip while completing the puzzle. Eventually José develops the confidence to work on his own so Ms. Ramos moves on to another part of the room.

The next day Mary returns to the same center and begins to work on the wooden alphabet puzzle once again. This time when she tries to fit the *W* in the *M* space the teacher hears Mary say to herself, "This letter looks like the *M* but if you turn it this way, it's really the *W*." Then she puts the *W* in its appropriate place.

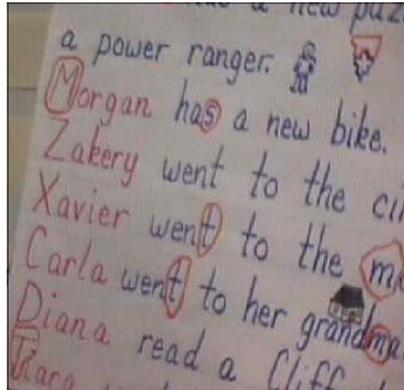
Children must learn to pay attention to letter features in order to distinguish between letters (for example, between the letters *w* and *v* or *l* and *l*) (McGee & Richgels, 2000).

See pages 24-25 for other ways to use alphabet puzzles.

Embedded Instruction

News of the Day

Vignette 3: Every morning Ms. Ramos begins Circle Time by asking two children to dictate a sentence about something that interests them. The sentence is often about what the students did the day before or a favorite part of a book. The purpose of the activity is to demonstrate to the students that what they say can be written down and read. While scribing, the teacher talks about the correct formation of letters, sounds out words before spelling them, and often “shares” the marker with the students who are capable of writing parts of the words. She always begins the sentence with the student’s name. This ensures that the students can read at least one word in the sentence.



Seeing alphabet letters in familiar words, such as their name, also helps children learn to identify letters (Schickedanz, 1999).

The most critical understanding [of alphabetic learning] for young children to develop is that of the function of letters in writing (Schickedanz, 1999).

Today Ms. Ramos asks Diana to dictate a sentence. Diana stands next to the easel where Ms. Ramos is writing so she can share the marker with the teacher and write the parts of words that she knows how to spell. The rest of the students are sitting on the floor watching the teacher write the sentence. Diana tells the teacher that she read a Clifford book. Ms. Ramos gives Diana a red marker to write her name as the first word of the sentence. She asks Diana to name the letters as she writes them. Then Ms. Ramos points to Diana’s name, reads it, and begins to write the next word, “read.” She encourages Diana to point to the words and read them as well. Diana reads, “Diana read.” Ms. Ramos says, “We want to write ‘Diana read a Clifford book.’ Can you write the word ‘a’?” Diana nods yes, and writes the word. Ms. Ramos points to and rereads the first three words of the sentence and quickly finishes writing the rest of the sentence, “Clifford book.” She asks Diana and the rest of the class to read the sentence together while she points to the words. Ms. Ramos then asks the students if they can point to and read any of the words in the sentence. Sue stands up and points to the word ‘a’ and says, “I know ‘a’ because it’s on our word wall.”

See pages 60-61 for other ways to use “News of the Day.”

Additional Applications of Lesson

- Give five students a *Student Alphabet Poster* (8½" X 11"). Have them point to the letters as they sing or chant the alphabet song.
- See Appendix, page 69, for other applications of the lesson.

Assessment

Observing Student Progress

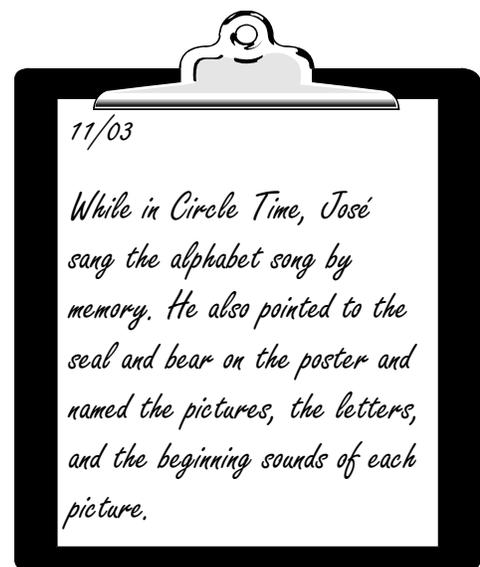
Determine if the student can:

- Sing the alphabet song by memory.
- Name each letter on the poster in a one-to-one correspondence.
- Point to and name some letters out of sequence. If so, which ones?

Informal Questioning Strategies

- Can you find the letter *M* (other letters) on the poster?
- Can you tell me the name of this letter? (Point to a letter on the poster.)
- Can you point to and name each letter of the alphabet on the poster?

Checklist	
Appendix	Pages
✓	73-75



Link to Self-Assessment Tool

Instruction is planned for children to:

- Interact with alphabet materials such as puzzles, matching games, books, and magnetic letters (Schickedanz, 1999).

Additional Applications of Lesson

- Have students place the plastic 3-D letters under the printed letters on the *Alphabet Rainbow Mat*.
- Cover letters on the mat using a small sticky note. Ask the students to identify the missing letters.
- Point to the letter Z. Recite the letters of the alphabet in reverse order.
- See Appendix, page 69, for other applications of the lesson.

Assessment

Observing Student Progress

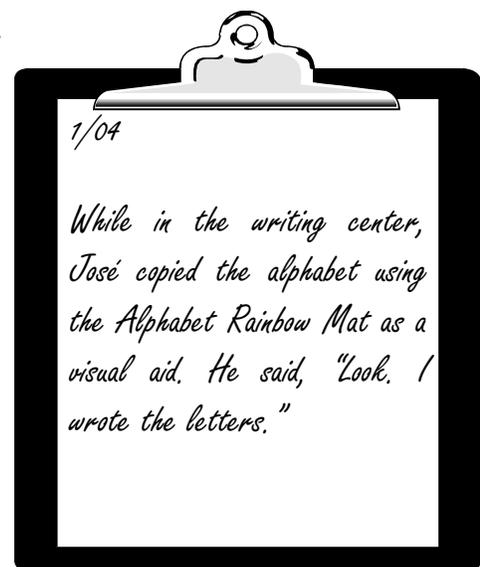
Determine if the student can:

- Recite the alphabet using the mat as a visual aid.
- Match the plastic 3-D letters to the printed letters on the mat.
- Name letters on the mat when pointed to randomly.
- Put the plastic letters in alphabetic order without using a visual aid.
- Identify which letter on the mat has been covered with a sticky note.
- Copy the alphabet using the mat as a visual aid.
- Write the alphabet without the use of a visual aid.

Informal Questioning Strategies

- How do you know the *O*, not the *Q* goes there? Ask the same question about *E* and *F*; *R* and *P*; *W* and *M*; *Z* and *N*.
- Can you explain how the letters *O* and the *Q* are different? How are they alike?

Checklist	
Appendix	Page
✓	79



Link to Self-Assessment Tool

Instruction is planned for children to:

- Interact with alphabet materials such as puzzles, matching games, books, and magnetic letters (Schickedanz, 1999).

Additional Applications of Lesson

- Increase the number of letters used in playing the game.
- Play the game by matching lowercase letters.
- Play the game by matching uppercase letters with lowercase letters.
- Play the game by matching the letter with the beginning sound of a picture card.
- Play the game by matching the same letter using different font types.

Assessment

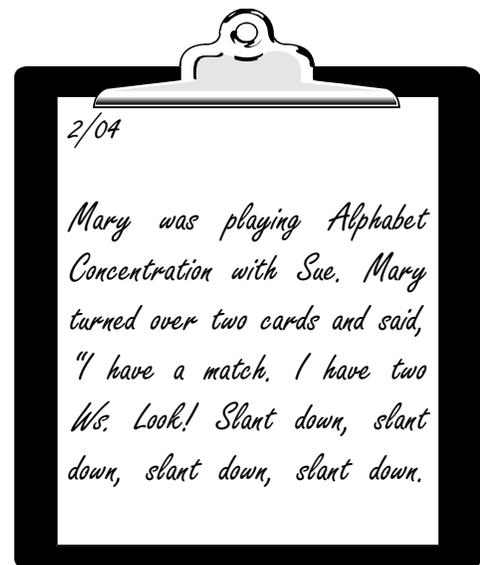
Observing Student Progress

Determine if the student can:

- Match uppercase letter to uppercase letter.
- Match lowercase letter to lowercase letter.
- Match letters when more cards are used.
- Name the letters that he or she matches.
- Match the uppercase letter with the lowercase letter.
- Match the letter with the beginning sound of a picture card.
- Match letters that have different fonts.

Informal Questioning Strategies

- How do you know those two letters match?
- How did you decide where to look for the letter you needed to make the match?
- Can you name the letters you matched?



Link to Self-Assessment Tool

Instruction is planned for children to:

- Interact with alphabet materials such as puzzles, matching games, books, and magnetic letters (Schickedanz, 1999).

Additional Applications of Lesson

- Have students decorate a large printed letter on poster board by gluing pictures on it that begin with the sound the letter makes.

Assessment

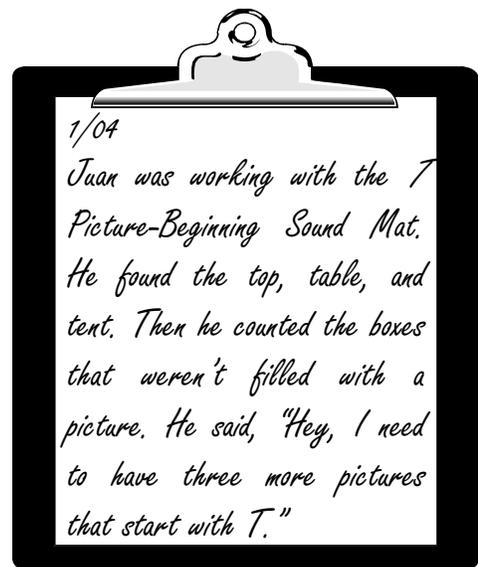
Observing Student Progress

Determine if the student can:

- Name the pictures correctly.
- Make the beginning sound of each picture.
- Sort the pictures by the beginning sound.
- Think of other picture cards that could go on the mat.

Informal Questioning Strategies

- Can you tell me how you know which pictures should be placed on the mat?
- Why is the picture of the pumpkin not on the mat?
- Can you tell me how the words sun and six are alike?
- Can you tell me how the words snake and pumpkin are different?



Link to Self-Assessment Tool

Instruction is planned for children to:

- Realize that alphabet letters are associated with certain sounds (McGee & Richgels, 2000) by interacting with picture-letter matching materials (Schickedanz, 1999).

Additional Applications of Lesson

- Play the game with lowercase letters using the same format as described.
- Play the game with uppercase and lowercase letters using the same format as described.

Assessment

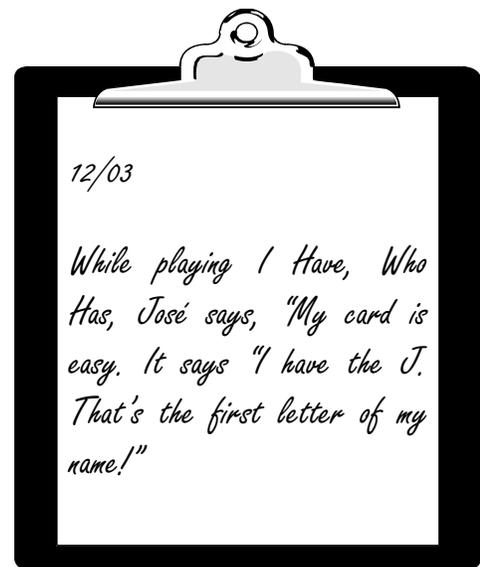
Observing Student Progress

Determine if the student can:

- Point to and identify any of the words on the cards. If so, which words?
- Name the two letters on the card.
- Listen for the letter he or she has and participate in the game correctly.

Informal Questioning Strategies

- How did you know that letter was the *M* and not the *W*?
- Can you tell me the letters on your card?
- Can you read the card you have?



Link to Self-Assessment Tool

Instruction is planned for children to:

- Interact with alphabet materials such as puzzles, matching games, books, and magnetic letters (Schickedanz, 1999).

Appendix

Alphabet Letter/Sound Identification Assessment

Student Name:

Date:

Teacher:

Age:

Upper-case Letters	C	L	R	U	S	E	Q	X	A	K	P	W	M	F	Y	O	J	H	I	Z	N	V	B	G	T	D
Identified Letter Name																										
Identified Letter Sound																										
Said Word that Begins with Letter																										
Incorrect Response																										
Lower-case Letters	c	l	r	u	s	e	q	x	a	k	p	w	m	f	y	o	j	h	i	z	n	v	b	g	t	d
Identified Letter Name																										
Identified Letter Sound																										
Said Word that Begins with Letter																										
Incorrect Response																										
Total Identified Uppercase Letters	Letters Not Identified or Confused											Intervention Strategies														
Total Identified Lowercase Letters																										

(Adapted from Clay, 1993)

Appendix

High-Frequency Words Reading Chart-Have a student point to each word in the chart and read the words he or she knows. Use the checklist on page 83 to document student's progress.

a	at	am	an
and	can	do	for
go	he	in	I
is	it	like	me
my	no	of	see
so	that	the	to
up	was	we	you

Prekindergarten Curriculum Guideline: Begins to identify some high-frequency words (age 4)

High-frequency words are a group of words that need to be learned for quick recall and are found frequently in reading materials for young children. They are words that do not carry meaning but that hold sentences together. They are often difficult to decode because they have irregular patterns in their spelling (Morrow, 2001).

High-frequency words are useful because emergent readers use the limited set of words they know to "anchor" their reading to help them monitor the way they are reading a text (Pinell & Fountas, 1998).

The precise collection of words does not have to be the same for every child (Pinell & Fountas, 1998).