



Consider Diversity: English Language Learners

- **English language learners can develop alphabetic understanding and phonics skills while developing English proficiency.**
- **Capitalize on native language ability:**
 - **Assess what they know about letters and sounds.**
 - **A Spanish-language assessment might be used to learn about Spanish-speaking students' phonics skills.**

K: Phonics: Alphabetic Understanding

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English language learners can develop alphabetic understanding while developing English proficiency. Recent research studies indicate that non-English-proficient English language learners can develop decoding skills in English at the same level as their English-speaking peers. English language learners can learn how to read in English while becoming proficient in this language. Do not wait on development of English fluency to provide high-quality literacy instruction.

Capitalize on students' native language ability. Reading success in English requires a strong foundation in native language skills. In bilingual classrooms, continue reading instruction in the native language even as English reading instruction begins.

Kindergarten English language learners might not have native language letter-sound understanding, but they have acquired the sound system of their language. Assess what they know about letters and sounds and take advantage of what

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they know. You may want to use a Spanish-language assessment to learn about a Spanish-speaking student’s phonics skills.

Finally, we need to be careful that our regional pronunciations of English match the standard sounds and letters we are teaching—“bowl an aig” should be “boil an egg.”

References

August, McCardle, Shanahan, & Burns, 2014; Cummins, 2003; Goldenberg, 2008; Goodwin, August, & Calderon, 2015; Lesaux, 2006; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005; Pollard-Durodola & Simmons, 2009; Riches & Genesee, 2006; Washington & Craig, 1994