

1. Imagine having to learn to read the following message:

3#^???*##^???%#^#*???^%+^##^???%^^%#^???*^^*##.

Prepare a list of information and skills that would make this task possible. Prioritize your list so that a teacher might know which skills to teach first, next, and so forth. Share your list with your college class, and defend the order of the introduction of skills.

2. Create a minilesson for first-grade students that encourages them to think of key words. You may want to use themes such as scary words, funny words, exciting words, or sad words. Teach this lesson to a small group of first-graders, having them help you sound out every word they contribute. When a word is not spelled exactly as it sounds, demonstrate to the students that a word can sound one way but look another. Put the words on a word wall, and see which ones they remember in future visits.

3. Administer the Phonics Mastery Survey in Appendix E to a first-grade child. From this assessment, make a list of what the student has mastered and another list of what elements the student must still learn. Finally, explain how you would teach one of the needed phonics skills through explicit instruction. Follow up this instruction with a phonics activity from the chapter. Defend your choice.

4. Imagine that you are teaching a classroom of kindergartners, half of whom are English learners who are Spanish speakers at a preliminary level of competency in English. What will you do differently for your English learners than for your English-only students in terms of phonics instruction? What will you do the same?

5. Find a short poem to read with a first-grade student. Pronounce unfamiliar words for the child, and then ask her to read the poem aloud while you time the reading. Invite the student to then take the poem home to read to friends and family members. Finally, meet again with the child and ask her to reread the poem while you again time the reading. What improvements did you observe in speed? Accuracy? Prosody?