



Attainment's

**explicit phonemic
alphabetic
connections curriculum**

Implementation Guide

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Sister Mary Karen Oudeans

Explicit Phonemic Alphabetic Connections Curriculum Implementation Guide

By Sister Mary Karen Oudeans
With a Foreword by Barb Bateman

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table of **CONTENTS**

About the Author.....	4
Foreword.....	5
Getting Started	7
Overview.....	7
Materials.....	8
Background	13
Research foundations	13
Basic concepts.....	14
Using EPACC	21
Scheduling and organizing EPACC.....	21
Understanding EPPAC materials.....	21
Using EPACC Materials	22
Preparing to teach a session.....	25
Teaching a session	26
Assessing Your Students	27
Understanding the CBA materials	27
Preparing to assess.....	28
Administering the CBA	28
Analyzing and using assessment results.....	29
Using generalized outcome measures for assessment.....	30
Appendixes.....	33
Appendix A: EPACC Scope and Sequence.....	33
Appendix B: Curriculum Based Assessment	48
Appendix C: Research Findings.....	68
Appendix D: Indexes	77
References.....	79

about the **AUTHOR**



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FOREWORD

The Explicit Phonemic Alphabetic Connections Curriculum (EPACC) is exactly what it purports to be—a research-based, beginning reading program that utilizes scientifically proven-to-be-effective direct instruction and fits well in a variety of instructional delivery systems, including a response to intervention (RTI) model.

In developing the program, the author faithfully adhered to what research has taught us about three critical beginning reading skills: phonemic awareness, alphabetic understanding (sound-symbol associations), and fluency. The reference list the author provides is an extremely useful guide for anyone wishing to become familiar with the best empirical studies and analyses available in teaching beginning reading. The EPACC validation studies reported in Appendix C were conducted by classroom teachers in the real world and show impressive results. EPACC is truly research based, tested, and validated.

The effectiveness of EPACC is undoubtedly a function of its roots in research and in the proven principles of direct instruction, such as a model-lead-test format, scripted correction procedures, and the opportunity for group and individual responses. These have repeatedly been shown to be among the most effective instructional techniques.

RTI models are multitiered plans for matching the intensity of instruction to the needs of the students, recognizing that some students need more-intensive instruction than others to master the skills being taught. Frequent curriculum-based assessment is an integral part of RTI. EPACC provides for ongoing assessment and clear benchmarks to determine when a student should move from

one level of instructional intensity to another. Levels of intensity vary by amount of instructional time, group sizes, and degree of teacher expertise. Student progress, measured frequently and precisely, is the determiner of student movement between tiers of instructional intensity.

In addition to EPACC's grounding in research and direct instruction and its suitability for use in delivery systems ranging from traditional classrooms to RTI models, it is teacher and student friendly. The **Implementation Guide** presents the background and an overview of the program as well as the necessary materials, all of which are provided. **Lesson Designs** and **Teaching Steps** clearly and explicitly outline the procedures, materials, and instructional language for each session and include exact correction procedures. Materials are provided for individual and small-group instruction and for use with a whole group. Additional sets of materials may be printed from the CD-ROM.

The teaching aid manipulatives and games are designed for maximum appeal and motivation for children. They include Stripe the zebra puppet and the familiar Slinky, as well as theme-based games such as Monster Mix, Sea Swim, and Candy Cover-up.

After more than 50 years of advocating for programs like EPACC to allow teachers to teach beginning reading most effectively, I heartily applaud EPACC and recommend it to all teachers and parents who want their children to have a solid start in learning to read well and easily. There can be no better foundation for future learning.

—*Barb Bateman*

IEP expert and best-selling author

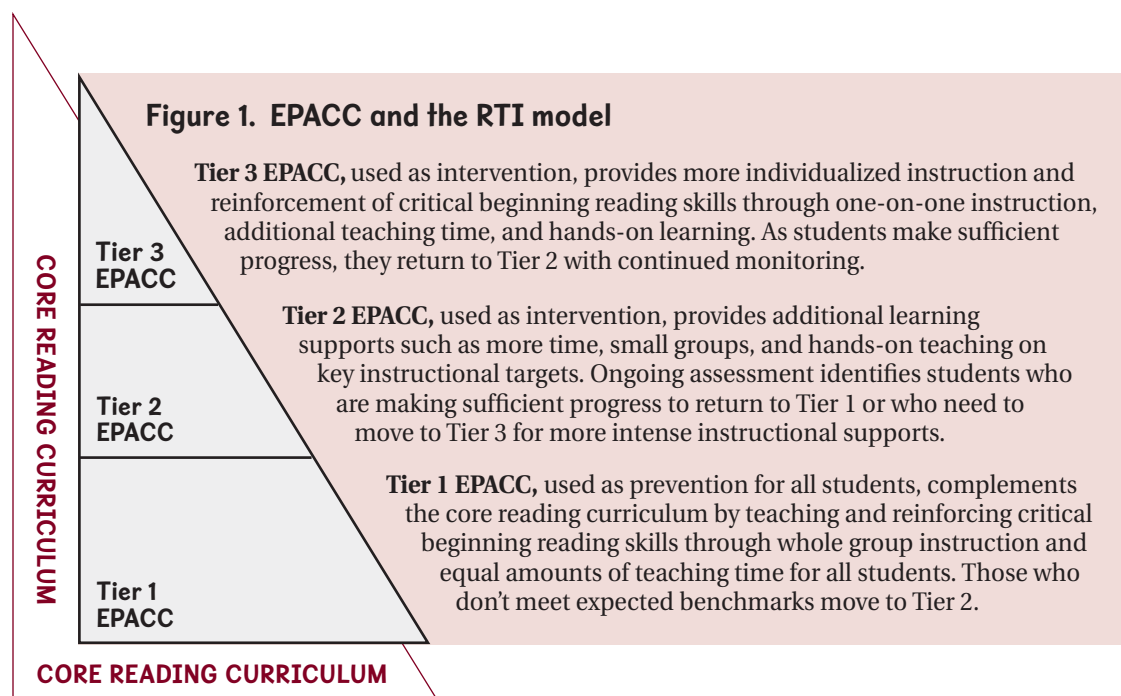
GETTING STARTED

Overview

The **Explicit Phonemic Alphabetic Connections Curriculum (EPACC)** is a set of research-based lesson designs that systematically teach and integrate the critical skills for beginning reading:

- **Phonemic awareness**—the ability to hear and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words
- **Alphabetic understanding**—the ability to associate sounds with letters and use these sounds to read words
- **Fluency with the alphabetic code**—the ability to effortlessly read words in connected text

EPACC is designed to complement, not replace, the core reading curriculum. It uses a response to intervention (RTI) framework that integrates assessment and intervention in a multilevel prevention system (see Figure 1). Tier 1 offers evidence-based instruction for all students, accelerating reading acquisition for some and preventing reading difficulties for others. Tiers 2 and 3 provide increasingly more intense and individualized learning support along with continued instruction in the core curriculum. As students make sufficient progress, they return to the previous tier with ongoing monitoring of their progress.



Materials

EPACC includes all the materials you'll need to teach the lessons to a group of three students. To order additional materials, visit www.AttainmentCompany.com.



Image Library

All the images used on the picture cards are provided in JPEG format on the CD-ROM. You may use the images to create additional materials for reinforcing skill development.



CD-ROM

The CD-ROM contains an Image Library and reproducible portable document format (pdf) files of the following:

- EPACC Implementation Guide
- EPACC Teaching Steps
- EPACC Lesson Designs
- Letter cards, picture cards, word cards, and sentences strips
- Let's Read storybooks
- Curriculum Based Assessment forms



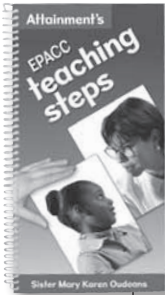
Implementation Guide

The Implementation Guide presents a brief review of EPACC's research foundation and an overview of its purpose, curriculum components, instructional design features, and relationship to RTI.

The Getting Started section explains how to use EPACC materials effectively and efficiently. Detailed step-by-step instructions guide you in organizing the materials, practicing the procedures, teaching a lesson, and extending student learning.

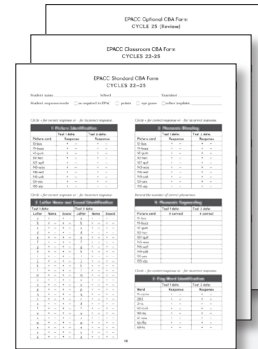
The book describes student assessment options and explains how to administer and record student data using the curriculum-based assessment (CBA) forms.

The appendixes include a scope and sequence, assessment forms, and indexes to help you keep track of materials. A report of EPACC research is also included.



EPACC Teaching Steps

The scripted Teaching Steps book is designed to be used in combination with the Lesson Designs book to know what to say and do during instruction. Teaching Steps provides detailed instructional language for using the model-lead-test format, in which you show students how to do a specific procedure, have students do the procedure with you, and then allow students to respond by themselves, individually or as a group. Every teaching step also includes a scripted correction procedure to use when a student makes an error.

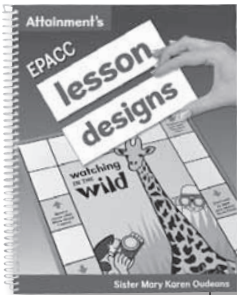


Student Assessment Forms

EPACC offers two versions of curriculum-based assessment (CBA):

1. The **Standard CBA** is administered after Cycles 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 12, 16, 21, and 25. It includes an individual student record form and a class record form, which allows you to record responses for four students on the same form. The individual forms may be found in Appendix B (page 48). Both the individual and class record forms are included on the CD-ROM.
2. The **Optional CBA** is administered after each EPACC cycle. Individual student record forms for the optional version may be printed out from the CD-ROM.

The CBA record forms list the specific letters, picture cards, word cards, and sentence strips needed to assess each skill. Directions for using the forms begin on page 27. Teacher scripts (see page 48) tell you what to say when administering the assessments.



EPACC Lesson Designs

EPACC Lesson Designs is the teacher's guide for preparing and teaching each session. The first page for each session lists all the instructional materials you need for the entire session. The second page outlines the sequence for teaching the session and the specific materials needed for each procedure.

a

Letter Cards

EPACC includes four sets of letter cards, one for the teacher and one for each student. (Additional sets may be printed out from the CD-ROM.) Each set includes the 26 letters of the alphabet, duplicates of the letters **d** and **m**, and three distractor symbols.

man

Word Cards

A set of 82 word cards presents words with CV (consonant-vowel) and CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) patterns. The word cards also include flag (sight) words.



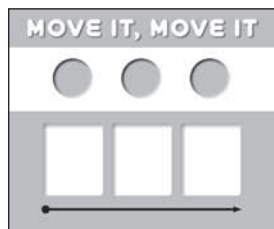
Picture Cards

The 155 picture cards provide a concrete visual representation to use with students when teaching phonemic blending, phonemic segmenting, and picture identification skills. Most words have a picture representation, but some (e.g., **am**) do not. These nonpicture words are referred to as “mystery words” in the Teaching Steps. Whenever a mystery word is used in an EPACC session, the Lesson Design provides an oral sentence that uses the word in a familiar context.

Sam is

Sentence Strips

A set of 94 sentences strips is included. Some sentences, especially those that appear in early EPACC cycles, use a picture to represent a word. Most sentences, however, contain only words taught previously with word cards. An empty box indicates that a student’s name should be inserted into the sentence.



Move It, Move It Boards

Four laminated Move It, Move It boards, one for the teacher and one for each student, are used with colorful plastic rings to teach phonemic skills. The boards are also used with letter cards to teach alphabetic skills.



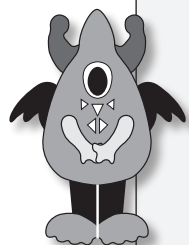
Four Square Board

The Teaching Steps book provides directions for using the Four-Square board to practice and review letter name and sound identification, phonemic blending, phonemic segmenting, and word reading.

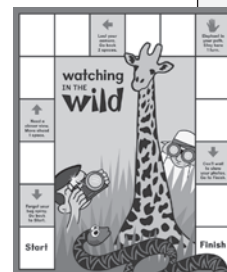
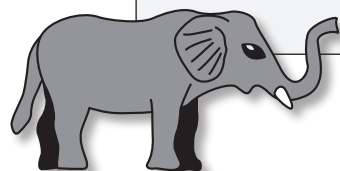
Game Pieces



The board games use a numbered die as well as markers that correspond to the theme of each game:



Candy Cover-up	Game chips
Cover Up the Cats	Game chips
Monster Mix	Monsters
Pass the Ball	Sports balls
Sea Swim	Sea creatures
Treasure Trek	Treasure chests
Watching in the Wild	Wild animals



Game Boards

EPACC uses a game format to actively engage students in practicing and reviewing letter name and sound identification, phonemic blending, phonemic segmenting, and word reading. The theme-based game boards are designed to have universal appeal (i.e., they are non-gender- or age-specific). The Lesson Designs book tells you when you can choose a game board (**Monster Mix**, **Pass the Ball**, **Sea Swim**, **Treasure Trek**, or **Watching in the Wild**), and when you need to use a specific game board (**Candy Cover-up** or **Cover Up the Cats**). For the games of your choice, the themes and complexity vary so you can select a board based on student interest and ability.



Stripe, the Puppet

Stripe, the name of our jaunty zebra puppet, engages and motivates younger students during the EPACC lessons and may be used in many of the Teaching Steps as your “assistant.” For example, when you use Stripe to say the sounds slow in a word (phonemic segmenting) and then say the sounds fast, Stripe’s movable mouth shows students the mouth position when saying the sounds. Using the puppet also helps you make an abstract skill (breaking words into individual sounds) more concrete. Using the puppet is optional with older students. For some of these students, however, Stripe provides motivation and a strong visual support in understanding the phonemic blending and segmenting skills taught in EPACC.



Stretch, the Slinky

Many Teaching Steps use Stretch, the EPACC Slinky, to provide a hands-on way to help students stretch out the sounds in a word slow and then say the word fast. By stretching out the Slinky slow and pushing it together fast, students add a visual aid and kinesthetic action to an otherwise abstract and artificial skill.



Let's Read

The 14 Let's Read storybooks incorporate previously practiced sentences into short stories to provide opportunities for students to read connected text and develop fluency with the alphabetic code. The books may be printed from the CD-ROM.

BACKGROUND

Research foundations

The basic task facing beginning readers in an alphabetic writing system is to understand the link between the sounds of speech and print. Beginning readers must learn to map speech to print. They must grasp very early that the sounds in spoken language can be represented by letters of the alphabet and that the letters of the alphabet are worth learning because they stand for the sounds in real words (e.g., Adams, 1990; Ball & Blachman, 1991; Byrne & Fielding-Barnsley, 1989, 1991; Ehri & Roberts, 2006; Kame'enui, Carnine, Dixon, Simmons, & Coyne, 2002; Spector, 1995).

Early research studies in beginning reading told us a lot about the connections between phonemic and alphabetic skills, and which of those skills reliably predict future reading success and contribute to a positive growth trajectory in beginning reading (e.g., Ball & Blachman, 1991; Bentin & Leshem, 1993; Byrne & Fielding-Barnsley, 1989, 1991; Juel, 1988; O'Connor, Jenkins, & Slocum, 1995; Torgesen, Morgan, & Davis, 1992; Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 1994).

Research syntheses (e.g., Adams, 1990; Dickinson & Neuman, 2006), National Reading Reports (e.g., Learning First Alliance, 2000; National Reading Panel Report, 2000; Partnership for Reading, 2003; Put Reading First, 2006; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), and research meta-analyses (e.g., Swanson, 1999; Troia, 1999) summarized and endorsed the findings of these earlier studies and provided the impetus for further research in beginning reading. More recent research has included evidence-based instructional practices for designing and implementing beginning reading interventions (e.g., Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2010; Coyne, Kame'enui, Simmons, & Harn, 2004; Foorman, Chen, Carlson, Moats, Francis, & Fletcher, 2003; Oudeans, 2003; Vadasy, Sanders, & Peyton, 2006).

Key research ideas

EPACC has incorporated many fundamental ideas identified by the research on beginning reading:

- Phonological awareness (PA) is necessary but not sufficient for the successful acquisition of beginning reading and spelling. There is a reciprocal and causal relationship between PA and reading: Teaching PA helps students learn to read and spell, and teaching reading and spelling improves PA skills.
- Both PA and alphabetic understanding (AU) are critical for learning to read and spell. Beginning readers need instruction in both PA and AU to develop the alphabetic principle, which enables them to translate graphic symbols (letters) into sounds. Insufficient skill in either PA or AU hinders acquisition of reading and spelling.
- Phonemic segmentation skills are a strong predictor of beginning reading ability.
- Phonemic segmentation and blending skills are necessary prerequisites for success in learning to read.
- Letter-sound knowledge is a prerequisite to effective word identification. Explicit instruction in letter-sound identification, matching, segmenting, and blending reduces the risk of reading failure and accelerates early reading and spelling acquisition. Integration of alphabetic skills (letter-sound correspondences) with phonemic blending and segmenting has a positive effect on word reading and spelling. The primary difference between good and poor readers is their ability to use letter-sound correspondence to identify words. Teaching students to listen to, remember, and process the sequence of letter-sound

correspondences in words is a demanding goal. Students who acquire and apply alphabetic skills early in their reading careers reap long-term benefits.

The beginning reading curriculum

Research has identified and validated the need for well-designed curricula that integrate phonemic skills with alphabetic skills explicitly and systematically. Based on the research, an effective beginning reading curriculum should include the following:

- Carefully sequenced examples, scaffolds, practice, systematic and cumulative review, and corrective feedback.
- Unambiguous strategies for teaching phonological blending and segmenting skills, as well as letter names and sounds, which make explicit the connections between the sounds and letters in words.
- Daily application of new knowledge at the phoneme, letter-sound, word, and text levels.
- Allocated time for daily, focused, explicit instruction in the critical beginning reading skills of phonemic awareness (e.g., phonemic segmenting and blending), the alphabetic principle (e.g., word identification), and reading connected text.

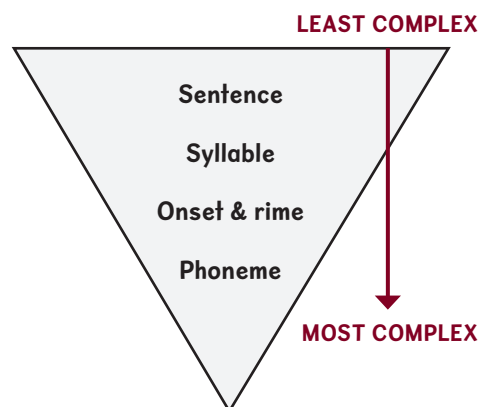
Basic concepts

What is phonological awareness?

Phonological awareness doesn't make speech easier to acquire or understand, nor does it develop automatically from speaking or understanding speech, but it's required in order to learn how to read and spell. **Phonological awareness** is a broad term covering many skills on a continuum from the least complex, easiest skills to the most complex, most difficult skills, which are more closely associated with the successful acquisition of reading and spelling.

As students move on the continuum, they learn to manipulate the sound structure of spoken language at each level from the least complex to most complex PA skills (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Levels of phonological awareness



For example, sentence segmentation is a less complex PA skill that helps students understand that sentences are composed of individual words. Students who demonstrate this level of PA can segment the sentence “The dog ran fast” into four words. At the next level, students can blend syllables together to say words (e.g., tap + ping = tapping) or segment spoken words into syllables (tapping = tap + ping). This is more difficult than segmenting sentences into words, but not as difficult as the next level on the continuum, which requires students to blend or segment words into the onset and the rime. The initial consonant or consonant cluster is the onset, and the vowel and consonant sounds after the onset is the rime. Students at this level can segment the word **tap** into its onset (/t/) and its rime (/ap/). Conversely, they can blend /t/ (onset) + /ap/ (rime) into the word **tap**. Finally, the most complex and difficult of the PA skills on the continuum is the ability to manipulate the sounds of spoken language at the level of individual phonemes, termed **phonemic awareness**.

What is phonemic awareness?

Although the terms **phonological awareness** and **phonemic awareness** are often used interchangeably, they're not the same. Phonemic awareness is one of several skills under the umbrella of phonological awareness; it's one type of phonological awareness and the most complex of all the PA skills.

Phonemic awareness focuses on the specific individual sounds (or phonemes) in spoken words and includes blending individual phonemes into words, segmenting spoken words into individual phonemes, and manipulating phonemes by adding, deleting, or substituting phonemes in spoken words. For example, phonemic blending requires students to blend the phonemes /t/ + /a/ + /p/ together by saying the sounds for the individual phonemes and then saying the sounds fast to produce the word **tap**. In phonemic segmenting, students segment the word **tap** into its individual phonemes by saying each phoneme in the word individually and slowly: /t/ /a/ /p/. Students who demonstrate phoneme manipulation can add, delete, or substitute phonemes in spoken words to answer questions such as: What word do you have when you add /s/ to the beginning of the word **am**? What word do you have when you take away /s/ from the word **sit**? What word do you have when you change /s/ to /b/ in **sat**?

The ability to access the sound structure of spoken words by blending and segmenting, and by manipulating the sounds in spoken words at the phoneme level—the most complex skill on the continuum—is critical to the successful acquisition of beginning reading and spelling.

Students who aren't aware that spoken words comprise individual phonemes are unable to manipulate these sounds as easily as do their peers who access the sound structure of spoken language effortlessly. Research has shown that without this awareness, it's difficult to understand how the alphabet works. For example, nonreaders who aren't aware that the spoken word **man** has

three individual phonemes (/mmm/aaaa/n/) won't be able to understand why the printed word **man** is written with three letters that represent three individual sounds (m a n). These students may struggle with acquiring beginning reading and spelling skills.

What is alphabetic understanding?

An alphabetic writing system requires an explicit awareness of the letter-sound structure of written language, termed the **alphabetic principle**. The alphabetic principle has two components: alphabetic understanding and phonological recoding. In the alphabetic phase of beginning reading and spelling, students are taught to map speech onto print, linking individual sounds with the letters of the alphabet (alphabetic understanding), and then blending the sounds for the letters together to retrieve a pronunciation for a string of letters that previously had no meaning for them (phonological recoding). Phonological recoding is word identification. Through explicit and systematic instruction, students are taught to use the connections between speech sounds, print, and words to read and spell in an alphabetic writing system.

Students who don't achieve fluency with the alphabetic code are unable to associate individual letters with their corresponding sounds or blend the sounds for letters together to identify a word based on the letter-sound sequences. These students need carefully designed and explicit instruction that teaches them the connection between speech sounds and print in order to translate visual symbols into sounds and learn to read and spell words independently.

Understanding response to intervention

Response to intervention (RTI) is one of the critical provisions in the federally funded Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004. Including RTI in the law was viewed as a proactive

and preventive alternative approach to the “wait and fail” ability-achievement discrepancy criterion that has been part of the federal definition for identification of students, specifically those with learning disabilities, who need special education services. In this legislative context, RTI is viewed more as a diagnostic model.

RTI is also referred to as an instructional model, with the RTI acronym commonly read as “response to instruction.” In this context, RTI is described as a prevention-oriented framework that emphasizes intervening early (i.e., kindergarten or earlier) so that students who may be at risk for beginning a cycle of failure can, with additional supplemental instructional supports, develop positive learning trajectories in the general education classroom. RTI is viewed as a practical way to begin to implement the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001), which is committed to “every child being a reader by third grade,” with its focus on using scientifically based early reading interventions and achieving results for all children. Student response to instruction is measured with ongoing assessment and is a way to measure the effects of instruction on student outcomes.

Beginning reading and RTI as response to instruction

The mandated heart and soul of the RTI instructional model in reading is the use of research-based core curricula and evidence-based instructional practices in a multitiered delivery system with concurrent ongoing assessment to monitor student responsiveness to the instruction at each tier. RTI requires more frequent assessment to monitor student response to instruction as the intensity and frequency of the tiered instruction increases.

Multitiered delivery of reading instruction and ongoing assessment

Often the RTI prevention framework for beginning reading instruction is described as multitiers of high-quality instruction, with Tier I instruction characterized by implementation of

evidence-based instruction for all students, while Tiers 2 and 3 instruction provides increasingly more intense and individualized learning support based on a student’s responsiveness to the instruction at the previous level. RTI intends to maximize learning for all students and to build the capacity of general classroom teachers to effectively teach all students in their classrooms.

Ongoing assessment is used to monitor each student’s responsiveness to the instruction at Tiers 1, 2, and 3 and provides the teacher with valuable information about the effectiveness and efficiency of the instruction at each tier. For example, ongoing assessment of all students at Tier 1 identifies which students aren’t responding sufficiently to Tier 1 instruction, that is, the students who aren’t meeting expected benchmarks and could be at risk for falling farther behind their peers.

When ongoing monitoring indicates insufficient progress, steps are taken to provide support through Tier 2 instruction while continuing Tier 1 instruction in the core curricula. Tier 2 includes the same high quality instruction used in Tier 1, with additional supports such as reducing the teacher-student ratio to 1:4 or forming small groups that target specific skill areas. Increased instructional time in the core curriculum (e.g., 20–30 minutes) and double dosing students with instruction in the core curriculum in a small group is another Tier 2 choice that may be enough to boost student learning outcomes.

Similarly, ongoing monitoring of student progress in Tier 2 flags any student who may not be responding adequately to the additional Tier 2 instructional supports. In this case, Tier 3 supports, which are more intense and even more highly individualized, are implemented, with a focus on one-on-one teaching of specific target skills identified during assessment.

At any point, if a student makes sufficient progress in an instructional tier, that is, meets the expected benchmarks and no longer needs the more intensive supports, the student returns

to the previous tier. Student response to instruction, which is monitored through ongoing assessment, becomes the driving force of all instructional decisions and movement between the instructional tiers.

The goal of this preventive RTI framework is to build early reading skills that are causally associated with future reading success and to use research-based instructional strategies that teach and reinforce those skills.

Understanding EPACC assessment

Curriculum-based assessment

Curriculum-based assessment (CBA) measures student progress and proficiency on the phonemic and alphabetic content and strategies taught specifically in EPACC, while focusing on early identification and prevention using the RTI multitiered delivery framework. Careful review and analysis of student responses guide teachers in making instructional decisions based on CBA data. For example, correct student responses confirm that students are ready to move on to the next EPACC cycle, while errors identify which EPACC skills should be retaught or reinforced with more practice for the entire group in Tier I, or for individual students in Tiers 2 and 3. Likewise, patterns and frequency of individual student errors point out which students aren't making sufficient progress with Tier 1 EPACC instruction and could benefit from the more intense instruction provided in Tier 2. In the same way, CBA responses identify students in Tier 2 who are:

- Making sufficient progress in Tier 2 instruction to return to Tier 1 EPACC and still be successful.
- Making adequate progress in Tier 2 but need to continue in Tier 2 to be successful.
- Demonstrating insufficient progress even with Tier 2 EPACC and need to move to Tier 3 EPACC for more intense and individualized instructional supports.

Generalized outcome measures

In addition to using CBA, employing a generalized outcome measure such as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS) is recommended. DIBELS has established reliability and validity for assessing broad, instructionally relevant, and empirically validated beginning reading skills such as phonemic segmentation and nonsense word fluency. DIBELS has clearly identified the expected criterion of performance, the fluency level, and the time frame for when skills must be demonstrated. For example, the established benchmark in Phonemic Segmentation Fluency for DIBELS requires a student to say 35–45 sound segments in one minute by the end of kindergarten. A significant advantage of using DIBELS in addition to CBA is that DIBELS allows teachers to evaluate individual student development on broad, empirically validated beginning reading skills and compare individual student performance on those skills with an established grade-level criterion, not just with performance on skills taught in EPACC.

Understanding EPACC curriculum and instructional design

The connections between the sounds in spoken words and the letters of the alphabet typically aren't grasped by early learners or students at risk for reading failure. EPACC incorporates best practices and empirically validated research recommendations into its curriculum and instructional design for integrating phonemic and alphabetic skills explicitly and systematically.

Curriculum features

The scope and sequence (see Appendix A, page 33) identifies student outcomes for each skill taught in EPACC:

1. Picture identification
2. Letter name and sound identification
3. Phonemic blending
4. Phonemic segmenting

- 5. Flag word identification
- 6. Word reading
- 7. Sentence reading
- 8. Spelling

Letters and words were selected using best practices and empirically validated recommendations from beginning reading research. It’s essential, therefore, to use the letters, words, and sentences as they’re presented in the scope and sequence.

Letter name and sound identification

EPACC teaches the letter names and sounds using the following sequence: a, m, t, s, i, f, d, r, o, p, n, l, c, b, u, g, h, x, e, v, j, w, k, y, z, q. Letters that appear most often in words—the more useful letters—are introduced first. Letter names and sounds are taught simultaneously.

Letters that look or sound similar are introduced several sessions apart. For example, introduction of the letters **t** and **d** are separated by several sessions because the sounds for these letters are auditorily similar. Likewise, **b** and **d** are introduced several cycles apart because their letter forms are visually similar.

The most common sound for a letter is taught in the lessons (see Table 1). Consonant letters with easy-to-pronounce sounds are introduced first in EPACC because continuous sounds are easier to say without distorting the sound. For example, the sounds for /a/ and /m/ are continuous sounds and are easier to say because they can be stretched and held without distortion: /aaa/ and /mmm/. Conversely, the sounds for /d/ and /c/ are stop sounds, which must be pronounced quickly or the sounds will be distorted.

The most common sound for vowels is the short sound. The short vowel sound for /i/, /e/, /o/, and /u/ are auditorily similar so they’re introduced several cycles apart and reviewed repeatedly in subsequent cycles to provide sufficient practice and discrimination between the sounds.

When a name and sound for a letter is introduced, it remains as a “new” letter in the four subsequent sessions before it’s moved to “review” status in the next four sessions. Letters are cycled into a cumulative review in cycles 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25.

Phonemic blending and segmenting

Phonemic blending and segmenting are taught as separate skills in each EPACC session. Blending individual phonemes (sounds) together into a spoken word is an easier skill than segmenting spoken words into individual phonemes.

Table 1. Most common sounds for letters

Continuous Sounds		Stop Sounds	
a	f <u>a</u> t	b	b <u>o</u> y
e	b <u>e</u> t	c	<u>c</u> an
f	<u>f</u> ill	d	<u>d</u> id
i	s <u>i</u> t	g	<u>g</u> ot
l	<u>l</u> et	h	<u>h</u> is
m	<u>m</u> ad	j	<u>j</u> et
n	<u>n</u> ut	k	<u>k</u> iss
o	<u>o</u> t	p	<u>p</u> et
r	<u>r</u> at	q	<u>q</u> uit
s	<u>s</u> ell	t	<u>t</u> op
u	<u>u</u> t	x	b <u>o</u> x
v	<u>v</u> et		
w	<u>w</u> et		
y	<u>y</u> es		
z	<u>z</u> oo		

In phonemic blending, the sounds in a spoken word are said slow (e.g., /mmm/aaa/t/) and then blended together to say the word “fast” (e.g., mat). In phonemic segmenting, a spoken word (e.g., mat) is broken into individual sounds by saying the sounds slow (e.g., /mmm/aaa/t/).

Each EPACC session incorporates:

- 5–10 words that use a CV (consonant-vowel) and/or CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) pattern, with each letter in a word representing its most common sound
- Words that contain continuous sounds (e. g., /aaa//mmm/) and stop sounds (e.g., /t/aaa/p/), with phonemes in varied positions (beginning, middle, last) whenever possible to avoid predictability
- Words that have a picture representation (e.g., man) and words that do not (e.g., am), with picture identification integrated into phonemic blending and segmenting to provide a context for the words

Words are introduced in a session and then reviewed in three subsequent sessions. Some words are included in cumulative review sessions in Cycles 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25. In each session the same words are used for both the phonemic blending and segmenting activities.

Instructional design

EPACC incorporates the research validated instructional design principles of consistent instructional language, explicit strategies,

and instructional materials that promote learning new or complex skills (e.g., Carnine, Silbert, Kame’enui, & Tarver, 2010; Engelmann & Carnine, 1991). These design principles are built into EPACC Teaching Steps, in which every teaching tab corresponds to an EPACC curriculum skill (see Table 2.)

Each teaching tab tells the teacher what to say and do during instruction, providing the specific and consistent language needed to teach and explain a concept or skill effectively. Teacher scripts ensure fidelity of instruction and implementation.

The Teaching Steps book also supplies explicit strategies for teaching the corresponding curriculum skills using direct instruction procedures. The teacher models the skill for the students, assists them in performing the skill, and finally asks them to perform the skill without assistance while continually providing corrective feedback during each of the steps. The language and procedures of direct instruction tell students what they need to pay attention to during instruction, and systematically teach them the strategies for unlocking the code in an alphabetic writing system. Likewise, the Teaching Steps book tells teachers how to use the instructional materials in ways that make the abstract concepts and complex skills for beginning reading more concrete, hands-on, and accessible.

Table 2. EPACC curriculum skills and corresponding Teaching Steps tabs

Skill	Teaching Steps Tab	Skill	Teaching Steps Tab
1 Picture identification	Tab 9 Picture Point Tab 10 Picture Turn-over Tab 11 Guessing Game Tab 12 Picture Cover-up Tab 13 Four Square Fast Tab 14 Candy Cover-up Tab 15 Move It Tab 16 Do You Have? Tab 17 Four Square Slow Tab 18 Say It Slow	4 Phonemic segmenting	Tab 15 Move It Tab 16 Do You Have? Tab 17 Four Square Slow Tab 18 Say It Slow
		5 Flag word identification	Tab 29 Flag Words
		6 Word reading	Tab 19 Word Reading with Letter Cards Tab 20 Word Reading with Word Cards Tab 21 Word Turn-over Tab 22 Four Square Words Tab 23 Word Reading One Tab 24 Word Reading Review Tab 25 Word Cover-up Tab 26 Word Uncover Tab 27 Word Reading Two Tab 28 Word Reading Three
2 Letter name and sound identification	Tab 1 Letter Names and Sounds Tab 2 Match Me Tab 3 Turn-over Tab 4 Give Me a Letter Card Tab 5 Letter Cover-up Tab 6 Four Square Letters Tab 7 Cover Up the Cats Tab 8 Alphabet Names and Sounds	7 Sentence reading	Tab 30 Sentence Reading Tab 31 Sentence Reading Review
3 Phonemic blending	Tab 9 Picture Point Tab 10 Picture Turn-over Tab 11 Guessing Game Tab 12 Picture Cover-up Tab 13 Four Square Fast Tab 14 Candy Cover-up	8 Spelling	Tab 32 Spelling with Letter Cards Tab 33 Spelling with Paper and Pencil

USING EPACC

Scheduling and organizing EPACC

The goal of EPACC instruction is to use explicit strategies to help students attain proficiency in beginning reading skills (e.g., phonemic blending, segmenting, and word reading).

EPACC has 25 instructional cycles with 4 sessions in each cycle. Instruction is most effective when provided four days a week for a minimum of 20 minutes a day, in addition to the core reading curriculum. EPACC cycles and sessions don't correspond to a specific week or day of instruction. For example, Cycle 3–Session 4 doesn't correspond with Week 3–Day 4 of EPACC instruction.

You may be able to complete an entire session during one 20-minute instructional period, especially in Tier 1 after you and the students are familiar with the Teaching Steps procedures. You may also begin a session one day and continue it the next. Use your professional judgment about which procedures from the previous day you need to review. Student proficiency determines movement to the next session.

Begin by determining instructional groups. You can use EPACC as:

- Tier 1 with 10–15 students taught as a whole group (Additional sets of student materials may be printed from the CD-ROM if you're teaching EPACC as Tier 1.)
- Tier 2 with 2–3 students
- Tier 3 with 1 student

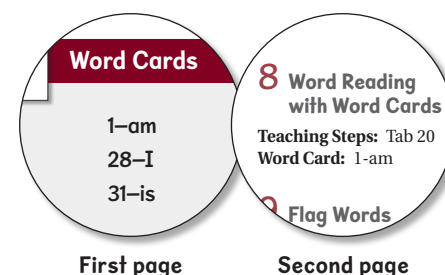
Schedule a time for teaching EPACC to various groups. Decide how to organize the materials for each session (e.g., in small boxes or plastic bags). Set up a system for distributing and retrieving the materials used by students during a session.

Understanding EPACC materials

The Lesson Designs and Teaching Steps books are used together for teaching each session. Lesson Designs tells you what you need to gather for each session, and Teaching Steps tells you how to use the materials listed in Lesson Designs and what to say.

Lesson Designs

The first page for each session lists the materials needed for the entire session. The second page lists the specific materials you'll need to teach each numbered procedure in the session.



The systematic introduction, review, and integration of letter-sound correspondences with phonemic blending and segmenting skills has been built into the EPACC design. The materials must be used as outlined in Lesson Designs to teach the program with fidelity.

Each of the 33 Teaching Steps corresponds with an EPACC curriculum skill (see Table 2, page 20). The name for each numbered procedure in Lesson Designs corresponds to a numbered tab in Teaching Steps. Please note that the numbers in Lesson Designs designate the order in which the procedures are to be taught and don't correspond with the tab numbers in Teaching Steps. For example, in Cycle 3–Session 2, Procedure 4 (Picture Point) corresponds to Tab 9 (Picture Point) in Teaching Steps.

Teaching Steps

Teaching Steps provides consistent instructional language and explicit strategies that have been empirically validated as effective

for teaching the complex skills of beginning reading. For optimal results, use the wording and follow the directions as written for each Teaching Step.

Words printed in red tell you exactly what to say. Each Teaching Step is a template in which you insert the letters, pictures, words, or sentences listed in Lesson Designs. Use the following guidelines when reading the teacher scripts:

- When the template shows a blank line (____), insert the name of a letter or the word for a picture card.
- When the template shows a dash within slanted lines (/—/), insert the sound for a letter. Use the most common sound for the letter (e.g., for the letter **a**, say the short vowel sound as in **cat**.)
- When the template shows /—/—/—/, say the sounds in the word slow (e.g., /mmm/aaa/t/ for **mat**). Repeated letters between slashes (/mmm/ or /aaa/) represent continuous sounds, which can be held longer without distortion. A single letter between slashes (/t/) represents a stop sound, which is said quickly. (See Table 1, page 18.)

er the card. Hold up a
of this letter is _____. Say
name of this letter. Contin
say: The sound fo

ne of this letter. Co
and say: The sound for th
with me, /—/. Tell me th
the picture cards, hold

say the word. If yo
ord for this card doesn't ha
slow, /—/—/—/. Rea
the word in a sentence

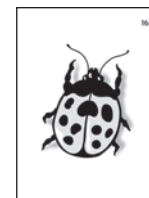
To see how this works, look at page 23 in Lesson Designs. Procedure 8 for Cycle 3–Session 2 indicates that the word **am** is to be used with Tab 20. Referring to Tab 20 in Teaching Steps, you'll see that the script reads, **The first sound in _____ is /—/**. You would therefore say, **The first sound in am is /aaa/**.

Using EPACC materials

Before beginning to teach the lessons, familiarize yourself with all the EPACC materials and become comfortable using them.

Picture cards

Picture cards are used in teaching the skills of phonemic blending and segmenting. You'll use Teaching Steps Tabs 9–18 to teach these skills while integrating picture identification into the instruction.

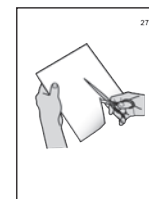


The picture cards are alphabetized. To make it easy to locate the cards needed for a session, each card has a small number in the top right corner. Words are listed in Lesson Designs according to this number (e.g., **1–am, 28–I, 31–is**).

For a complete list of picture cards, see the Picture Card Index in Appendix D, page 77) or on the CD-ROM. If a word doesn't have a picture representation (e.g., **if**), the word is underlined in the list. Lesson Designs gives you an oral sentence to use whenever a card without a picture representation is listed.

Picture Point
Teaching Steps: Tab 9
Picture Cards: 40-fit, 60-if,
125-sock
Manipulative: Puppet
Oral Sentence: **If it rains
hard, we play inside.**

Some picture cards name an object (noun), and others show an action (verb) or describe something about the picture (adjective or adverb). It's essential that you differentiate between pictures that name an object and pictures that show an action or describe something. In Teaching Steps you're instructed to say, **This is _____** (if the picture is a noun) or **This shows _____** (if the picture shows an action or describes something). This is a critical distinction. For example, the picture card for **cut** shows scissors cutting paper. You would say **This shows cut**, rather than **This is cut**, to avoid confusing students who may have learned the word **cut** in another context. A simple differentiation in the instructional language avoids teaching misinformation. You'll find it helpful to write "This is _____" or "This shows _____" beside each word on the list of picture cards as you prepare to teach an EPACC session.



Letter cards

You'll use letter cards to teach alphabetic understanding. Alphabetic skills always involve printed letters, while phonemic skills involve speech only. Letter cards are used to:



- Identify letter names and sounds as taught in Teaching Steps Tabs 1–8.
- Transition from saying only the individual sound for a letter to reading words using the letter cards. For example, in Teaching Steps Tab 19, you systematically teach students to say the sound for each letter slow and then blend the sounds together to say the word fast.
- Spell words using letter cards. For example, in Teaching Steps Tab 32, you direct students to say the sound for each letter slow, then say the word fast, and finally say the name for each letter in the word.

Word cards

The word cards are alphabetized. To make it easy to locate the cards needed for a session, each card has a small number in the top right corner. Words are listed in Lesson Designs according to this number (e.g., **44–man**). For a complete list of word cards, see the Word Card Index in Appendix D (page 77) or on the CD-ROM.



Word cards are used to systematically teach students word reading skills. You'll use Teaching Steps Tabs 20–29 to teach those skills. For example:

- When a CV or CVC word is first introduced (see Teaching Steps: Tab 20), you tell students to **say the sounds in the word slow** while you point to each letter of the word on the card. Then you tell them to **say it fast** while you move your finger quickly under the letters of the word.

- When a CV or CVC word is reviewed (see Teaching Steps Tab 28), you systematically teach students to read the word by saying: **Think about the sounds in this word without moving your lips, and then say it fast.**
- Some word cards represent words that aren't decodable. In EPACC these high frequency sight words are called **flag words**. Using the consistent instructional language in Teaching Steps Tab 29, you teach students an explicit strategy by saying: **Some of our words are flag words. We look at a flag word and say it fast. This word is _____.**

Sentence strips

The sentence strips are numbered in the order in which they appear in the cycles. Most words in the sentences have been taught previously with word cards. If a sentence strip contains an untaught word, the word is represented by a picture. For example, the Lesson Design for Cycle 4–Session 1 lists the sentence strip **6–(Student name) is [mad]**. The word **mad** is represented by a picture on the sentence strip. The empty box indicates that the student's name should be used to begin the sentence.

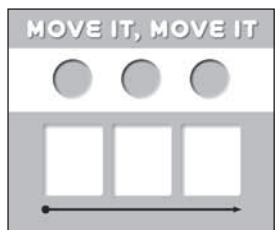


After a sentence strip is introduced in a session, it typically occurs in three subsequent sessions and then is reviewed in the next four sessions.

It's important to follow the instructional language in the Teaching Steps. For example, Tab 30 (Sentence Reading) tells you what to say and how to use the sentence strips as you begin to systematically transition students from reading individual words to reading words in connected text. Tab 31 (Sentence Reading Review) tells you what to say and do to move the students toward reading a sentence with only the prompt **Read this sentence.**

Move It, Move It board

The Move It, Move It board provides a concrete, hands-on technique to teach phonemic and alphabetic skills, using the concept of one-to-one correspondence. For example:



- When using the Move It, Move It board with Teaching Steps Tab 15 (Move It), you teach students to say the sounds in a word slow (phonemic segmenting), and to move one ring down into a box on the board each time they hear a sound in the word.
- When using the board with Teaching Steps Tab 19 (Word Reading with Letter Cards), you're teaching an alphabetic skill. Students match a spoken sound with its printed symbol (letter), move a letter down into a box on the board for each sound they say, and finally blend the sounds together fast to read the word.

Four Square board

The Four Square board provides a gamelike format to teach, review, and practice the phonemic skills of blending and segmenting as well as the alphabetic skills of letter name and sound identification and word reading. For example:



- In Teaching Steps Tab 6 (Four Square Letters), you review and practice previously taught letter names and sounds—an alphabetic skill.
- In Teaching Steps Tab 13 (Four Square Fast) you teach phonemic blending. You say the sounds in a word slow and have students say the word fast to identify the word for a picture.
- In Teaching Steps Tab 17 (Four Square Slow), you teach phonemic segmenting. Students say the sounds slow in words you give them.

- In Teaching Steps Tab 22 (Four Square Words), you teach students an explicit strategy for reading words.

Lesson Designs tells you what Teaching Step to use with the board. Each Teaching Step supplies the instructional language and directions for using the board. Examples follow.

Games

The EPACC games actively engage students in reviewing and practicing phonemic and alphabetic skills. Lesson Designs tells you whether you need to use a specific game board or whether you can choose a theme-based game board.

The two specific game boards, Cover Up the Cats and Candy Cover-up, correspond with Teaching Steps Tab 7 and Tab 14, respectively.



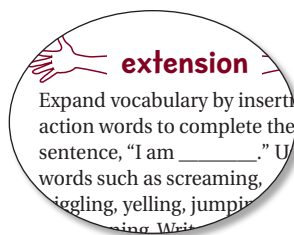
The five theme-based games are Monster Mix, Pass the Ball, Sea Swim, Treasure Trek, and Watching in the Wild. The themes and complexity of these game boards vary so you can select a board based on student interest and ability. Five Teaching Steps tabs use theme-based games:

- Tab 8: Alphabet Names and Sounds
- Tab 18: Say It Slow
- Tab 23: Word Reading One
- Tab 27: Word Reading Two
- Tab 28: Word Reading Three

Lesson Designs also lists the letter, picture, or word cards you need for playing the game. Page 11 of this Implementation Guide lists the specific markers to be used for each game.

Extensions

Many sessions in Lesson Designs include an extension following the numbered procedures. The extensions provide you with ideas for practicing the EPACC skills taught in the lesson. For example, in Cycle 5–Session 4, the extension focuses on expanding vocabulary.



In beginning EPACC cycles, extensions check students' factual comprehension of the connected text from the sentence strips. In later cycles (Cycles 15+), extensions include a predictive question to help students begin to make inferences or forecast possible outcomes based on the text.

Extensions in later cycles use **Let's Read** books, which contain short stories that incorporate previously practiced sentences. Students color pictures and add their own illustrations on a "What Do You Think?" page. The books are accessible as reproducible portable document files on the CD-ROM. To assemble a book, fold the paper in half lengthwise, print side out. Then fold it again crosswise, with "Let's Read" on the cover. The fold will be on the bottom to make it easier for students to color in the books.



You can decide whether to use the extensions in the 20-minute EPACC instruction or at a different time. Because they're part of the sequence of skill development in the curriculum design, however, it's important to use them as sequenced in Lesson Designs.

"Stripe" the puppet

Lesson Designs tells you when to use Stripe as your teaching assistant. He provides a strong visual support to help you teach abstract skills like phonemic blending and segmenting more concretely.

EPACC doesn't tell you how to introduce Stripe or suggest ways to engage students with the puppet (e.g., allowing students to use Stripe during individual turns). This is left to your creativity and expertise.

Stripe should always be used with younger students when indicated in the Lesson Designs. Using Stripe with older students is optional. However, you'll find that some older students benefit from the added visual support and engagement.

It's necessary to practice with Stripe because the movement of his mouth must be in sync as you say the sounds in a word slow, for example. You also need to practice using Stripe to perform other actions, such as pointing to pictures.



"Stretch" the Slinky

Lesson Designs tells you when to use the Slinky. Stretching out the Slinky slowly and pushing it together fast adds a visual aid and kinesthetic action to an otherwise abstract and artificial skill.

EPACC doesn't tell you how to introduce Stretch. This again is left to your creativity. Please note, however, that the Slinky should not be presented as a toy and students should use it only when you tell them to.



Preparing to teach a session

Prepare carefully to teach each session according to the following procedure:

1. Using the first page of the session in Lesson Designs, gather the materials you'll need to teach the session.

2. Organize the materials for the session (e.g., in small boxes or plastic bags).
3. Decide how you will distribute and retrieve the materials used by the students.
4. Study the names of the picture cards. Decide if each picture names an object or shows an action or describes something about the picture so you know whether you identify the picture by saying, **This is _____** or **This shows _____**.
5. Practice each procedure, gathering the materials and studying the Teaching Step that corresponds to the procedure.
6. Focus first on the instructions (in black type).
7. Practice the scripts (in red type) out loud.
8. Note in the Teaching Step (a) when you model—show students how to do a specific procedure, (b) lead—have students do the procedure with you, and (9) test—give students opportunities to respond by themselves, individually or as a group.
9. Study and practice using the scripted correction procedure for when a student makes an error.
10. Practice using the puppet or Slinky; manipulating letter, picture, and word cards; and moving rings or letter cards on the Move It, Move It board, as directed in the Teaching Step.
11. Combine the words and actions, and practice, practice, practice.

Initially you need to spend more time practicing. Because Teaching Steps are used repeatedly throughout the EPACC cycles, you'll become more fluent and comfortable over time. You'll also find that your ease in using the Teaching Steps will make it easier for the

students to become proficient and successful in demonstrating the beginning readings skills you're teaching in EPACC.

Teaching a session

The following tips will help ensure the success of your lessons:

1. Set the stage for learning. For example, provide a transition cue for moving from the previous activity to EPACC and remind students of what you expect them to do (e.g., sit tall and keep their hands on the table).
2. Tell the students what to do with the materials as you distribute them.
3. Teach each procedure in the session as you practiced. Use the language in the Teaching Steps for all your conversation during instruction to minimize “teacher talk” and maximize instructional time.
4. Keep the pace of the session quick, while not eliminating any steps.
5. Give feedback on how students perform each procedure.
6. Use the correction procedure when students make an error. Providing a correct model for the response eliminates student confusion.
7. Tell students how to return the materials to you.
8. At the end of a session, use positive and specific feedback about student performance (e.g., **You remembered to _____** or **You used all the materials carefully**).

ASSESSING YOUR STUDENTS

EPACC uses curriculum-based assessment (CBA) to measure student progress and proficiency on 8 curriculum skills, which correspond with the 33 Teaching Steps (see Table 2, page 20):

1. Picture identification
2. Letter name and sound identification
3. Phonemic blending
4. Phonemic segmenting
5. Flag word identification
6. Word reading
7. Sentence reading
8. Spelling

In addition to using CBA, employing a generalized outcome measure such as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is recommended.

Understanding the CBA materials

Standard and Optional CBAs

EPACC provides two versions of CBA:

1. The Standard CBA is administered after Cycles 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 12, 16, 21, and 25. This version includes an individual student record form and a class record form, which allows you to record responses for four students on the same form. The individual forms may be found in Appendix B (page 48). Both the individual and class record forms are included on the CD-ROM.

2. The Optional CBA includes an assessment for each of the 25 cycles and is administered after students complete a cycle. Individual record forms can be printed from the CD-ROM as needed.

CBA is administered to each student individually. The CBA record forms list the specific letters, picture cards, word cards, and sentence strips you'll need to assess each skill.

Assessment scripts

The assessment scripts are used in combination with the CBA forms. The scripts are included in Appendix B (page 48) and may also be printed from the CD-ROM. They tell you what to say and do to administer assessments. It's important to use the wording and follow the directions as written because the scripts use words and strategies very similar to those used for instruction. By adhering closely to the scripts, you can be confident that student errors are skill related, rather than due to unfamiliarity with the assessment directions. In addition, the scripts provide consistency and fidelity when the assessments are administered by different personnel.

Words printed in red tell you exactly what to say. A blank line (____) in the script indicates that you need to insert a word. Words printed in black give directions for what to do with the cards and other materials. In addition to the specified cards, you'll need the Move It, Move It board and rings for Skill 4