

Alphabet Tracing, Katie Babb, Springfield Elementary School

We started out and tested all our kindergarten kids on their letter recognition and we found out that there were a number of them who knew less than forty letters, forty meaning uppercase and lowercase letters. We also found that we had a lot who were twenty and below. So we decided to focus on the ones who had twenty and below with letter tracing. As interventionists, we were going to go in and letter trace consistently every day with them. Their teachers were going to continue with the ones who were forty and below because they still need letter tracing as well. Over the course of about 4 weeks, we've been letter tracing, and we've seen some good growth in our kindergarten, just with that consistent letter tracing every day. Every one of our teachers has an ABC chart that hangs in their rooms and they also have these at their guided reading tables. The links are the same, so the kids are hearing the same links with us that they hear with teachers, and then when they go on to first grade, they're still going to have the same links. This was an effort on our District's part to keep it consistent. If they had more than ten letters, we would do the whole alphabet. Every day they would trace A, a, apple. And we made sure as they were going through that it was the correct formation; we weren't just letting their hands go all over. We wanted them to form the letters correctly, name the letter, and also use the link.

T: OK, J___, let's trace your letters.

S: A!

T: Great. Go ahead and trace.

S: A, a (some out of order letter formation), apple.

T: All right. Look, let me show you how to write this a. (guides his finger) Around like a c, down. That's an a. You do it.

S: Apple.

T: Start here and do it one more time.

S: A, a, apple.

S: B, b (confused on b)

T: Let me hold your finger

T&S: B, b,

S: Bear.

S: C! C, c, cat.

S: Elephant. G

T: This is the letter F. f.

S: F, f, fish. G

T: G. Good. (guides hand)

S: G, g, fence

T: This is the gggate. GG – gate

S: Gate

S: Z

T: Z, yes

S: Z, z, zipper.

T: Very nice.

J___, at the beginning of the year, he started out at the beginning of September he had 4 letters. So I started out with just the letters in his name. I made him a book with these same cards, but it was just

the letters in his name. We worked on that for several weeks. The next time I tested him, he was at 10.

After he got to 10, I did the whole alphabet with him tracing. When we went from his name to the whole alphabet, I had to go in and help him a lot, but then he went from 10 to 25. And now his teacher told me the other day that he's made even more significant gains from doing this letter tracing.

Alphabet Tracing 2, Katie Babb, Springfield Elementary School

In the very beginning of our letter tracing, I held their hand and showed them explicitly how to write these letters and reinforced that letter formation from the very beginning.

I try to make notes so that I would have a clue as to what letters they've known, what letters they haven't, because some of them are very inconsistent, some not so much. My notes helped guide me when to come in and when to give them some time but if it was a letter I knew was unknown, I told them the letter, this is the letter a. If they were not forming the letter, I took their hand.

I would put up here (on chart) I would give him a check if he got it and was able to form it. If I had to go in and hold his hand, I might put an f above the letter to know that I had to help him with his formation on that letter. Or if it was something – he did not know the letter h, so I circled it. You just have to come up with your own system of how you know what your notes mean.

S: A, a, apple, B, b, bear, C, c, cat

S: f, fish, (hesitate)

T: G

S: G,

T: start here (T&S) g

S: gate

S: k, kite, L (waits and looks at teacher)

T: (nods)

S: L, l, leaf

T: Yes, trace both of them – do it again (guides his hand)

S: L, l, leaf

T: Now you do it.

S: L, l, leaf.

T: T, t, turtle, (hesitates)

T: U,

S: U, u, octopus – umbrella

T: Yes, this is an umbrella, like you walk in the rain. You hold it up. That's called an umbrella. OK?

S: Z, z, zipper.

T: Very nice. Thank you, F__.

He started out the year and he knew 14 letters, so I did the entire alphabet with him the entire time.

The next time he went from 14 to 20. This gives me an idea, are they holding onto the same ones, from this time to the next time I tested him. Are the letters he knew here still known here? So that gave me an idea. And then the last time, he had gotten to 36, and now he's at 40. So he's really made some good gains as well.

You can't do it here or there. You need to be consistent in tracing every day. So most of our kindergarten assistants have been trained on this, so they are doing it some too.

Letters in Names, Emily Garrett, Springfield Elementary School

I began working with T and M – the first part of the school year, it was just letter tracing. We were working on building their letter knowledge by tracing their name, rainbow writing their name, and then tracing our alphabet chart that we have, A-Z. When we first tested them, they knew fewer than 10 letters. At this point, T__ has 41 and M__ has about 37 known letters.

At this point we're working at the beginning of the lesson on their names, making their names with magnetic letters. We'll start cutting their names into syllables so that they can see how their names work in different parts and putting those back together. So I always have them read their name after they make it, show me where your name starts so they can understand this is where my name starts as well as other words. Always go to that first letter first, get it started by making that sound, and then searching all the way through to see all the letters that make my name.

T: OK, today I want you to take your letters out of your cup and make your name, right there in front of you. Just dump them out and make your name on this board right in front of you. How does your name look? Think about how we traced it. Good. Think about what comes after that. Good. Think about how you have to make your name. Good. So what does this say? Let's put our finger in there and let's read it.

S: T-

T: What's the name? What does it say?

S: Trey

T: (guides his finger across the word) Trey. Now you can tell me- what letters do you see?

S: T-r-e-y

T: And what does it say?

S: Trey

T: Trey. Where does your name start? What comes first?

S: T

T: The T. Good. OK, put those back in the cup. (to other student): What do you have here? What does it say?

S: Matthew

T: Matthew. OK, tell me the letters in your name

S: M-a-t-t-h-e-w

T: OK, read it one more time. What do you have?

S: Matthew

T: And where does your name start? What comes first?

S: M

T: M. Good. Put those in there.

I start with their name first because those are the letters that we teach first because sometimes we find it easier and more beneficial if they can usually know the letters in their name before we go to the other letters in the alphabet. Both these students picked up on their names fairly quickly. I did first and last names, so they've gotten their first and last names down and those letters are known. So those are the letters we're going to be working with and focusing on as far as still with maybe some picture sorts we'll get into using their known letters, and also their letter formation to make sure that they know always start at the top and pull down when we write these letters. So I try to focus on their names for several reasons. Sometimes it's easier for them to learn the letters in their names, and their

names are very important and they need to know that this is my name when I see it, and I can write it and read it.

Rainbow Writing Names, Tracie McGovern, Springfield Elementary School

When he first came to kindergarten, he could not even write any letter. He couldn't really even hold a pencil very well. I see him every day, my personal – My assistant sees him once a day. My assistant does the alphabet trace and then she'll do rainbow writing – rainbow name with him. And then we have our interventionist who comes in and also works with him.

We started out with name puzzles before I actually started guided reading. We started with this is his name, and naturally we do this (Ty sa re) and he had to put it together. We broke it down even further into his letters. He would have to be able to write it – I mean, say it, in order. And then we finally got to the point last week, that I could take this (the full name strip) away. And he could find them and we made sure that he knew that he had to go left to right. He couldn't just put it in any order.

T: (puts name chart in front of him with dots where letter formation begins.) Oh, we know what this is, don't we? One of our favorites. Pick a color so we can rainbow write. Twist and pull. All right, the smiley faces tell you where to start. What's this letter?

S: T

T: T. Start right here.

(S writes)

T: Start at the dot. Y,

S: s,

T: Start at the dot. T-y-s-a-

S: r

T: there you go.

S: e

T: Good, do it again. (child gets another color marker)

S: says each letter as makes it.

T: What's that letter? Let's look –

(he reads letters from beginning – T-y-s-a-r -e

T: Let's do one more.

(finishing next rainbow writing) e-

T: Now what's that word?

S: Tysare.

T: Tysare. Very good. Can you show me the first letter in your name?

S: (points to T)

T: Can you show me the last letter?

S: (points to y, then T)

T: The last letter – the one at the end. (S points to e) There you go.

It's very important since he struggles with where to begin that I would put dots where he needed to start, because he would want to randomly just go somewhere, like with s he might want to start at the bottom. And e he would start at the bottom and go around. I wanted him to know where to begin and do the pathways, so he would know we're going to start at the dot, down and across. And I wanted him to say the letter every time he wrote it. As you noticed in the lesson, he knows the letters in order, but in isolation he struggles a little bit, so this way I thought, when he comes to the letter he couldn't answer, then I went back. Let's spell it, let's read it – T-y-s-a- and then he knew automatically it was r and he would repeat r. So hopefully, the more he sees these letters, whether they're in

isolation or not, he'll get to be more proficient with them. He'll be able to know that's are r every time he comes to it, regardless of having to go back and spell his name.

Letter Formation, Tracie McGovern, Springfield Elementary School

T: Now let's practice our letters. Remember what letter we've been practicing?

S: a

T: We have practice a. What did we practice this morning on the board, when you wrote the word.

S: n?

T: We did do n with the other one. Do you remember the other one? (writes y on whiteboard, then puts the T for his name before it, and then the rest of his name.)

T: What's that word? Let's spell it.

S: t, y, s, a, r, e

T: so what's that letter (pointing to y)

S: r

T: Let's try it again.

S: T

T: (pointing to y) What letter's this?

S: y

T: y. We're going to practice our y. Are you ready? All right, get your top off. Go with Ms. McGovern. Slant down (he does). Come back up over here. Slant down some more. Good. Can you try it – slant down like this – oh that's going to be a good one. Now can you start about here? We're going to slant down some more. (he does) Look at that beautiful y. Look at that. It looks almost like this one. Here it is. (puts out magnetic letter). Does it look the same? Yes. We have stick, stick, down and down some more. Can you try it by yourself? Slant down, now down some more. What letter's that?

S: (hesitates) y

T: y. Very good. All right, try one more time, by yourself. (erases the ones on the whiteboard and puts the magnetic letter in front of him).

S: (writes y)

T: Oh my goodness. What's that letter?

S: y

T: Y. Excellent job.

He's still struggling with letter formation. So we're trying to focus one at a time. He made the comment, what letter have we been working on – a. Well,, we have been on a, and we've worked on e fluently. We're trying to get those firmed up before we go to these other ones. Yet I don't want him to write the letter incorrectly. I want to at least guide him. So that's why would practice with the dry erase marker. I would do the scaffolding with bringing down the actual magnetic letter, so he can visually see what it looks like. I showed him on the chart so he could see it and then I would talk him through the pathways and hopefully it's going to be drummed into his head how it goes every time, and it will be an automatic, natural ability for him.

DISTINGUISHING LETTERS QUICKLY, Andrea Overton, Reading Recovery Teacher Leader, Anderson 5

T: OK, A__, today I want you to sort these letters (g, b, and d on whiteboard). Go ahead

S: (Child sorting letters)

T: Take a good look

T: What's this one?

S: g (T points to next) d (and last) b

T: You got it

S: g, d, b

For h and n and r, he has some trouble visually discriminating those letters in text. And so today one of the questions that came up was white - a white mushroom - and it was loaded. I kind of thought he might know white as a color word. So I left it. But thing about it is, he initially articulated "ww". But when he goes back this time he says, rr. So I'm wondering if he sees this as wr and not the h and that has been something that's been problematic for him, the difference between h and r and n, because they're all visually similar. So when I work with him oftentimes I'm having him sort those letters that are the same.

T: Will you sort these for me please?

S: uh-huh. (sorts r's, h's, and n's)

T: What's this letter?

S: r

T: What's this letter?

S: n

T: What's this letter?

T: h

He can do it in isolation, but when it's embedded in text there's a lot of other things competing and it looks different than it does when he's manipulating the magnetic letters. So I also will draw attention to the verbal and motor pathway.

T: H. I want you to trace your finger over the h. Pull way down, up on top of the letter, watch. Pull way down, up, over and down. I'm going to say it one more time while you run your finger over it. Pull way down, up, over and down. (S traces as she talks). You see how that works?

S: Yes

T OK.

T: (give S board to write on): Pull way down, up, over and down. (Puts magnetic letter next to his writing). Pull WAY down,

S: way down,

T: up, over, and down.

S: up, over and down.

T: Does it look like an h?

S: yes

T: It kind of looks like an n, doesn't it? Watch when I say, "Pull way down." Pull WAY down, up, over and down (T demonstrates as she talks). You say it.

S: Pull way down, up, over and down. (Writes h)

T: Good. One more time please.

(S writes another h)

T: What's the letter?

S: h

T: h. Do you see how it's different from n?

S yes

T: We don't have to pull way down with n, we just pull down, up, over. They're very similar, but you have to be very careful when you're looking in a book and when you're writing that they look different. OK?

His n and h - you can't distinguish when he writes that this is an h and this is an n, because they're the exact same height. And so when he makes h, it's really important that he pulls way down, up, over and down, and that n is just pulled down up over and down. That has really helped him sort some things out over time because you're seeing him and he's reading a Level 11 but when he came in early in the program there were a lot of those confusions. And so being able to use a motor pathway and having him say that motor pathway, and having him say that pathway has helped him sort out some of those things.

Sometimes what then will help him is not only having him sort the magnetic letters and tying the verbal pathway with the motor path but also going back into text and just isolating what's this letter, what's this letter, what's this letter, so that he sees those similar letters in text and can call those up quickly and easily.

T: I'm going to ask you about some letters, OK?

S: OK

T: What's this letter?

S: n

T: What's this letter?

S: h

T: What's this letter?

S: r

T: r I like the way you're looking very closely.

Alphabet Charts, Emily Garrett, Springfield Elementary School

After we do a little word work with their name – we can do name puzzles, magnetic letters or rainbow write their names and we've done all three of those things, we will go into working with letters. Depending on the students in the group, I pick several letters that are known, and have them match them up with the ABC chart. So with this particular group that I just had, I gave them h,a,s,k, and w. Then they needed to find where they went on their chart.

T: I'm going to give you the ABC chart and you have some letters in your cup and I want you to match them up on top of your ABC chart. OK, so take your letters. Good – where did that one need to go? Good. Now make it look right. Good. See how you made it look right? OK, so what letter do you, M? Pick one.

S: (puts the w on another letter)

T: Does that one match? What letter do you have in your hand?

S: W

T: So where's the w on your chart? (S looks -) Look on this row – See if you can find the w on this row. (S find it). Good.

T: To other student – yep, K – good job. What do you have now, M?

S: H

T: H. OK, look on this row. Find your h. Good, good job.

(To the child who is done). OK, so what letters do you know?

S: A

T: A

S: K

T: K

S: h, s, w

T: Good.

T: All right. Find your k. Where does your k go? Look on this row – see how it has to match? So let's look at your letters. What letter? (points to a)

S: a, h, k, s, w

T: That's right. We need to know these fast.

T: Let's look at our a. So take your a and let's say, A, a, apple. Aah – It says aah. Show me your h. Let's say it, OK?

S&T: H, h, hat –

T: hhh – make that sound? Hh

S: w, w,

T: Oh, let's do our k next, ready?

S&T: k, k, kite. And it says kkk. Can you make that sound?

S: S, s

T: - Oh, make the K sound – kk

S: kk

T: Good. Now do your s

S: S, s, sun, and watch me, T___. SSSS

S: C

S: That's the sss sound. Can you make that sound?

S: sss

I noticed that they did struggle a little bit at finding them, so I would give them, “Check this row, or check this row,” for that letter that you have. Then we named them, “a,a,apple, s,s,sun” and we quickly talked about how it said aa and ss and kk, just making those sounds. We haven’t gotten into the sorting of the pictures by the sounds yet, because we’re still firming up. Like I said, they don’t know all 54 letters yet, so we’re still firming that up. We will move into that, taking these that are known and using that later in the lesson with some picture sorting.

They can also have a bag of letters that are known, and each bag is probably different, because each child knows different letters. Then they would dump their bag of letters out and put them onto their chart. 40:51 So just different ways to work with letters. Again, you could have 3 or 4 letters up here and they could name them, left to right, really quickly. Show me the s, they could just point to it on the chart. You could have them do “what I expect to see at the beginning of dog” if they knew d, and have them make that sound and find it on their chart as well. So always bringing it back, these are the links that our District uses, but if children have different links for a letter, we definitely want to provide that for them and maybe make a book that would have their own links for them to help them better their letter knowledge.

Letters and Sounds, Tracie McGovern, Springfield Elementary School

I started out with the letter activity, working with letters. We've already matched letters in the bag, matched letters to the alphabet chart, with his name, we've made the magnetic letters and things like that. So I thought he was ready for me to go to the next step, where we use the alphabet chart and I name a sound and he locates the letter or picture that goes with that sound, and then I wanted him not only to say, this is it, but I wanted him to actually come out and say, dog, what letter is that, d. So I wanted to reinforce that not only did he hear the sound, but he also saw the picture and heard the word together.

T: I want you to look at your alphabet chart that we've been working with, and I want you to look and find a picture that shows the word that begins with dih. Do you know which one starts with dih.

S: (points)

T: What is that?

S: Dog

T: Dog. Do you know that letter?

S: d

T: d! Good job. Now can you find one that starts like "huh" Say it for me. Can you say "huh". Look at me. Can you say "huh"

S: huh

T: OK, can you find the word? (pause) It's in this row right here. And Leah's got it in her name. huh.

S: (points elsewhere)

T: (takes his finger to the row.) It's in this row, right here. (Points to the f) Could it be ffish?

S: (shakes head no)

T: (moves his finger to each word as she says it): Could it be "gate"? Hat?

S: (shakes head yes)

T: Can you say "hat"?

S: hat

T: Get it started for me. Huh. That's right. H says huh.

Now this is going to be a simple easy one. Ready? Find the picture that's like ttt – like in Tysare.

S: points to t quickly.

T: Oh my goodness, what is that?

S: t

T: That's right. What picture is that?

S: turtle

T: OK. Here's the last one. Ready? Watch Ms. McGovern's mouth. Look at my mouth. Www. Www. Let's look right here, it's on this row.

(S points to w)

T: Oh! What is that?

S: Window

T: Window. Can you get it started?

S: ww

T: ww. That's right. Window. Can you say window?

S: window.

T: Beautiful.

I tried to get one in every row. He had a bit of trouble so I would tell him it was in this row. And he still had trouble, so I went back and I said, OK, let's try this one, "fish, does it sound like fish?" and he

would say it and say, no. And then we went to gate, and he would say gate and I would say, is that it? And he said no. And then I said what about this one, what's this? Hat. Is that it? Shook his head no first, then said yes. He said no and then he changed his mind. I even related it to his friend who is in his group, M___. She has an h in her name, and they've been working on putting the letters with the alphabet chart. So I thought he might have caught on with it being in her name, and he even helps her sometimes – he takes her letters and says, "It's right here," that maybe he would have gotten hat, but he didn't so that's why we went through and I went to each letter, and I made that sound with him, and then he had to repeat it. So hopefully he's going to catch on and hold on to that letter h.

At the very beginning of the school year, he knew zero letters. Then we did it again on October 13 and he knew 11 letters. We did the alphabet identification assessment today, just out of curiosity, and he's up to 25 letters. And he knows 5 sounds, whereas before he had 0. So he's really working diligently with those.

Tracing the alphabet every day, working on it every day, multiple times. And he enjoys the 1-1 time with the assistant and with the interventionist, and he enjoys coming with his partner, M___. It's a very proud moment for him to be able to help his friend. So he's very good about, no, that's it. He's all about interacting, and it makes him feel successful that he can do this, because he's been doing it every day, for 45 days.

Phonological Awareness, Emily Garrett, Springfield Elementary School

After we work with letters for a couple of minutes, today we worked with clapping syllables and hearing the sounds in words. We clapped one syllable words, and they were doing well with that, so I did do a couple of 2 syllable words. So again we focus on things here (on the alphabet chart), so we did cat, moon, and pig – so things that they've seen before because they've traced all these letters, the links, they should know those.

T: Now I want you to show me the cat. Where's the cat? Can you point to your cat? Good. Find your cat. Now, watch how I can say that word and clap it. Cat. Can you help me do that? Ready, let's do it together. Cat. Good. Can you find the pig. All right let's do just like we did cat. Watch – pig. You try it. S: (says pig, doesn't clap).

T: You have to clap it. Try it again.

S: Pig (claps)

T: Good. OK. Find moon. Let's do it.

T&S: Moon

T: This one is going to be tricky. Show me turtle. Now watch how I can clap this one – ready? Tur- tle. You help me?

T&S: tur-tle.

T: Good. Let's try window. Show me window. Just like turtle. Ready? Let's clap it.

T&S: Win – dow.

S: You've got to say the word, and clap it and hear those parts, OK.

Before, when we were clapping syllables, everything was clap,clap,clap,clap – It didn't matter if it was one syllable, 10 syllables, it was clap clap clap clap. So we're working on slowing down, listening, and thinking type things.

T: We're going to practice our clapping now. Remember how we clapped our syllables? We did "igloo." Let's practice "igloo" real quick. (T&S) I-gloo. Now, we're going to do a harder one. We're going to do one with three beats. Ready? Can you clap umbrella?

S: Umbrella – (one clap)

T: Let's do it together, slowly.

T&S: Um -brell-a. Good job. Now let's try "octopus"

T&S: oc-to-pus.

T: OK, you try one by yourself. Elephant.

S: el-e-phant

T: Oh, you did it. Can you do kangaroo?

S: (shakes head no)

T: Oh yes you can. Let's do it together. Try it. I'll do it with you, ready?

S: kang- a – roo

T: Oh! You did it. You didn't need my help.

In this section of working with sounds, you could talk about rhymes and how we can hear parts that are the same in words, and you can do some picture sorts. You could pick 2 letters and have them say the picture and what they expect to see at the beginning to make that sound and start thinking about – I would put out a t and an a maybe, two letters that are not similar looking, are opposite and they can hear very easily and see the differences in those. I would provide them with some cards, like turtle, tank, some t cards and some "a" cards. They would say the picture, turtle, what sound do I hear – tt, and then what letter would I put it under – that t.