



Facilitator’s Guide

This guide was produced in partnership with the **National Education Association**



EPISODE 3

Mastering Short Vowels and Reading Whole Words with Calista, First Grader

Video length: 19 minutes

Watch the video here:

ReadingRockets.org/interventions/mastering-short-vowels-and-reading-whole-words-with-calista-first-grade

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Watch the whole “Looking at Reading Interventions” series here:
ReadingRockets.org/interventions



Section 1: Purpose of this guide

This facilitator's guide for professional development (the Guide) is intended to provide suggestions for reading coaches, principals, team leaders, or other facilitators to use for professional development (PD) sessions.

The Guide is organized to facilitate discussion about the video, not for the facilitator to lecture. PD facilitators may find insight about the videos by reading the Guide before leading PD about the video.

Use in conjunction with the Viewer's Guide

A separate Viewer's Guide intended for anyone to use during a first viewing of the video. Find it here:

- [Episode 3 Viewer's Guide](#) (printable PDF)
- [Episode 3 Viewer's Guide](#) (fillable PDF)

The Viewer's Guide includes the following:

1. Calista's profile
2. Video overview
3. What to notice while watching the video
4. Questions to consider while watching the video the first time

PD participants should use the Viewer's Guide as they watch the entire video as the initial step in PD, either on their own or in a group.

Using this guide for professional development

General guidelines for using the guide

PD should start with all participants watching the entire video and using the Viewer's Guide to guide their watching.

The Guide organizes the video into short clips for the group to view before discussing the clips. The short clips are organized around the following themes:

- A. Calista Reads Words
- B. Calista Learns Motions for the Short Vowel Sounds
- C. Calista Learns How to Substitute First and Last Sounds in a Sound Chain
- D. Calista Learns to Manipulate Vowel Sounds in a Sound Chain
- E. Calista Reads Decodable Words and Text



Each theme includes one to three short video clips for viewing, and one to five discussion questions for immediate discussion after each clip is viewed.

A PD facilitator may elect to offer several shorter sessions as part of ongoing shorter PD sessions, such as for a Professional Learning Community (PLC), or to have one half-day session to discuss the video.

Use the guide for a series of shorter PD sessions

1. Ask participants to read the Viewer's Guide before viewing the entire video. As they view the video, participants should answer the questions in Section 4 of the Viewer's Guide.
 - Facilitators might want to use the first short session to view the video and discuss the questions in the Viewer's Guide.
 - Alternatively, facilitators might ask participants to view the video and answer the questions in the Viewer's Guide before the first session, then discuss the questions during the first session.
2. Before each PD session, select video clips and the discussion questions that will fit into the time frame for the session.
 - Facilitators may want to make a copy of the discussion questions for each participant so they can write notes during the session.
3. During the PD session, show the video clips and discuss each clip, using the questions in the Guide.
4. Consider using one or more questions from Section 3: Summarizing Questions before the session ends.

Use the guide for a half-day session

Preparation: Make copies of the Viewer's Guide and the questions in Section 2 for each participant.

Consider an agenda as follows:

1. View the entire video.
 - Read the Viewer's Guide.
 - Answer questions in the Viewer's Guide while viewing the video.
 - Discuss the answers to the questions and other questions participants may have.
2. View short clips and ask discussion questions for each section listed in Section 2.
3. Discuss the questions from Section 3: Summarizing Questions before the session ends.

Using the answer keys

Answer keys provide facilitators with suggestions for answers to each question in the Viewer's Guide and this Guide. Of course, you can adapt the answers to address the needs of participants in your session.



Section 2: Questions for guiding the second viewing of the video

Note about time stamps: The location for the part of the video related to the question is in parentheses. The start and stop times are shown as minutes:seconds. For example, the first question starts at 11 seconds and ends at 54 seconds. The total time for each clip is also shown in minutes and seconds.

Short session A: Calista reads words

2.1 Calista Reads Words (0:11 – 0:54) 0:43 total time

1. Describe how Calista reads when Ms. Farrell asks her to read a few words.
2. Does Calista read the words accurately or inaccurately after saying the letter sounds?

Short session B: Calista learns motions for the short vowel sounds

2.2 Calista Learns Motions for the Short 'a' and Short 'e' Vowel Sounds (0:55 – 3:17) 2:22 total time

3. Why does Ms. Farrell check Calista's knowledge of the short vowel sounds?
4. What are the guide words and motions that Ms. Farrell teaches for short 'a' and for short 'e'?
5. Why does Ms. Farrell teach Calista motions for the short vowel sounds?

2.3 Calista Learns Motions for the Short 'o' and Short 'u' Vowel Sounds (3:18 – 4:22) 1:04 total time

6. What are the guide words and motions that Ms. Farrell teaches for short 'o' and for short 'u'?
7. Why is it important that the vowel motions are not static?
8. What does Ms. Farrell say is the biggest problem in reading issues?

2.4 Calista Learns the Motion for the Short 'i' Vowel Sound and Practices the Short Vowel Sounds (4:23 – 5:33) 1:10 total time

9. What is the guide word and motion that Ms. Farrell teaches for short 'i'?
10. How does Ms. Farrell review the vowel sounds with Calista?
11. How does Ms. Farrell know that Calista is solid with the short vowel sounds?



Short session C: Calista learns how to substitute first and last sounds in a sound chain

2.5 Calista Learns to Use Color Tiles to Talk about Sounds (5:34 – 7:36) 2:02 total time

12. What does Ms. Farrell say is often the problem for sound-by-sound readers?
13. Why is it not intuitive that sound-by-sound reading is a phonological problem?
14. What error does Calista make when Ms. Farrell asks Calista to tell her the first sound in *lip*?
15. What is Ms. Farrell's immediate response when Calista gives the name of the letter 'l' instead of the sound /l/?

2.6 Calista Learns about Substituting Sounds (7:37 – 9:35) 1:58 total time

16. How does Ms. Farrell help Calista figure out which sound changes in *tip* to *Tim*?
 17. What is sound chaining?
 18. Why don't the tiles have letters on them?
 19. Why is being able to manipulate sounds without saying the sounds aloud a critical skill for reading?
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Short session D: Calista learns to manipulate vowel sounds in a sound chain

2.7 Calista Learns How to Change *tap* to *tape* in a Sound Chain (9:36 – 11:05) 1:29 total time

20. Why is it appropriate to ask Calista to change a short vowel to a long vowel in sound chaining when we are only going to ask her to read words with short vowels?
21. When Ms. Farrell asks Calista to identify the sound that changes, she touches the middle tile, which is correct. However, when she asks, "What sound do you take out of *tap*?" Calista's answer is 'a'. Why do you think she answered 'a'?
22. When Ms. Farrell asks "What sound do you put in to make *tape*? Why do you think Calista says the sound /ē/?
23. Why is *tap* to *tape* more difficult than the previous sound changes?



2.8 Calista Learns to Think about Sounds with Her Mouth Closed (11:06 – 13:16) 2:10 total time

24. Why does Ms. Farrell ask Calista to close her mouth until she knows which sound to change?
 25. Why does Calista take longer to change sounds when she keeps her mouth closed?
 26. How will Calista demonstrate mastery with manipulating sounds?
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Short session E: Calista reads decodable words and text

2.9 Calista Reads CVC Words (13:17 – 14:37) 1:20 total time

27. Why is it important that Calista 'thinks the sounds' before she reads the words?
28. Does asking Calista to close her mouth while thinking letter sounds relate to closing her mouth during sound chaining?
29. How will Calista demonstrate that she has mastered reading whole words?

2.10 Calista Reads Decodable Phrases (14:38 – 16:02) 1:24 total time

30. Why does Ms. Farrell ask Calista to read some phrases again?
31. Is there a benefit to having Calista read the same phrases again in a sentence?

2.11 Calista Reads Decodable Sentences (16:03 – 16:18) 0:15 total time

32. How many sentences do you think Calista should read in a session?

2.12 Calista Reads a Decodable Passage (16:18 – 17:25) 1:07 total time

33. Why does Calista hesitate before reading *Pip* in the title and *lad* in the first sentence?

Section 3: Summarizing questions

1. Do you have any students who might benefit from the strategies Calista learns?
2. What did you learn?
3. How do you plan to use what you learned in your instruction?
4. How can you use what you learned with a small group?



Section 4: Answer keys

Answer key for Viewer's Guide

1. **At the beginning of the video, how does Calista read the words?**

Calista reads the words sound-by-sound, saying each sound aloud before reading the whole word aloud.

2. **Does she read the words accurately or inaccurately?**

Calista reads the words accurately.

3. **What pre-reading skill/knowledge does Ms. Farrell check first with Calista?**

Ms. Farrell checks that Calista is solid with the short vowel sounds.

4. **When Calista is changing sounds with colored tiles, how does she initially answer: "What is the first sound?" and "What is the last sound?"**

Calista says the letter name instead of the sound.

5. **How does Ms. Farrell guide Calista to say the sound instead of the letter name?**

Ms. Farrell says, "That is the name of the letter, what is the sound?"

6. **What does Ms. Farrell ask Calista to do when reading words to help Calista stop pronouncing each word sound-by-sound?**

Ms. Farrell asks Calista to read without opening her mouth until she is ready to read the whole word.

7. **What is different about how Calista reads the words at the end of the video compared to her reading at the beginning of the video?**

Calista reads accurately without sound-by-sound reading.



Answer key for Section 2: questions for guiding the second viewing of the video

Short session A: Calista reads words

2.1 Calista Reads Words (0:11 – 0:54) 0:43 total time

1. Describe how Calista reads when Ms. Farrell asks her to read a few words.

Calista says the letter sounds before she reads the words.

Note to facilitator: You might want to explain to participants that this is sometimes called “sound-by-sound” reading. It is when the student names the letter sounds, then reads the word correctly.

2. Does Calista read the words accurately or inaccurately after saying the letter sounds?

Calista reads the words accurately.

Short session B: Calista learns motions for short vowel sounds

2.2 Calista Learns Motions for the Short ‘a’ and Short ‘e’ Vowel Sounds (0:55 – 3:17) 2:22 total time

3. Why does Ms. Farrell check Calista’s knowledge of the short vowel sounds?

Ms. Farrell checks because vowels are usually a source of confusion for striving readers.

4. What are the guide words and motions that Ms. Farrell teaches for short ‘a’ and for short ‘e’?

Short ‘a’: the guide word is *apple* and the motion is to pretend to hold an apple in your hand and then move it left to right across your body about chest high while saying the sound /ăăăă/.

Short ‘e’: the guide word is *edge* and the motion is to trace your index finger along an edge left to right while saying the sound /ěěěě/.

5. Why does Ms. Farrell teach Calista motions for the short vowel sounds?

Ms. Farrell is providing a unique multi-sensory anchor to each sound that Calista can access anywhere, anytime. There is power in the creation of the link between the physical movement, the known object that is a guide word, and the abstract vowel sound.



2.3 Calista Learns the Motions for the Short 'o' and Short 'u' Vowel Sounds

(3:18 – 4:22) 1:04 total time

6. What are the guide words and motions that Ms. Farrell teaches for short 'o' and for short 'u'?

Short 'o': the guide word is *octopus* and the motion is to mime an octopus with your hand swimming left to right at head height while saying the sound /*ööööö*/.

Short 'u': the guide word is *up* and the motion is to point your index finger up and move your hand up from your waist to above your head while saying the sound /*üüüüü*/.

7. Why is it important that the vowel motions are not static?

The active motions encourage students to draw out the vowel sounds so that they can clearly hear and feel the sounds and the distinctions between the sounds.

8. What does Ms. Farrell say is the biggest problem in reading issues?

She points to phonological awareness difficulties, which cause some students to struggle with discriminating between speech sounds such as short 'i' and short 'e'.

2.4 Calista Learns the Motion for the Short 'i' Vowel Sound and Practices the Short Vowel Sounds

(4:23 – 5:39) 1:16 total time

9. What is the guide word and motion that Ms. Farrell teaches for short 'i'?

For short 'i', the guide word is *itch* and the motion is to mime scratching an itch on your arm while saying the sound /*ĩĩĩĩĩ*/.

10. How does Ms. Farrell review the vowel sounds with Calista?

Ms. Farrell says a vowel label (short 'a', short 'e', short 'i', etc.) and asks Calista to say the sound while making the motion. She does this in a random order, sometimes asking for one sound twice in a row.

11. How does Ms. Farrell know that Calista is solid with the short vowel sounds?

Calista is able to respond easily to Ms. Farrell's questions about the sounds and the motions for the sounds.



Short session C: Calista learns how to substitute first and last sounds in a sound chain

2.5 Calista Learns to Use Color Tiles to Talk about Sounds (5:33 – 7:36) 2:03 total time

12. What does Ms. Farrell say is often the problem for sound-by-sound readers?

Ms. Farrell says that sound-by-sound reading is most often a phonological problem, not a problem with knowing the letters. These students can blend the letter sounds into a word. The problem is that sound-by-sound students have to look at each letter and say the letter sounds aloud before they can blend the sounds into a word.

Note to the facilitator: You might want to explain that students are not ready to move from sound-by-sound reading if they are not accurately blending the letter sounds into a word. Students who know the letter sounds but cannot blend the letter sounds into a word need work on blending and segmenting sounds in spoken words without letters.

13. Why is it not intuitive that sound-by-sound reading is a phonological problem?

It is not intuitive because we hear the student correctly produce the sounds for the letters and correctly blend the sounds into a word, so it seems that the difficulty is not with sounds. But, as Ms. Farrell explains, the student stuck at sound-by-sound blending hasn't internalized the decoding process. Sound-by-sound readers can't perform the task of reading a word entirely in their heads.

The problem is not that the students can't blend phonemes into a word. The problem is that the students cannot blend letter sounds unless they say them aloud. These sound-by-sound students need extra help to move from blending spoken letter sounds to just thinking and silently blending the sounds before reading a word aloud.

Note to the facilitator: You might want to explain that these students are never able to build a mental orthographic image of the word because they are always processing individual letters one at a time.

14. What error does Calista make when Ms. Farrell asks Calista to tell her the first sound in *lip*?

Calista says the name of the letter.

15. What is Ms. Farrell's immediate response when Calista gives the name of the letter 'l' instead of the sound /l/?

Ms. Farrell uses positive error correction to tell Calista "L is the name of the letter." She then simply repeats the question, "What is the sound?"



2.6 Calista Learns About Substituting Sounds (7:37 – 9:35) 1:58 total time

16. How does Ms. Farrell help Calista figure out which sound changes in *tip* to *Tim*?

Ms. Farrell asks Calista to touch and say the sounds in *tip* on the color tiles. Next, she has Calista touch and say the sounds in *Tim* on the tiles. This allows Calista to see the tile associated with the sound that changes. Then she can compare the sounds for the tiles that change. Then she is able to answer the question, "Which one is different?"

Note to facilitator: You might point out that the tiles are scaffolds for Calista to be able to relate the sounds to a tangible object. Eventually, like all strong readers, Calista will be able to state which sound changes just by comparing the words without the tiles.

17. What is sound chaining?

Sound chaining is a technique for teaching and practicing phoneme manipulation using tiles with out letters to represent the sounds. The basic steps in a sound chain are:

1. Teacher says the first word.
2. Student shows the sounds (not letters) in the word with tiles.
3. Teacher says a second word with only one sound different from the previous word.
4. Student removes the tile and says the sound that is taken out of the first word, then says the sound that goes in the new word by putting in a different tile.
5. The student touches the tile and says the sounds in the new word, then says the new word.
6. Continue with words that have only one sound change. (*boat – bat – bite – bit – sit – sin – fin – fine – fight – kite – cat – sat – sam – same*)

Note to the facilitator: You might ask teachers to come up with 3 word chains starting with each of these words: *note, seem, lamb*.

18. Why don't the tiles have letters on them?

The tiles don't have letters because the task is purely phonological, meaning it is about speech sounds and not print. When working on phonological tasks we don't want students to be distracted by print. We want them to focus purely on the sounds so they become automatic with sounds before they also have to process the multiple spellings of sounds.

19. Why is being able to manipulate sounds without saying the sounds aloud a critical skill for reading?

A student who can easily manipulate sounds in words can easily develop a phonological and visual imprint of words and word patterns in their minds, which makes the word and the letter pattern easy to recall the next time it is encountered. To become a fluent reader, a student has to be able to automatically map the sounds and spellings of a word to form a mental orthographic image (the phonological and visual imprint) of the word. Once a student is able to do this, it only takes a couple of exposures to a new word to own it as a familiar word (sight word). It then will be recognized without conscious effort every time the student sees it in print.



Short session D: Calista learns about more advanced sound chaining

2.7 Calista Learns How to Change *tap* to *tape* in a Sound Chain (9:36 – 11:05) 1:30 total time

20. Why is it appropriate to ask Calista to change a short vowel to a long vowel in sound chaining when we are only going to ask her to read words with short vowels?

It is appropriate because the sound change is one change regardless of the spelling. Calista has to stop thinking about letters, so she can focus on hearing the sounds. Once she understands that *tap* and *tape* both have three sounds, she will be able to understand that the 'a' in *tap* spells the short 'a' sound, but that it takes both the 'a' and the 'e' to spell the long 'a' sound in *tape*. Being able to compare sounds in words easily and effortlessly enables students to compare spelling patterns easily as well.

21. When Ms. Farrell asks Calista to identify the sound that changes, she touches the middle tile, which is correct. However, when Ms. Farrell asks, "What sound do you take out of *tap*?" Calista's answer is 'a'. Why do you think she answered 'a'?

She says 'a' because she knows how *tap* is spelled and she is visualizing the letters to think about the sounds.

22. When Ms. Farrell asks "What sound do you put in to make *tape*? Why do you think Calista says the sound /ē/?"

Calista knows how *tape* is spelled and she is visualizing the 'e' at the end of the *tape*, which is the only letter that is different.

23. Why is *tap* to *tape* more difficult than the previous sound changes?

It is more difficult for two reasons:

- The letter 'e' is the only spelling difference between *tap* and *tape*, so students who focus on spelling and not sounds will often suggest that as the sound that changes.
- The letter 'a' can spell both short a and long a, so students who are thinking about letters and not sounds will think that the tile representing 'a' in *tap* will not change.

2.8 Calista Learns to Think about Sounds with Her Mouth Closed (11:06 – 13:16) 2:10 total time

24. Why does Ms. Farrell ask Calista to close her mouth until she knows which sound to change?

Ms. Farrell wants Calista to think about the sounds without saying them. If Calista closes her mouth, she has to think the sounds because she can't say them aloud.



Note to facilitator: You might want to discuss with participants that if students whisper the sounds, it is the same as saying them aloud. o transition from sound-by-sound reading to whole word reading, it is imperative that students must not hear the sounds even whispered or sub-vocalized if they are going to think the sounds.

25. Why does Calista take longer to change sounds when she keeps her mouth closed?

Calista is trying the new skill of thinking about the sounds in words without vocalizing them. She is learning how to think about sounds without actually hearing them, and that takes longer than when she says the sounds aloud.

26. How will Calista demonstrate mastery with manipulating sounds?

When Calista can easily state the sound change between two words without having to take time to think it through, she will demonstrate mastery of sound manipulation.

Short session E: Calista reads decodable words and text

2.9 Calista Reads CVC Words (13:17 – 14:37) 1:20 total time

27. Why is it important that Calista ‘thinks the sounds’ before she reads the words?

To become a fluent reader, Calista has to automatize the decoding process. She needs to become able to look at print and translate it into sounds without conscious effort. The development of this process starts with eliminating the need to say the sounds aloud.

28. Does asking Calista to close her mouth while thinking letter sounds relate to closing her mouth during sound chaining?

Yes, closing her mouth during the sound chaining is teaching her the ability to think about sounds without having to verbalize them first. That sets her up for doing the same thing when thinking about sounds when reading words.

29. How will Calista demonstrate that she has mastered reading whole words?

When Calista can easily read words without having to take time to think through the decoding process (i.e. without conscious effort), she will demonstrate mastery of reading whole words. At that point, she will be reading words easily, accurately, and quickly.

2.10 Calista Reads Decodable Phrases (14:38 – 16:00) 1:22 total time

30. Why does Ms. Farrell ask Calista to read some phrases again?

After Calista reads slowly, word-by-word, Ms. Farrell asks Calista to read again so she could feel what reading fluently feels like.



31. Is there a benefit to having Calista read the same phrases again in a sentence?

Yes, rereading phrases allows Calista to begin to feel what reading with fluency and expression is like. It also gives Calista another exposure to all the words to help build mental orthographic images (phonological and visual imprints) for the words she reads.

2.11 Calista Reads Decodable Sentences (16:01 – 16:18) 0:17 total time

32. How many sentences do you think Calista should read in a session?

Calista should read at least two or three sentences, so she gets sufficient opportunity to practice her new skill.

2.12 Calista Reads a Decodable Passage (16:18 – 17:25) 1:07 total time

33. Why does Calista hesitate before reading *Pip* in the title and *lad* in the first sentence?

The words are unfamiliar, and she is pausing to sound them out in her head.

Note to the facilitator: You might want to point out that researchers have found that even strong readers take longer to read an unfamiliar word than one that they already know.



Answer key for Section 3: summarizing questions

1. Do you have any students who might benefit from the strategies Calista learns?

Use this question to have participants discuss their students who might be struggling with sound-by-sound reading.

Thoughts for teachers to consider:

- What student behaviors do they observe that might be clues to difficulty with being stuck at sound-by-sound reading?
- Do teachers have any data from assessments that might indicate a student's difficulty with sound-by-sound reading?
- How will teachers go about practicing any missing or weak pre-reading skills with students stuck at sound-by-sound reading?
- How will teachers go about practicing reading with students stuck at sound-by-sound reading?

2. What did you learn?

Use this question to have participants reflect on and consolidate their learning by expressing it aloud.

3. How do you plan to use what you learned in your instruction?

Use this question to have participants develop and express specific action plans for teaching their students: Who? What? When? How will you measure student progress?

4. How can you use what you learned with a small group?

Teaching the short vowel sounds and motions, sound chaining, and how to think through the sounds before reading the word aloud is easy in small groups with 2–5 students who are stuck at sound-by-sound reading.

Step 1. I DO — The teacher demonstrates how to use the strategy (I Do) for the group.

Step 2. WE DO — The teacher and all the students use the strategy for one or two words.

Step 3. YOU DO — The teacher calls on one student at a time to blend syllables, body-coda, onset-rime, or phonemes, depending on the student's level. As a student becomes more proficient blending, the teacher moves to having the student blend at the next hardest level.



Notes for YOU DO:

1. The other students follow (with their own tiles or copy of the text for reading). When the called-on student finishes, the teacher can call on the trackers to show a 'thumbs-up' if they think the student was 100% accurate or a 'helping hand' (a raised hand with palm facing out) if the student needs help. They do not say anything aloud. The teacher gives positive error correction to the called-on student, if necessary. Then the teacher guides the student in fixing any errors and has the called-on student repeat the task successfully.