



# Facilitator’s Guide

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



## EPISODE 5

# Mastering ‘Silent e’ and Becoming More Fluent with Michael, Third Grader

**Video length:** 18 minutes

**Watch the video here:** [ReadingRockets.org/interventions/silent-e-pattern-with-michael-third-grade](http://ReadingRockets.org/interventions/silent-e-pattern-with-michael-third-grade)

## Contents

### Section 1: Purpose of This Guide

Use in Conjunction with the Viewer’s Guide .....	2
Using this Guide for Professional Development .....	2
Using the Answer Keys .....	3

### Section 2: Questions for Guiding the Second Viewing of the Video

Short Session A: Learning About Michael’s Reading .....	4
Short Session B: Checking Michael’s Ability to Identify Vowel Sounds in Spoken Words .	4
Short Session C: Michael Learns Two-Finger Touching .....	5
Short Session D: Michael Reads Words .....	5

### Section 3: Summarizing Questions .....

### Section 4: Answer Keys

Answer Key for Viewer’s Guide .....	7
Answer Key for Section 2: Questions for Guiding the Second Viewing of the Video.....	8
Answer Key for Section 3: Summarizing Questions .....	12

Watch the whole “Looking at Reading Interventions” series here:  
[ReadingRockets.org/interventions](http://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 5 Viewer's Guide](#) (printable PDF)
- [Episode 5 Viewer's Guide](#) (fillable PDF)

The Viewer's Guide includes the following:

1. Michael'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. Learning About Michael's Reading
- B. Checking Michael's Ability To Identify Vowel Sounds in Spoken Words
- C. Michael Learns Two-Finger Touching
- D. Michael Reads Words

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 this 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 this 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 1 minute, 34 seconds. The total time for each clip is also shown in minutes and seconds.

### Short session A: learning about Michael's reading

#### 2.1 Michael Accurately Reads Decodable CVC Text (0:11 – 1:34) 1:23 total time

1. What do we learn from watching Michael read in this clip?

#### 2.2 Michael Demonstrates He Knows the Short and Long Vowel Sounds (1:35 – 2:18) 0:43 total time

2. Why does Ms. Farrell check to see if Michael knows the short and long vowel sounds?

### Short session B: checking on Michael's ability to identify vowel sounds in spoken words

#### 2.3 Michael Learns to 'Stretch' Words to Identify the Vowel Sound (2:19 – 3:04) 0:45 total time

3. Why does Ms. Farrell check Michael's phoneme awareness?
4. What is 'stretching' the sounds in a word?
5. What extra questions does Ms. Farrell ask Michael after he stretches (segments) the sound in the word?

#### 2.4 Michael Learns to Identify the Vowel Sounds (3:04 – 4:41) 1:37 total time

6. How is Michael helped by answering questions about the vowel sound in a spoken word and what the vowel sound is called?
7. What is Michael's initial confusion when identifying the vowel sound in *back*?
8. How does Ms. Farrell help Michael when he is confused about the vowel sound in *'back*?

#### 2.5 Michael Reads Some Decodable Text with CVC and with 'Silent e' Words (4:42 – 6:33) 1:49 total

9. Which vowel spelling pattern was easy for Michael?
10. Which vowel spelling pattern was difficult? Which words did he misread?
11. Why is this a difficult pattern?



## Short session C: Michael learns two-finger touching

### 2.6 Ms. Farrell Introduces Two-Finger 'Touch and Say' (6:34 – 9:07) 2:33 total time

12. Why does Ms. Farrell teach Michael to use two fingers to touch the vowel and the 'silent e'?
13. What type of vowel sound should Michael read when he uses one-finger 'touch and say'?
14. What type of vowel sound should Michael read when he uses two-finger 'touch and say'?
15. How does Ms. Farrell ask Michael to practice with the words?

### 2.7 Michael Practices Reading Words Using Two-Finger 'Touch and Say' (9:08 – 12:25) 3:17 total time

16. What steps does Ms. Farrell use to guide Michael in the practice?
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## Short session D: Michael reads words

### 2.8 Ms. Farrell Explains That the English Language Follows Patterns (12:26 – 13:46) 1:20 total time

17. What is one difference between students who learn to read and spell easily and students who don't?
18. If the English language follows patterns, why is it so hard for some students to learn them?

### 2.9 Michael Practices Using Two-Finger 'Touch and Say' While Reading Words (13:47 – 15:02) 1:25 total time

19. What is the purpose of the two-finger pointing strategy?
20. What scaffolding is still in place in this section of practice?
21. If Ms. Farrell is teaching Michael to read 'silent e' words, why do the word lists have words with short vowels and 'silent e' words?
22. How will slowing down make Michael ultimately faster?

### 2.10 Michael Practices Reading Words Without Touching (15:03 – 17:25) 2:22 total time

23. How does Michael do when he reads words without touching and saying the vowel sound?
24. What contributed to the improvement when Michael re-read the paragraph that was difficult for him at the beginning of the lesson?



## Section 3: Summarizing questions

1. Do you have any students who might benefit from the strategy Michael 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 Michael read the text with single syllable, short vowel words?**

Michael reads the words accurately but slowly. He does not guess any words.

2. **Why does Ms. Farrell ask Michael to say each of the short vowel sounds and the long vowel sounds?**

Ms. Farrell is checking to see if Michael knows the short and long vowel sounds because not being able to recognize short and long vowel sounds in spoken words is a major source of decoding confusion.

3. **What does Michael do the first time Ms. Farrell asks him for the vowel sound in the word back? Why?**

Michael says 'a', the name of the letter, instead of the sound /ă/. Confusion between the sound and the letter name is common for striving readers.

4. **What are the multisensory anchors that Ms. Farrell gives Michael for the short vowel and 'silent e' long vowel spellings?**

The anchors are how Michael touches the letters and says the sounds. Ms. Farrell teaches Michael to touch a single vowel letter and read the short sound. She teaches him to touch the 'a' and the 'e' at the same time and to read the long vowel sound. Using the anchors helps Michael see the vowel and 'silent e' as one spelling unit and associate it with the long vowel sound compared to the one vowel letter he associates with the short vowel sound.

5. **How does Ms. Farrell make sure that Michael can use the anchors to read accurately?**

First, he practices touching and saying the vowel sound in six words, but he doesn't read the words.

Next, he touches and says each sound in the word, then reads the word.

Finally, he touches and says the vowel sound, then he reads the word. This is hard for Michael, and he practices it twice with the six words before he can do it reading the words accurately.

6. **After Michael can read all the words in one row with touch and say, what does he do next?**

Michael reads words in a row without using touch and say.

After he reads words in a row accurately without using touch and say, he then reads a passage that has some words with 'silent e' and some words with short vowels.

7. **Why does Ms. Farrell focus on having Michael read accurately to help him with his fluency?**

Ms. Farrell knows that accuracy is the first step to developing fluency. Once accuracy is an established habit, a student can work on reading at a faster rate without having to make a conscious effort not to guess.



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

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### Short session A: learning about Michael's reading

#### 2.1 Michael Accurately Reads Decodable CVC Text (0:11 – 1:34) 1:23 total time

1. What do we learn from watching Michael read in this clip?

We learn that Michael is an accurate but slow reader at the CVC word level.

#### 2.2 Michael Demonstrates He Knows the Short and Long Vowel Sounds (1:35 – 2:18) 0:43 total time

2. Why does Ms. Farrell check to see if Michael knows the short and long vowel sounds?

Ms. Farrell is checking because vowel sounds are the major source of decoding confusion, especially the long and short vowel sounds. She learns that Michael knows the short vowel and long vowel sounds.

### Short session B: checking on Michael's ability to identify vowel sounds in spoken words

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#### 2.3 Michael Learns to 'Stretch' Words to Identify the Vowel Sound (2:19 – 3:04) 0:45 total time

3. Why does Ms. Farrell check Michael's phoneme awareness?

Phonemic awareness is a necessary and critical pre-reading skill that is often still a weakness for older striving readers. If Michael has difficulty working with individual sounds, it would impact his word reading.

4. What is 'stretching' the sounds in a word?

'Stretching' the sounds in words is a technique that students can use for segmenting phonemes (saying each sound in a spoken word). Students say each sound they hear and stretch out a finger to show the sound. The students' fingers become manipulatives that represent the sounds. [There are other techniques for segmenting sounds, such as tapping or touching different parts of the arm for each sound or using colored tiles, etc.]

5. What extra questions does Ms. Farrell ask Michael after he stretches (segments) the sound in the word?

Ms. Farrell asks Michael to say the vowel sound in the word (e.g. /ă/ or /ā/.)

She also asks Michael what the vowel sound is called (e.g., short a or long a).



## 2.4 Michael Learns to Identify the Vowel Sounds (3:04 – 4:41) 1:37 total time

6. How is Michael helped by answering questions about the vowel sound in a spoken word and what the vowel sound is called?

Identifying the vowel sound and what it is called helps Michael understand the relationship between a spelling pattern and the sound the pattern spells. It also solidifies for him the difference between a letter name and a letter sound.

7. What is Michael's initial confusion when identifying the vowel sound in back?

Michael gives the letter name instead of the sound because he is still visualizing the spelling of the word to think about the sounds rather than just relying on what he hears. Older students often know the spelling of words, and they give the letter name when asked for the sound. Automatically knowing that the letter name and the sound it spells are different will help Michael recognize different spelling patterns.

8. How does Ms. Farrell help Michael when he is confused about the vowel sound in 'back'?

Ms. Farrell uses positive error correction (telling Michael what he did right before guiding him to the correct answer). Positive error correction is when Ms. Farrell tells Michael, "A is the name of the letter" before she helps him identify the vowel sound. She helps him identify the vowel sound by asking him to stretch again. She shows him how he can use his fingers to help think about the sounds.

## 2.5 Michael Reads Some Decodable Text with CVC and with 'Silent e' Words (4:42 – 6:33) 1:49 total

9. Which vowel spelling pattern was easy for Michael?

The short vowel pattern, which is one vowel letter not at the end, also called a closed syllable.

10. Which vowel spelling pattern was difficult? Which words did he misread?

The 'silent e' vowel pattern was difficult for Michael. He misread *Luke*, *rice*, and *limes*.

11. Why is this a difficult pattern?

The 'silent e' pattern is often difficult for students because it consists of two vowel letters (separated by a consonant) that spell only one sound. It is often the first vowel pattern introduced after the short vowel pattern, which is easier because with short vowels, one vowel letter spells one sound. 'Silent e' can be especially challenging if students have not previously been asked to pay attention to long vowel sounds in phonemic awareness practice. Students are suddenly faced with a new set of sounds which are spelled with a complex pattern and it can be overwhelming to learn.



## Short session C: Michael learns two-finger touching

### 2.6 Ms. Farrell Introduces Two-Finger 'Touch and Say' (6:34 – 9:07) 2:33 total time

#### 12. Why does Ms. Farrell teach Michael to use two fingers to touch the vowel and the 'silent e'?

Ms. Farrell teaches the two-finger multi-sensory strategy to call Michael's attention to the two separated letters at the same time. This will help him to start recognizing them as a unit that spells a long vowel sound even though they are separated. This will need to become automatic for Michael in order to improve his accuracy and rate.

#### 13. What type of vowel sound should Michael read when he uses one-finger 'touch and say'?

A short vowel sound.

#### 14. What type of vowel sound should Michael read when he uses two-finger 'touch and say'?

A long vowel sound.

#### 15. How does Ms. Farrell ask Michael to practice with the words?

Michael practices at first by touching and saying only the vowel sounds, but not reading the words.

**Note to the facilitator:** Michael did practice reading the words after he demonstrated that he could read the vowel patterns.

### 2.7 Michael Practices Reading Words Using Two-Finger 'Touch and Say' (9:08 – 12:25) 3:17 total time

#### 16. What steps does Ms. Farrell use to guide Michael in the practice?

Michael practices reading words using one- and two-finger 'touch and say.'

1. Michael first touches and reads the vowel sound, with one or two fingers, then reads the word while running his finger under it.
2. That was hard for Michael, so she has him touch just the vowel and read it, without reading the word.
3. She once again has Michael first touch and read the vowel sound, then read the word.



## Short session D: Michael reads words

### 2.8 Ms. Farrell Explains That the English Language Follows Patterns (12:26 – 13:46) 1:20 total time

**17. What is one difference between students who learn to read and spell easily and students who don't?**

One difference between how students who learn to read easily and those who don't is that those who don't have difficulty recognizing and internalizing spelling patterns.

**18. If the English language follows patterns, why is it so hard for some students to learn them?**

Because in English, there are many patterns that students have to learn. It is our job as teachers to explicitly teach the patterns, and to give extra practice to students who don't easily recognize patterns.

### 2.9 Michael Practices Using Two-Finger 'Touch and Say' While Reading Words

(13:47 – 15:02) 1:25 total time

**19. What is the purpose of the two-finger pointing strategy?**

The purpose is to provide Michael with a multi-sensory process to practice paying attention to and recognizing the 'silent e' spelling pattern until he develops automaticity.

**20. What scaffolding is still in place in this section of practice?**

Michael is still touching the vowel spelling with one or two fingers before he reads the word.

**Note to the facilitator:** Michael will get better at coordinating this activity as he practices. When he can easily touch and say the vowel sound, then read the word, he will be ready to read words without two-finger touch and say.

**21. If Ms. Farrell is teaching Michael to read silent 'e' words, why do the word lists have words with short vowels and 'silent e' words?**

Michael needs to practice reading words with short vowels and with 'silent e', intermixed, so that he learns the difference between the two and so that he automatically recognizes both patterns when he is reading. This will also be the case when he learns other patterns, such as r-controlled vowels and vowel teams. Reading words with contrasting patterns will ensure that Michael recognizes the new pattern as well those patterns he already knows.

**22. How will slowing down make Michael ultimately faster?**

Michael needs to slow down so that he develops the habit of accuracy. After he is accurate, he will most likely increase his rate as he practices, and importantly, he will continue reading accurately because he will internalize the short vowel and 'silent e' patterns.



## 2.10 Michael Practices Reading Words Without Touching (15:03 – 17:25) 2:22 total time

23. How does Michael do when he reads words without touching and saying the vowel sound?

He reads the whole paragraph accurately with little effort.

24. What contributed to the improvement when Michael re-read the paragraph that was difficult for him at the beginning of the lesson?

Michael read the paragraph with no errors, and he read it faster than the first time. He made these improvements because he had practiced reading words with 'silent e', which was confusing to him.

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## Answer key for Section 3: summarizing questions

1. Do you have any students who might benefit from the strategy Michael learns?

Use this question to have participants discuss their students who might be struggling with reading multisyllabic words.

Thoughts for teachers to consider:

- What student behaviors do they observe that might be clues to difficulty with 'silent e'?
- Do teachers have any data from assessments that might indicate a student's difficulty with 'silent e'?
- Do the students they are thinking about have the prerequisite skills for reading 'silent e'?
- If students not do not have all the prerequisite skills, what will they need to learn and practice before moving to silent e'?
- How will teachers go about teaching 'silent e' and having students practice them?

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 two-finger touch and say strategy for reading 'silent e' words is easy in small groups with 2–3 students who are similar in their instructional needs. It will not work if all the students have not mastered reading short vowel words.

Step 1. I DO — The teacher demonstrates how to use the strategy 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 gives students a page with rows of short vowel and 'silent e' words to read. The teacher calls on one student at time to read a different row using the two-finger strategy. As students master using the strategy, the teacher moves to having students read the words without using finger touching.

**Notes for YOU DO:**

The other students follow along on their own copy of the practice sheet. When the reader finishes, the teacher can call on the watchers to show a 'thumbs-up' if they think the reader was 100% accurate or a 'helping hand' (a raised hand with palm facing out) if the reader needs help. They do not say anything aloud. The teacher then tells the reader how many words were correct and, if necessary, guides the reader to fix any errors.