



Building a Strong Literacy Foundation with Phonics

Your child will have many opportunities during literacy instruction, especially in the primary grades, to expand their knowledge about what good readers do through instruction in print awareness, phonics, blending, and fluency. **The most urgent task of building a strong foundation for reading is helping students learn, remember, and apply knowledge of sounds and their corresponding letters, known as phonics.** As students learn to use this information to blend words, recognize critical sight words, and develop some level of fluency, they can take more responsibility for their reading growth.

One resource that teachers have in the K-5 classrooms of Long Beach Unified School District to help remind students of the sounds in English and their matching spellings is the **Open Court sound/spelling wall cards**. While some students may not need the wall cards to assist them with **decoding** (phonics), many students do need to refer to them for **encoding** (spelling).

Each card contains a picture of the sound being produced. The name of the card contains the target sound the letter makes. For instance, the MONKEY card introduces the /m/ sound, and shows a monkey looking at a banana and saying “m-m-m-m.” Students reading at the kindergarten level learn the name of the cards and the sounds. Students reading at the first and second grade level also learn the spelling patterns for the sounds. This is challenging for students because many letters have more than one spelling. For instance, /K/ can be spelled using k, c, or ck. The Long /A/ has five spellings: a, ai, a_e, ei, and -ay. It is like a code, and the faster students learn the code, the faster the fascinating world of reading opens up to them.



Check with your child’s teacher as to their understanding of the sound/spelling wall cards and their use in sounding out words as they read. Look on their report card for their Reading Achievement grade under the sub-heading *Phonics/Decoding & Word Recognition*. Encourage your student to use the sound/spelling wall cards as a resource to help them with their reading, writing, and spelling.