>> Hello and welcome. My name is Dawn Durham. I am an educational consultant with the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network. The session you are about to view is referenced as a quick pick. The idea is that you could watch this training session at your own pace as time permits. You will be able to start and stop the video as you need to. Upon completing this session, you will be asked to complete a post survey. Once that post survey has been submitted I'll share directions with you on how to obtain an attendance certificate stating that you've taken the time to view this session.

Today's quick pick is about alphabet knowledge and I'm very excited that you've chosen to deepen your understanding and gain a stronger grasp around this concept. For today you will need some blank paper. We will be doing activities throughout our session together and a pencil or pen to take notes with.

Before we begin, I want to take a minute to make sure that we all understand PaTTAN's mission. The mission of the Pennsylvania Training Technical Assistance Network is to support the efforts and initiatives of the Bureau Special education and to build the capacity of local educational agencies to serve students who receive special education services. Our goal is for each child to ensure individualized education program teams begin with the general education setting with the use of supplementary aids or services before considering a more restrictive environment.

What I'd like you to do now is to pause the video. What you'll do is you'll visit this URL address and take a pre-survey. This is just for all of us to get a good understanding of what our base knowledge is about alphabet knowledge. Once you've done that, go ahead and press play and we'll start again.

For today what we're going to be focusing on is the theoretical frameworks behind the science of reading. You need to have that to anchor our work today. We'll define the alphabetic principle and the role it plays in the decoding process. We'll talk about alphabet knowledge or letter naming knowledge and what it means for literacy development. I'll share instructional practices with you, and then we'll talk about the challenges that students face when letter naming. Let's first start off by the theoretical frameworks. Again, this helps us anchor us to our work to give us a good understanding of what's going on inside of a student's brain when reading.

The first one I want to share with you is referenced as the simple view of reading. Often times we call it SVR. What they've done is they've taken the five essential components of reading and have categorized them in two ways: printed word recognition and oral language comprehension. Notice that there's a multiplication sign in between. That multiplication sign is very purposeful. Printed word recognition, which is basically the pulling the print off the page, and oral language comprehension, being able to do something with that print. If I were to put an addition sign between the two, I'd be looking for a sum which means I could have zero on either side and still get an answer. But the multiplication sign indicates that if I have zero on either side, meaning I am unable to pull the print off the page or am unable to think about what I've read, I have no product at the end. I don't have proficient reading. In order to be a proficient reader, you have to be able to pull the print off the page, you'd have to have printed word recognition, and then you need to be able to do something with those words. Oral language comprehension.

A second theoretical framework I want to share with you is one that was adapted by Marilyn Adams after a very extensive review of research and then later published in her book, Beginning to Read Thinking and Learning about Print. In this model, the four part processing model of word recognition, we see that there are multiple parts of the brain being engaged when reading occurs. If you look here at the very front part of the left side of our brain, we have what's called the phonological processor. That

processor is where we store sounds of our language. Moving across we then have the orthographic processor. That procers back here. That's where we store our letter or letter patterns. It's where we recognize print. Getting information from the phonological processor to the orthographic processor, from the front of the brain to the back of the brain, is where we reference as the phonics bridge. That's where the decoding process starts.

Moving up the model, we then have the meaning processor. This is your mental dictionary. We call it your lexicon. It's like a filing cabinet of all the definitions of words that you now. We then have the context processor. And in this processor, it allows you to know which meaning you really need. For example, when I'm reading the word bat, I need to figure out am I talking about the baseball bat, the animal bat, or something like batting of my eyes. This model really shows us the multiple areas of the brain that are engaged and activated when reading occurs. In order to be a proficient reader, you need to have all four parts of the brain activated.

What I want to do is overlap the simple view of reading or SVR and the four part processing model to show you how they connect. Here on the bottom we have the phonological processor and the orthographic processor. If I were to draw a red line, I could separate the bottom from the top. The bottom processors is really the ability to pull print off the page. Remember when we talked back about the SVR, we said that was printed word recognition. The top of the processors are being able to do something with the print that you now read. Again we call that language comprehension. If I were to then put a multiplication sign on that red line, I can see how the simple view of reading overlaps with the four part processor model.

A third theoretical framework I want to share with you is work done by Hollis Scarborough in the reading rope model. What she's done here is taken the word recognition and language comprehension and just flushed them out a little bit more. On the bottom you see the strands of word recognition divided out by three strands. Again, just fleshed out a little bit more. On the top, you have language comprehension flushed out to those five strands on top. What happens is all these strands come together and they marry or intertwine together to create a proficient reader. It's important to note that if any one strand has a deficit or is struggling, all strands are affected. I want you to see here how the rope intertwines and braids together like this. What that's showing is that in order to be a proficient reader you have word recognition, pulling print off the page, and language comprehension, being able to do something with those words. They come together to create a proficient reader. This rope model is a wonderful way to show that intertwining of the two pieces. The two components of reading.

Now if I wanted to go ahead and overlap all three theoretical frameworks. We've looked at the four part processing model and the simple view of reading. If I were to go ahead and put Scarborough's three word recognition strands on the bottom and the five language comprehension strands on the top, I would see again that I have three theoretical frameworks overlapping. I show you this not to confuse you, but to show you that the models really do complement each other rather than contradict each other. All three frameworks show us that reading really is rocket science.

Let's take a look at the alphabetic principle. We'll define it and understand why it's important for later literacy development. Our language is an alphabetic language system. Because of that, we need to have the alphabetic principle. When you have sounds of our language and print of our language and they overlap onto each other, that's what we call the alphabetic principle. It's necessary to learn to read or write any alphabetic language. For example, if I wanted to learn Russian or Greek, two alphabetic language systems, I would need to understand the sounds of their language or the phonemes and how

those sounds relate to the print of their language. When I understand how those sounds and prints overlap, I then have the ability to understand the alphabetic principle of that language and can start to learn how to read and write.

David Kilpatrick said this in his book, Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties, "The alphabetic principle is neither a skill nor a strategy. It is an insight. The alphabetic principle is the insight that there is a direct connection between the sounds of spoken language and the letters in the written words." I like how Kilpatrick makes a point to say it's an insight, not a strategy or a skill. Seventy five percent of the students in your classroom will infer the alphabetic principle no matter how you teach it. However, 25% of your students will need direct, systematic, and explicit instruction on the alphabetic principle in order for them to understand that piece. We know that in order to start the decoding process, we have to start with the alphabetic principle, the overlapping of sound and print together.

Let's go ahead and take a look at alphabet knowledge or letter naming. Knowing a letter name is knowing the form or the shape the letter takes, the name of the letter, and the corresponding sound the letter makes. We measure the letter naming by three ways. Recognition: meaning I put a sheet of letters both uppercase and lowercase in random order in front of a child, I dictate a letter to the child, and they find it for me. Production: meaning I provide a sheet of letters – again, lower case, upper case - in random order, and I ask the child to go through and name each one. And then writing: producing the written form of the letter.

It's important to understand that a letter name is the only constant property in a letter. Let me explain what that means to you. What's the name of this letter? A. What's the name of this letter? A. What sound could this letter make? Aaa. What sound could this letter make? Eii. This letter's name is A. So we look at this. We see that all of these printed forms have the same name, but they have the ability to take on different shapes and they can also produce different sounds. The only constant property was the name we gave to all of these letters. Children need that constant property because they need that to anchor their work. Once they have the letter name and that's anchored and solid, they can start adding on other features like different sounds that letter can make or different shapes or forms that letter could take on.

We want letter naming to be accurate and automatic. By accurate automatic I mean we want the ability to name that letter to be so effortless that it is literally easier to name the letter than to not name the letter. Accurate and automatic letter naming leads to accurate and automatic word reading. That's something to keep in mind.

There's been a long history of research to show us the predictability of letter naming. We know since the 1960s that letter naming -- If you're strong in letter naming, you are likely to be strong in reading and writing later on. We know that preschool and kindergarten students who struggle with letter naming early on are likely to struggle with reading and writing achievement throughout their school years. We also know that preschool and kindergarten students who struggle with letter naming fluency at that young age are more likely to be classified as having a reading disability. Even though letter naming is a precursor skill for reading, letter naming is a form of reading in itself. It is letter reading. Now we understand the science behind reading. We've talked about what the alphabetic principle is and the features of a letter.

Let's go ahead and share the "Now what?" piece. How do I provide quality effective instruction in my classroom for my students around the concept of alphabet knowledge or letter naming? When thinking about planning your lessons, I want you to keep these guiding principles in mind. Our teaching needs to be multi-sensory. By multi-sensory I mean guiding a student through eye, voice, ear, and hand. By guiding a student through all of those senses, we are creating stronger neurological pathways in the brain. We need to be thoughtful about the presentation sequence of our letters. For example, you wouldn't want to present B and D together because of the similar shape and sound. So we need to be always thinking about the sequence that we're presenting to our children. We know that if we can identify students who struggle early on, we can then intervene early on.

Research has shown us time and time again that the earlier we intervene with the problem the more likely we are to close that gap. It's more effective to do shorter, more frequent pieces of practice then longer infrequent times of practice. So when you're thinking about planning lessons around alphabet knowledge or letter naming, you want to keep that concept of frequent, distributed practice in mind. Quick, brief sessions of letter naming is going to go much longer than doing it for a longer period of time every so couple of days in your classroom. Again, we want our letter naming to be accurate and automatic. Therefore we need to teach to automaticity. It is something to think about that each student requires a different timeframe for becoming automatic on those letter names. But if we want our students to be accurate and automatic, then we have to expect that and teach to automaticity.

I hear so often from so many teachers about their kids not knowing how to proofread. We can teach this essential literacy skill to even our little guys when we're teaching them letter naming. I'll show you some ways when we do our instructional practices of how to introduce proofreading even at this early literacy stage.

Let's share some activities that you can do in the classroom. These you can take and turn right around tomorrow, and I think you'll find them very helpful and effective and relatively easy to implement. The first is matching and naming. This is simply taking a 3D letter, like a magnetic letter tile, and matching the 3D letter to a print form of that letter. When the child takes the 3D letter and matches it to the print letter, they then need to say the letter name. Again, we're connecting multiple senses there, and we're creating that stronger neurological pathway.

An alphabet strip. Many of us already have this on our desk. Usually you find it on like the name tags that you have for your kiddos. What I like about this activity is that it's very quick and easy. As a teacher, I would stand up in the classroom and I'd say to the students, "Everybody point the letter N." and they quickly identify it on their name tag, on their alphabet strip, point to it, and we're on to the next letter. Or I can quickly walk around the classroom, point to different letters on different students' alphabet strips, and they can go ahead and provide the letter name. Again, what I like about this is it's very quick and easy to do. Think about those two, two and a half minutes. You're a little bit early for gym class. Or you're waiting for the guidance counselor to come in and do the lesson. Here's a great activity. A lot of bang for your buck, but it doesn't take much thought from on your part which is always very helpful in a classroom setting.

The sequencing mats. As a teacher, you want to write the letters A, M, N, Z in an arc much like this. What the students then do is take their 3D letter tile. Again, think magnetic letter tiles. And the students place them in the order on the arc that they would be sequentially in the best places that they can. Remember I talked to you about proofreading? Here's a great chance for your students to do proofreading. After the kiddos place the alphabet letters on their arc, have them go back through. Point

to every letter. Name the letter as they go through the arc on the alphabet sequence. This is a form of proofreading at its very simplest form, but it's still a way to teach them go back and check your work. Always going back to check your work.

Instant letter recognition charts. I know you already have these. You probably just don't reference them this way. An instant recognition chart is simply a piece of paper where you list random lower case and upper case letters and you ask the students to name as many as they can in a minute. What the kids like about this is they like to challenge themselves. For example, if a child named 12 in one minute on Monday, make a goal for Friday to see if they can name 14. Kiddos love to be challenged and it's a great way for you to show growth or lack thereof when parent-teacher conference time comes.

Missing letter decks. This one involves a little bit of prep work on your part before getting to the activity in the classroom. What you want to do is create decks of cards that look like this. Notice on each card there's a string of four letters. What you want to do is pick the four letters. They could be at the beginning of the alphabet, middle, or end of the alphabet. Doesn't matter. But you always want to leave one letter missing. When the child picks up the card, they say the letters that are present: A B C, and then they insert the missing letter D. Notice on the first card I have the last string letter missing and on the second card I've changed up where I've done it. My suggestion would be to always start by taking out the fourth letter of the string first. Get the students comfortable with the format of the activity. Get them comfortable with what they're doing and how they're saying it, and then you can go ahead and switch up what letter you take out on the letter string.

Alphabet battle. This one is played in pairs, teams of two, and it's very similar to that card game War. What the students do is they pick a 3D letter tile out of a bag or a basket each one. Lay them out in the middle of the table or in the desk or carpet wherever it is they're playing. And the students do is they have to name the letter. For example, J. If my other friend has A, my sentence would go something like this: J is closer than A to the letter Z. The goal is to always get closer to the letter Z. That's how you win your war battle, your alphabet battle. Since my letter J was closer than A, I take both letter tiles, put them into my pile. The kiddos love this game because it's something that's familiar and comfortable, but it just adds a little bit of a twist that the kids like to play. And that again, you will find as an easy reference tool and activity to plug right into your classroom instruction.

Another twist on a popular game is alphabet Bingo. Each child will choose seven 3D letter tiles from a bag or a basket and place them on the left side of their desk. As the teacher, you call out random letter names. If the child has that letter on their side of the desk, they take it from the left side and put it to the right side. When the child has all seven letters moved from the left side to the right side, they can go ahead and call out alphabet Bingo. Again just a twist on a popular game. Easy to implement something that children will be able to do eventually on their own with another partner or group small group, or perhaps you can't be right in front of them giving them direct instruction.

Guess what. The kids love this game too because it's a little bit more of – Well, it's a guessing game and they like that kind of stuff. A child again, works in a team of two. They pull out a 3D letter from a basket or bag without peeking closing their eyes. And they feel the shape without looking at it. What they're doing is they're feeling for the shape or the form of that letter. They're really analyzing the curves and the sticks and the way the shapes come together to see if they can identify that letter just by the form or the shape itself. If the child guesses the letter correctly, it goes into their pile and it's the next child's turn. If the child does not get the letter correctly, it just goes back into the bag and player number two takes his turn.

Super sleuth. Remember we talked about that alphabet arc where you have A, M, N, Z? Well, in this game again you'll have a pair of two. The children work as a team to fill out that alphabet map arc, to fill in all the letters. Make sure everything's in the right order. Decide who's going first, player one or player two. Player one will close his or her eyes and player two will choose a letter to take out of the arc. For example, I might take the letter S out and hide it behind my back. Player two then pushes all the letters back together so it doesn't look like there's a big hole right where S was. And player one opens their eyes, reads through the alphabet arc trying to discover which letter is missing. They have to be the sleuth or the detective to figure out which letter is missing. They get the letter correct. The friends go ahead and build the arc back the way it was, and player two has their turn to cover their eyes and see if they can be the detective for the last missing letter.

All of these activities are going to be beneficial. They're quick. They're relatively easy to put into practice and very minimal prep work on your part which I know we need to be thinking about because, let's face it, you just don't have the kind of time that we all want to be creating and building and making new activities. These are activities that you probably already have a large majority of the materials ready to go on, and if not, they're very easy to obtain or to create on your own or to help have a team create them but they're effective. And remember it's keeping that small frequent pieces of practice rather than long infrequent pieces of practice. All of these instructional activities, and these ideas, and games will help you with that frequent distributed practice.

With anything there are always challenges. Letter naming is no different. Let's talk about some of the challenges that students face when they're learning their letter names. Letter names are arbitrary which means there really is no reason a letter is named the letter. It's just the way it was chosen. Because it's somewhat arbitrary, it's a little challenging to necessarily wrap your head around it because the name doesn't mean much to us.

Letter shapes are similar and can be easily confused. Let me show you what I mean by that. Take a look at these two letters: M N. They have similar shapes and therefore can be easily confused. Same with G and Q. Particularly Q, and G really, if you think about depending on the type of font or the typeset that we're using. It can be a bit challenging to distinguish between the two forms. It's something to keep in mind.

Capitals in lower case letters may look different. Here's what I want you to do. Remember I told you to get some blank piece of paper? If you would, please take one of those pieces of paper and fold in three, just like I have here. On the left side I want you to write the word same. In the middle I want you to write the word similar. And on the far right side go ahead and write the word different. Now in a minute I'm going to ask you to pause the video. I'm going to ask you to think about the letter pairs, capital and lower case pairs. Think about which ones are the same, think about which ones look similar, and think about which ones are different. When you have those jotted down, go ahead and press play again, and I'll show you what I came up with.

Okay, here's what I came up with. The letters that are the same - the capital and lowercase letter pairs that are printed in the same manner - are generally speaking going to be easier to recognize and for students to form on their own versus those that are very different. This is something to keep in mind when you're thinking about your students who are struggling with letter naming. I'm sure if you thought about for a minute -- think of two students who are struggling in your classroom with this concept of letter naming. Can you identify on which chart that those letters are? I'd venture to guess that a lot of

them are over here in this different piece because it can be challenging. Essentially you're learning two forms right away for this same letter. All right.

Letter names themselves may sound very similar. Say these letters with me: A J K. I hear a long A in all three of those. How about E, G, P? I hear a long E. I Y? A long I and so on. We can go on for quite a bit of time on this. But because letter name's sound similar, that's also a challenging piece for students. They can't always distinguish between those different letter names. If you even add in to them -- let's say the letter F. F. Tap out the sounds and the letter F. Eeh. Fff. The first sound or the first phoneme is a vowel, then a consonant. What about the letter Z? Tap out the sounds in Z. Zzz. Eee. We start with a consonant and then go to a vowel. Even if we start with what phoneme is first, a vowel or a consonant can add a layer of difficulty for students learning their letter names. Something again to be thinking about as you analyze and think diagnostically about your students. Are any of these challenges posing a problem for them and how do we impact that change?

Alrighty. Let's talk about factors that influence letter learning. These factors may add to the challenges or they may assist students in acquiring letter naming. Laura Justice and her colleagues in 2006 did a rather extensive research study with four year olds on their letter acquisition. I want to share some of the results she worked with in this study. Let's first talk about the letter position in the alphabet. What Justice and her colleagues discovered were that letters found earlier in the alphabetic string like A, B, C, D had a higher rate of recognition than those letters found later in the alphabet string like Q, R, S, T. So thinking about where the letter is positioned may be a factor for your students who are acquiring letter names.

Shape distinctions. Another activity I want you to do. Get out a blank piece of paper, and go ahead and jot down for me letters that have straight lines. Go ahead and do that. Now jot down letters that have curved lines. Go ahead and do that. Here's what I came up with. But that's not all the letters of the alphabet, is it? No.

We have to be thinking about intersections of straight lines, intersections of curved lines, and then, my goodness, we have diagonal intersections as well. Just the form or the shape or the manner in which it's created adds a layer or a factor that we need to be thinking about. Some of these might be easier for your students to acquire. Some of these might be harder based on how they are formed and shaped. Again this could aid in the challenges or help them. It really depends on the child and the letter itself.

The last factor I want to share with you is rate of exposure. Justice and her colleagues -- remember that study with the four year olds I talked about? What they found was that students had a much higher recognition rate of the letters in their own first name as compared to those letters not in their first name. What was even more astounding was that students were able to identify the first letter of their name, the initial letter, 11 times more likely to recognize that one letter than any other letter. Sadly, this phenomenon did not transfer over into nicknames or last names.

So again, thinking about your students who were struggling with letter naming or that alphabet knowledge. Do they know the letters in their own name? That's a pretty good indication that they have at least those letters anchored and solid. If they don't know the letters in their own name that might be a place to start because we know that they've seen those letters again and again and again. They're going to continue to see those letters every day in school and at home. That might be a place to be thinking about where to start your intervention instruction if you need to.

We haven't talked really about letter sounds, and I can't let you go without talking about a quick little note about letter sounds. Remember we talked about in the front of the brain and the back of the brain that phonological processor and that orthographic processor and the connection between the two is what's referenced as the phonics bridge? Phonics is decoding. It's the ability to pull the print off the page. Letter naming is a link between those two processors, and we need to be able to see that link and students need to see that link to start the phonetic or the decoding process the phonics process. We also share with you that letter is three things: a name, its shape or form, and its corresponding sound. We don't want to forget about that corresponding sound.

We know that learning a letter name is a springboard to learning a letter sound. Research has shown us again and again that it's more beneficial to teach the letter name and the letters sound together rather than in isolation. So be thinking about that when you're planning your lessons.

During this quick pick we've talked about the science behind reading. We've discussed alphabet knowledge and what it means for a leader reading achievement. We've shared activities that can help foster alphabet learning in your own classroom quick and relatively easy to implement. We've shared obstacles about letter naming and some factors that may influence your students to struggle or not struggle with letter names. What I need you to do now is pause the video and visit this URL address. This will take you to a post survey. It's a good idea for us to see where we started with that pre-survey and where we've ended up with the post survey. Once you've done that, make sure you press play again and I'll give you directions on how to obtain your attendance certificate.

I want to thank you very much for spending your time with me today. I'm thrilled again that you decided to deepen your knowledge and gain a stronger grasp around alphabet knowledge and letter naming. I think you'll find the information you gained today will be valuable to the work you do in your classroom with your students. My contact information is here. If you have any questions that you want to reach out to me, please feel free to do so. Once I receive word that you have completed your post survey through that URL address, we check those periodically and we'll be emailing and issuing attendance certificates stating that you've taken the time to view this quick pick session. Thanks again and I hope to see you at another quick pick.