

Big Words, No Problem!

Syllabication Strategies That Work

Marnee Somers
mlsomers@cbe.ab.ca

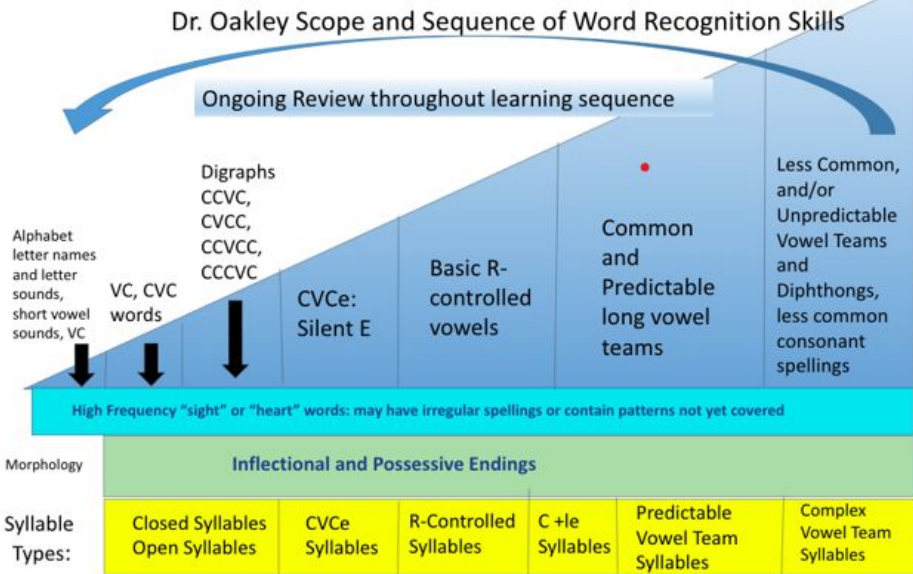
Andra Coulter
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- Short-term (2 year) program with intensive focus on literacy
- 200 students, Elem = 2:25, JH = 1:15
- Grades 3 – 9
- All students have identified complex learning disabilities and were referred from their community school
- 2h 15min explicit literacy instruction/day

Dr. Oakley Overview



Updated Visual Scope and Sequence 2025-26



Comprehension and accessing Grade level texts (focus on non-fiction & audio)

Fluency - aiming for Green Level @ Grade (ORF)

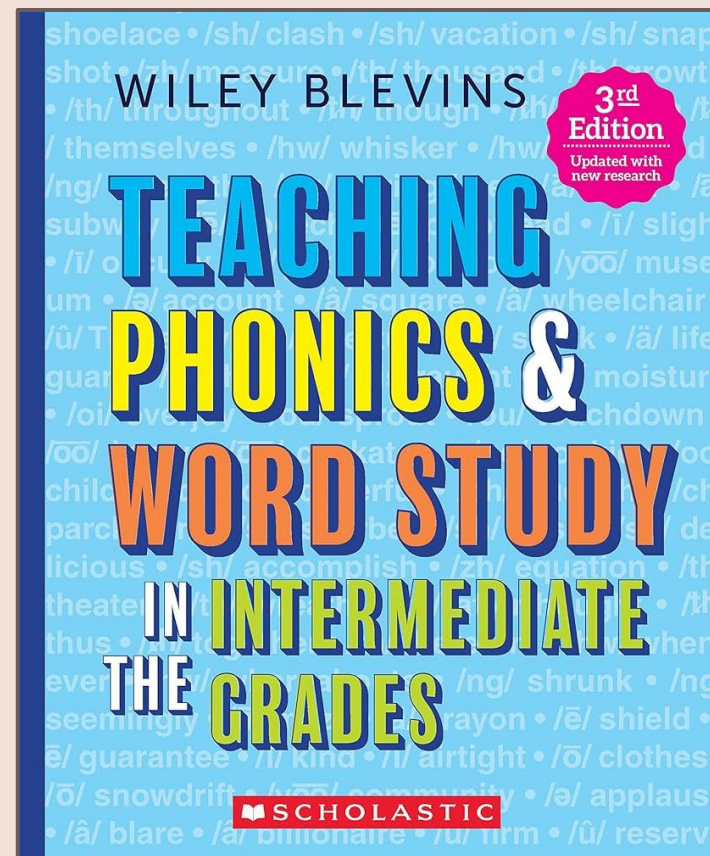
Morphology & Vocabulary Development

Background Knowledge

**Some skills may be worked on concurrently according to student strengths & needs*

In order to easily read multisyllabic words, students must be able to:

1. Understand the concept of a syllable, and how to identify vowels & consonants
2. Recognize various syllable types and where syllables divide
3. Recognize common prefixes, suffixes and base words
4. Break apart a word and arrive at an approximate pronunciation



Available on Amazon
Wiley Blevins (2023)
Teaching Phonics & Word Study in the Intermediate Grades

1. Understand the Concept of a Syllable

- A syllable contains only one vowel sound
- Syllables may have more than one vowel letter (ie. vowel teams like ea, ai, ou) but these letters only make one vowel sound
- All syllables have a vowel, but not all syllables have a consonant

1 Syllable	2 Syllable	3 Syllable	4 Syllable	5 Syllable
child	garden	explosive	available	association

*the vowel sound is the part of the word that causes your mouth to open

retake

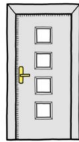
descendent

2. Recognize Various Syllable Types (& know where they divide)

6 Basic Syllable Spelling Patterns

CLOSED SYLLABLES

When a vowel is closed in by one or more consonants at the end of the word. When the vowel is closed in, it makes its short sound.



mop

scratch

blend

thrill

VCE SYLLABLES

If there is a letter E at the end of a one-syllable word, the E can jump over one consonant and gives all of its power to the other vowel. This makes the E stay silent and the other vowel says its name or long sound.



gate

flute

kite

broke

R-CONTROLLED SYLLABLES

Anytime the letter R follows a vowel, the vowel is neither long nor short; it is controlled by the letter R and the /r/ sound. ER, IR, and UR say /r/. AR says /ar/, and OR says /or/.



fern

bird

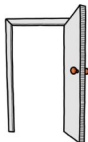
turn

car

for

OPEN SYLLABLES

When the vowel is at the end of a syllable and there is no consonant trapping or closing in the vowel, the vowel says its long name.



go

she

shy

puppy

VOWEL TEAM SYLLABLES

Two vowels that work together to make one sound (digraphs) or one sliding sound (diphthongs).

DIGRAPHS:

rain

boat

green

DIPHTHONGS:

coin

trout



C+le Syllables

This is a syllable with a stable (unchanging) final pattern - Consonant LE is one of the most common patterns.

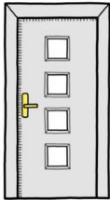
/t/ /r/ /t/ // → turtle



A stable final syllable provides the extra vowel necessary to make it a two syllable word.

CLOSED SYLLABLES

When a vowel is closed in by one or more consonants at the end of the word. When the vowel is closed in, it makes its short sound.



m^op

scr^atch

bl^end

thrⁱll

Closed Syllables

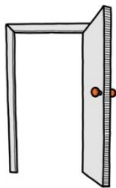
cat

rabbit

fantastic

OPEN SYLLABLES

When the vowel is at the end of a syllable and there is no consonant trapping or closing in the vowel, the vowel says its long name.



gō

shē

shȳ

puppȳ

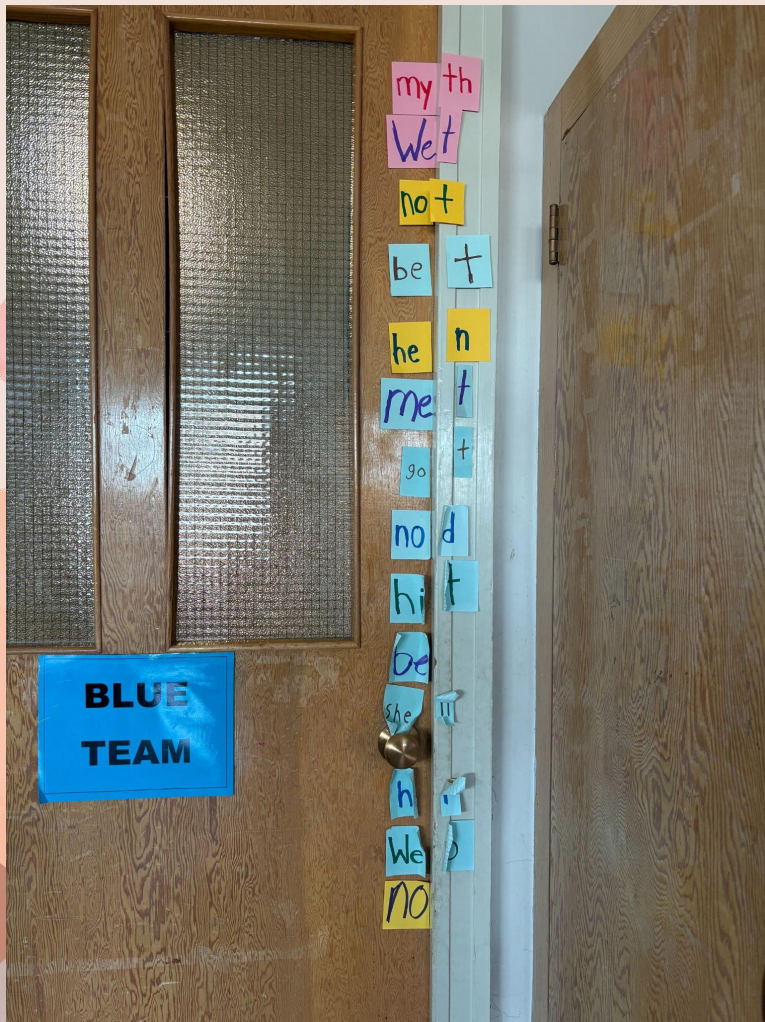
SMARTER INTERVENTION

Open Syllables

hi


agent

vacancy



we d
be t
so d
he m
a t
hi t
go t

we b
be t
so b
he m
a t
hi t
go t

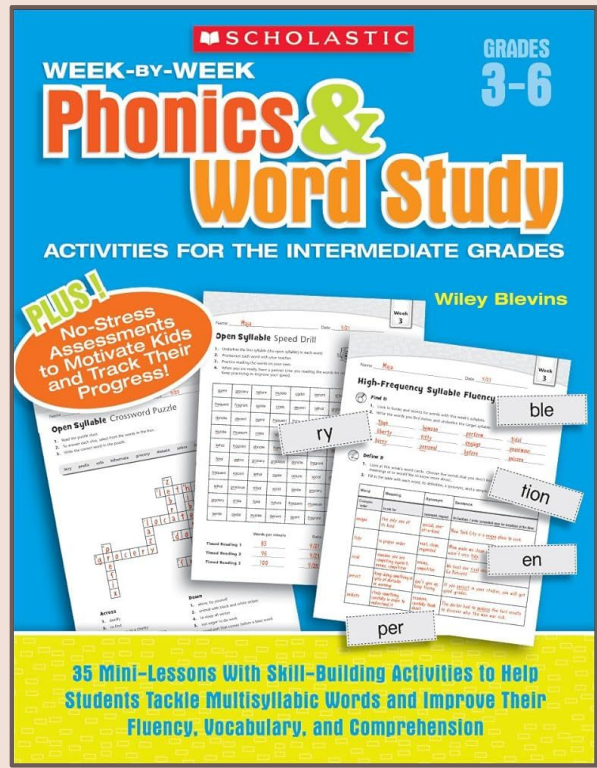
A hand is shown at the bottom of the image, holding a strip of white paper. The paper is folded in the middle, and text is visible on both the left and right sides. The text on the left side is 'we', 'be', 'so', 'he', 'a', 'hi', and 'go'. The text on the right side is 'b', 't', 'b', 'm', 't', 't', and 't'. The background is a dark, textured surface.

Blending Instruction

Open Syllable work

ba
di
hi
hu
so
fe
fra
re
va

baby
diver
hijacking
human
social
female
fragrant
recently
vacancies

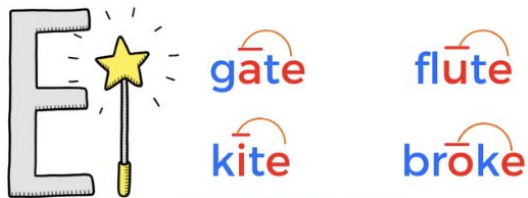


Available on Amazon
Wiley Blevins (2011)

Week-by-Week Phonics & Word Study Activities for the Intermediate Grades

VCE SYLLABLES

If there is a letter E at the end of a one-syllable word, the E can jump over one consonant and gives all of its power to the other vowel. This makes the E stay silent and the other vowel says its name or long sound.



SMARTER INTERVENTION

CVCe Syllables

side

stampede

hopefulness

Activity

at az am av an ak ap ad af ab

en ez ed em ev ef ep et eb eg

if im iv ig ip ib is in it id

om ob op ot on og oz od oc ov

ub um up ug ut un uf uz ud uk

ud af om ak ib og ez ut ep iv

Blending Instruction

side

inside

vade

invade

fine

refine

made

unmade

plete

complete

hope

hopeless

side

sideways

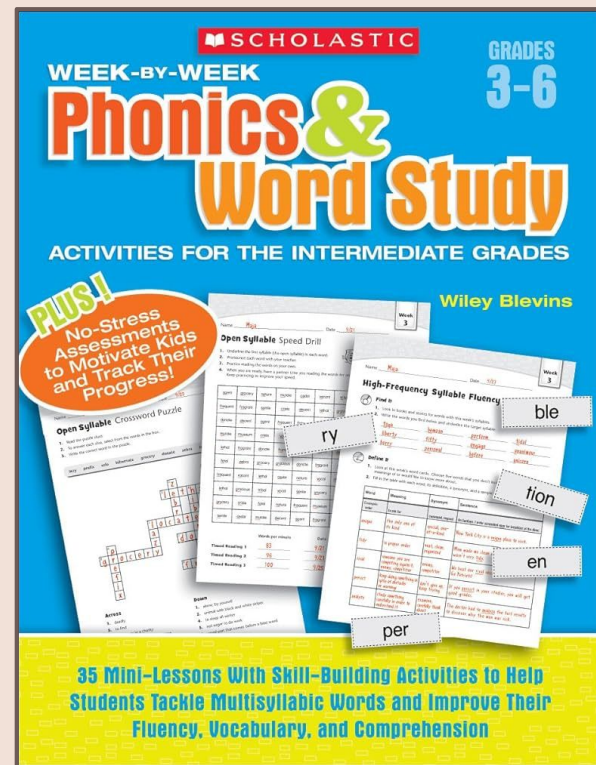
shame

shameful

wide

widespread

"Bossy E"
Syllable work

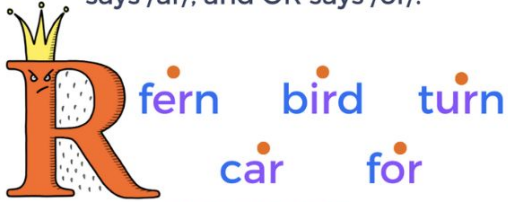


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Week-by-Week Phonics & Word Study Activities for the Intermediate Grades

R-CONTROLLED SYLLABLES

Anytime the letter R follows a vowel, the vowel is neither long nor short; it is controlled by the letter R and the /r/ sound. ER, IR, and UR say /r/, AR says /ar/, and OR says /or/.



SMARTER INTERVENTION

R-Controlled Syllables

dart

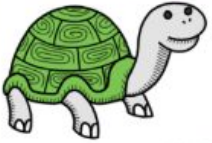
concert

vaporize

C+le Syllables

This is a syllable with a stable
(unchanging) final pattern -
Consonant LE is one of the most
common patterns.

/t/ /r/ /t/ /l/ → turtle



A stable final syllable provides
the extra vowel necessary to
make it a two syllable word.

SMARTER INTERVENTION

C+le Syllables

dribble

assemble

VOWEL TEAM SYLLABLES

Two vowels that work together to make one sound (digraphs) or one sliding sound (diphthongs).

DIGRAPHS:

rain

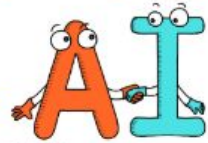
boat

green

DIPHTHONGS:

coin

trout



SMARTER INTERVENTION

Vowel Team Syllables


pay

seesaw

unafraid

Vowels



^{/e/} 
e_e
e
y
ee
ea
ey

^{/i/} 
i


^{/ə/} 
a_e
a
ai
ay


^{/ɛ/} 
e
ea




^{/æ/} 
a


^{/i/} 
i_e
i
y
ie
igh




^{/o/} 
o



^{/aʊ/} 
au
aw
augh


^{/u/} 
u


^{/o/} 
o_e
o
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ū
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u_e
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

^{/yʊ/} 
u_e
ū
ew
eu
ue


^{/oi/} 
oi
oy


^{/ou/} 
ou
ow


^{/ar/} 
ar


^{/er/} 
er
ir
ur
or
ar


^{/or/} 
or
ore


Division of Longer Words (Syllabication)

Not many generalizations are helpful in the longterm, but some are worth pointing out (these are all “usuallys”, never “always”):

- Don't divide digraphs/trigraphs, vowel teams
- Compound word = divide between the two words
- Inflectional ending (ie. ing, er, est, ed) = its own syllable
- 2 consonants in middle of word (VCCV) = divide between them
- 1 consonant between 2 vowels (VCV) = first try dividing before consonant
- Word ending in consonant + le = consonant +le are the last syllable



TIGER RULE

V.CV

If a consonant is between two vowels, divide after the vowel to make an open syllable.

^{V C V}
tiger

music

bacon

paper



CAMEL RULE

VC.V

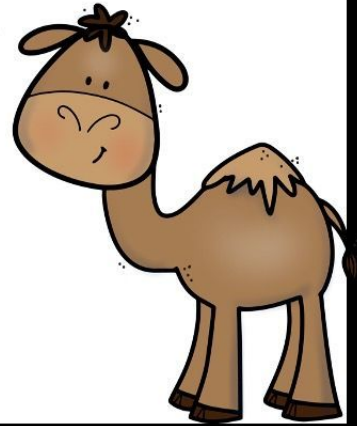
If a consonant is between two vowels and dividing after the vowel doesn't work, divide after the consonant to make a closed syllable.

^{V C V}
camel

lemon

visit

cabin



Rules with syllabication are good starting points (previous slide)

HOWEVER

“Flexing the Vowel” and “Call the Dog”
are the two most useful skills you want students to work towards

Flexing the Vowel

Official name = the Set for Variability reading strategy

Helpful when students have used their letter-sound knowledge and a blending strategy to decode a word, but there's **still a mismatch between what they decode and the actual word**

robin

frozen

Call the Dog

Official name = Syllable Emphasis

When deciding where to put the emphasis on a multisyllable word, think of what you sound like when “calling the dog”

Ea-ster

Ea-ster

3. Recognize Common Prefixes, Suffixes and Base Words

Reaction

prefix

root / base

suffix

YOUR
DICTIONARY

AFFIXES

prefix

+

base

+

suffix

non-  not, negative

sub-  under, beneath

de-  away, removal

dis-  not, opposite of, refuse

un-  not, against, opposite

in-  not

pre-  before, in front of

mis-  bad, wrong, different


re-  again, repetition

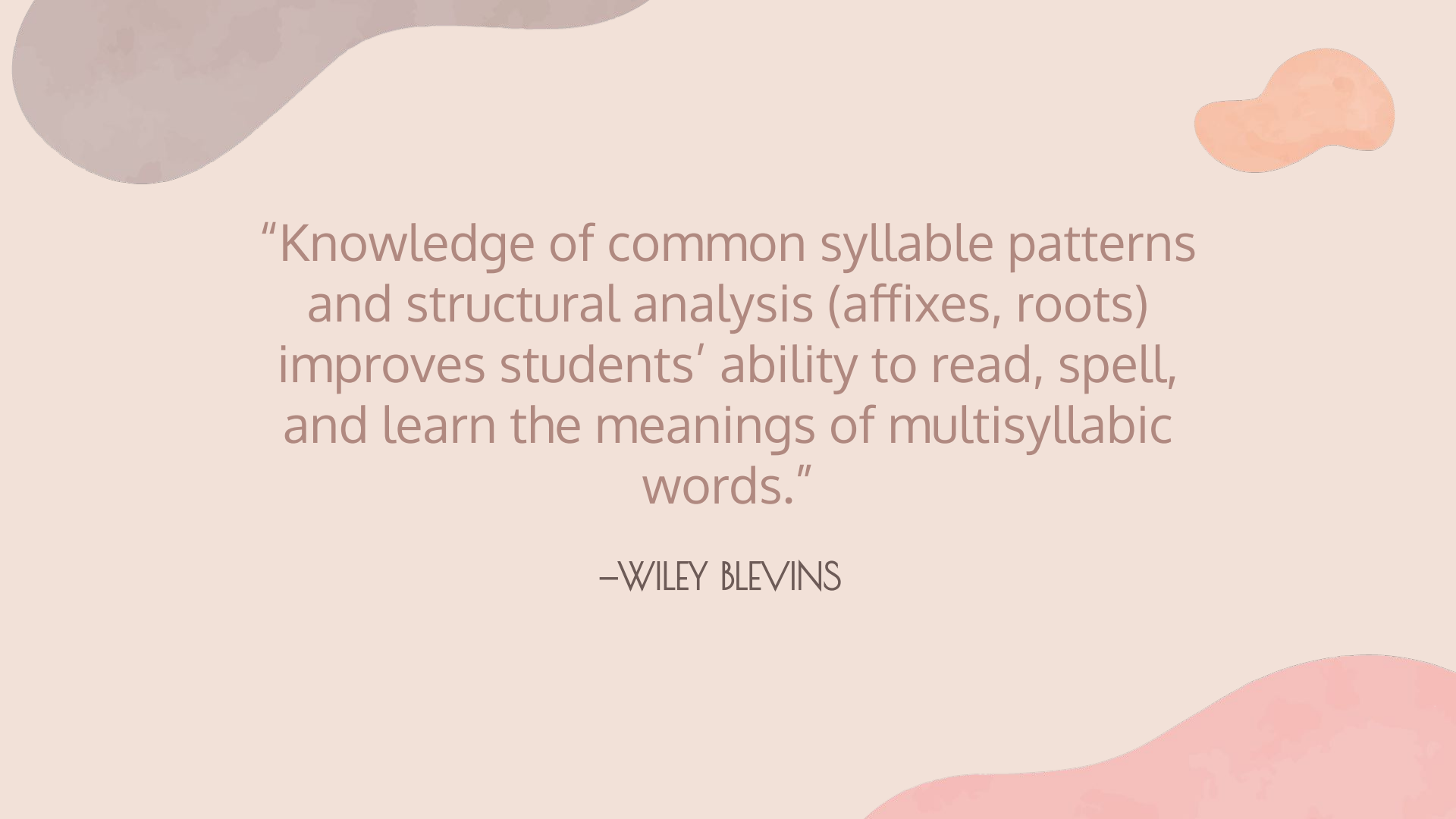
-er  someone who

-ing  actively doing

-ly  behaving like, having characteristic

-ed  past tense verb

-ed  attributes of



“Knowledge of common syllable patterns and structural analysis (affixes, roots) improves students’ ability to read, spell, and learn the meanings of multisyllabic words.”

—WILEY BLEVINS

Rank	Prefix	%
1.	un (not, opposite of)	26
2.	re (again)	14
3.	in, im, ir, il (not)	11
4.	dis (not, opposite of)	7
5.	en, em (cause to)	4
6.	non (not)	4
7.	in, im (in or into)	4

Rank	Prefix	%
8.	over (too much)	3
9.	mis (wrongly)	3
10.	sub (under)	3
11.	pre (before)	3
12.	inter (between, among)	3
13.	fore (before)	3
14.	de (opposite of)	2

Rank	Prefix	%
15.	trans (across)	2
16.	super (above)	1
17.	semi (half)	1
18.	anti (against)	1
19.	mid (middle)	1
20.	under (too little)	1

*Only directly teach the most-common prefixes and suffixes

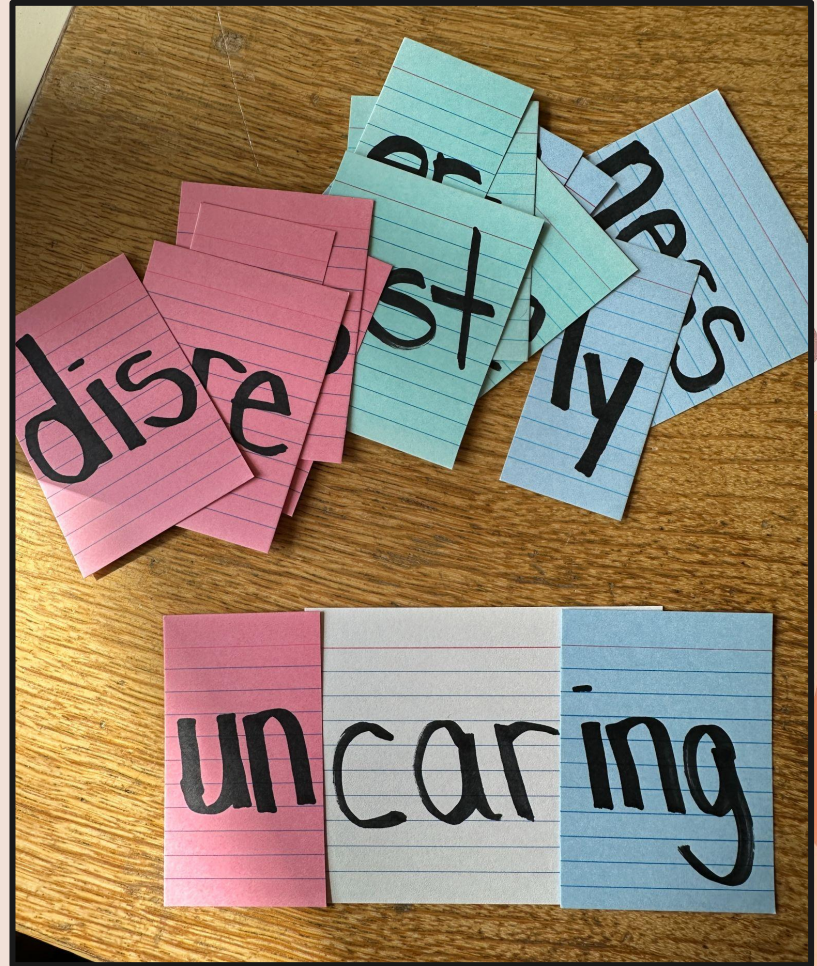
*Teach students to be careful about groups of letters that look like prefixes but aren't!
(ie. undone vs uncle)

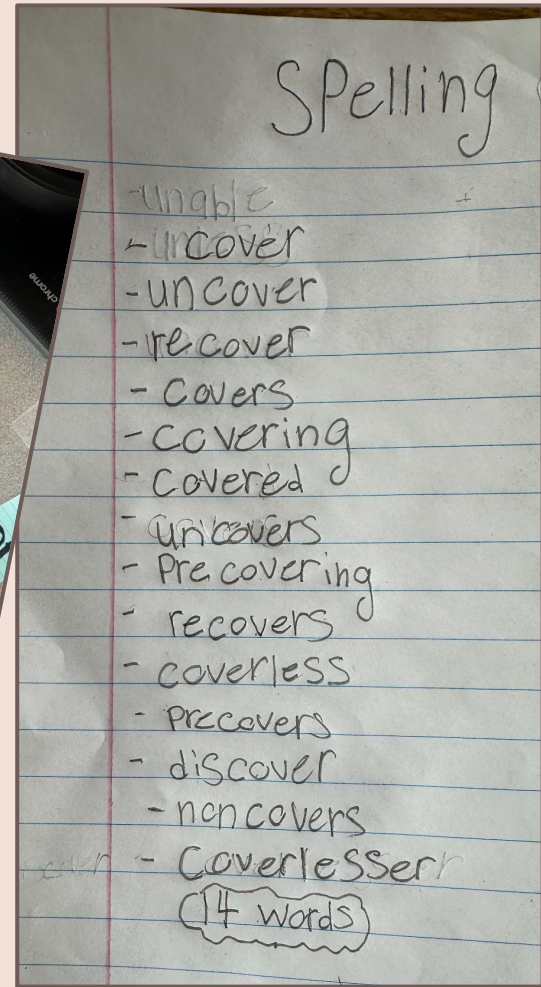
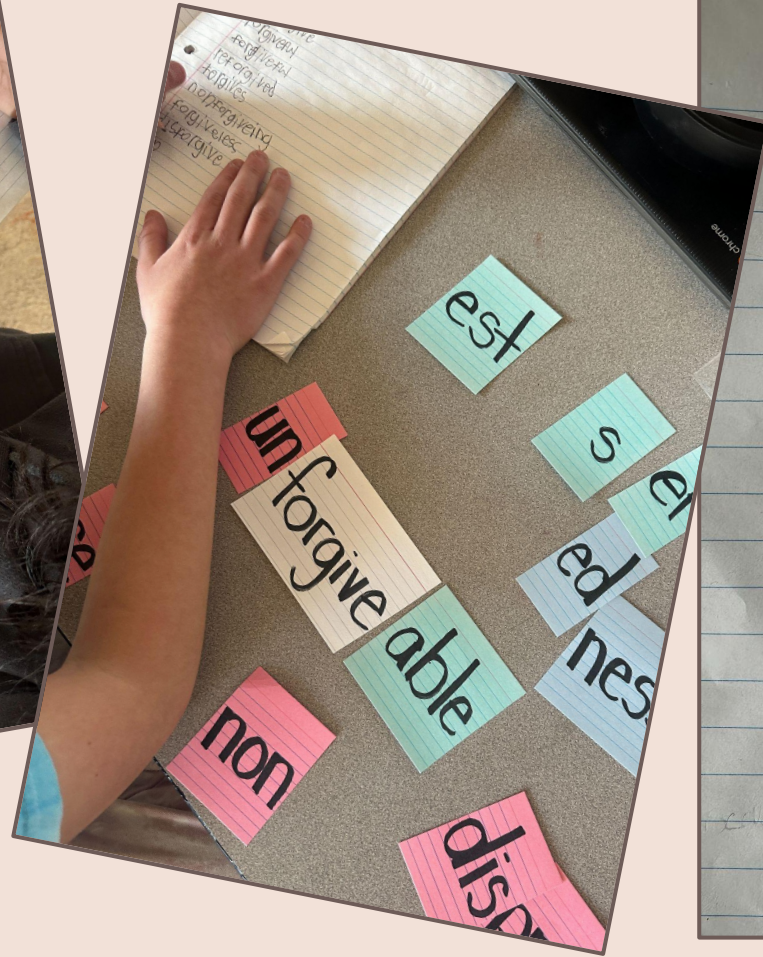
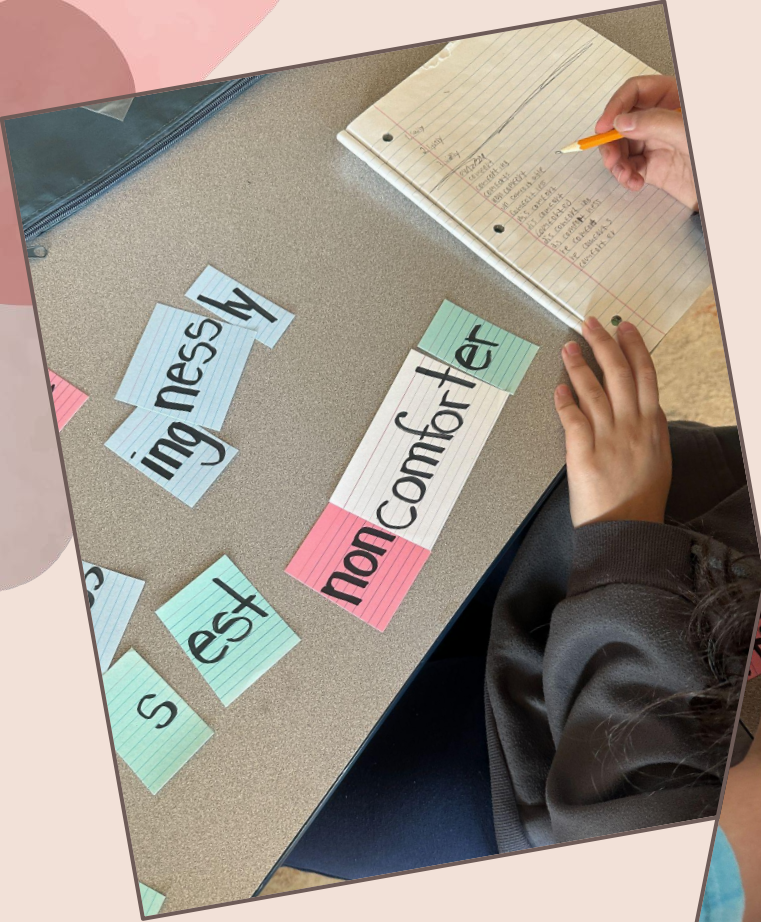
Rank	Suffix	%
1.	s, es (plurals)	31
2.	ed (past-tense verbs)	20
3.	ing (verb form/present participle)	14
4.	ly (characteristic of)	7
5.	er, or (person connected with)	4
6.	ion, tion, ation, ition (act, process)	4
7.	ible, able (can be done)	2
8.	al, ial (having characteristics of)	1
9.	y (characterized by)	1
10.	ness (state of, condition of)	1

Rank	Suffix	%
11.	ity, ty (state of)	1
12.	ment (action or process)	1
13.	ic (having characteristics of)	1
14.	ous, eous, ious (possessing the qualities of)	1
15.	en (made of)	1
16.	er (comparative)	1
17.	ive, ative, itive (adjective form of a noun)	1
18.	ful (full of)	1
19.	less (without)	1
20.	est (comparative)	1

Prefixes and Suffixes and Base Words, Oh My!

- Using different colours, make one set of prefix cards and one set of suffix cards for each student/group of students (ie. prefixes on red, suffixes on blue)
- Make another set of base word cards (white) that the class will share
- Student or groups record words found, and read outloud at end
- Can make this a game with points for # of words, set time to complete etc.





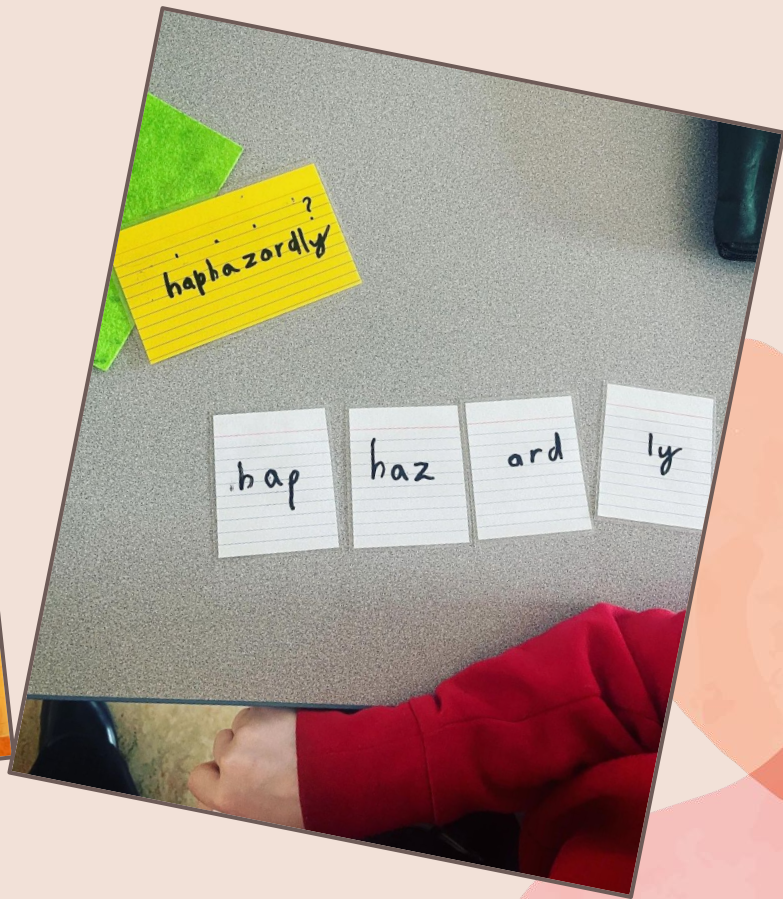
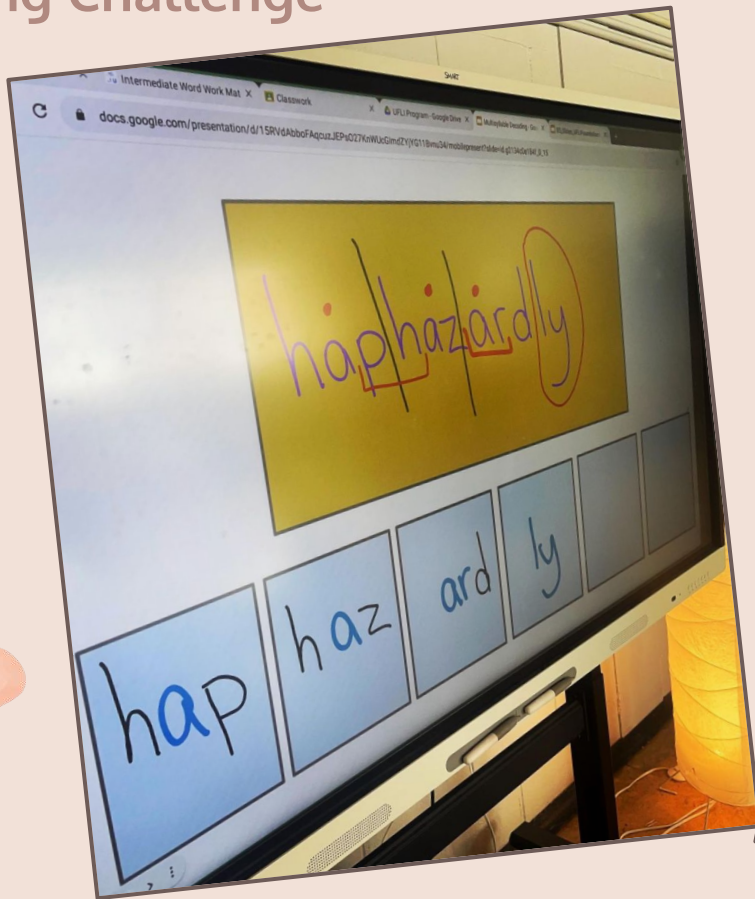
4. Break Apart a Word (and arrive at an approximate pronunciation)



Decoding Big Words

1. Look for the word parts (prefixes) at the beginning of the word.
2. Look for the word parts (suffixes) at the end of the word.
3. In the base word, look for familiar spelling patterns. Think about the six syllable-spelling patterns you have learned.
4. Sound out and blend together the word parts.
5. Say the word parts fast. Adjust your pronunciation as needed. Ask yourself: "Is it a real word?" "Does it make sense in the sentence?"

Decoding Challenge



Decoding Challenge



Building Words

re

un

birth

pre

ed

concern

ing

turn

serve

fer

born

der

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Structural Analysis

- Explicit weekly instruction in Greek & Latin root words (“Root Word of the Week”)
- Daily analysis and conversation of words/morphemes/word origins as they appear in text and discussions

Root #27

flect/flex


Example #1	Example #2
After doing yoga for two weeks, Carrie was feeling so flexible .	Erica loved staring at her reflection in the mirror.

Use the examples above to help you with the following prompts. You can use a dictionary or other online tools to help you with some of the prompts.

Make A Prediction: What does the root mean? TYPE YOUR ANSWER HERE	Origin: TYPE YOUR ANSWER HERE
Define The Root: TYPE YOUR ANSWER HERE	
Find Examples: TYPE YOUR ANSWER HERE	Create a Symbol:
Use Examples in a Sentence: TYPE YOUR ANSWER HERE	

grad


step



- gradually
- graduate
- gradual
- centigrade
- gradient

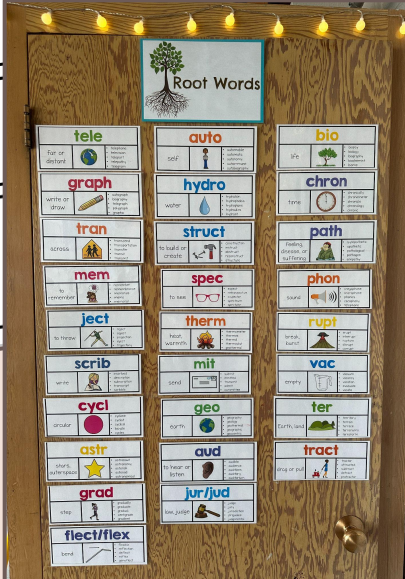
flect/flex

bend



- flexible
- reflection
- reflect
- reflex
- geneflect

Root Words



tele For or distant	auto self	bio life
graph writing or shape	hydro water	chron time
tran across	struct to build or create	path feeling, experience
mem to remember	spec to see	phon sound
ject to throw	therm heat, warmth	rupt break, burst
scrib write	mit send	vac empty
cycl circle	geo earth, soil	ter earth, soil
astr stars, constellations	aud to hear or listen	tract drag or pull
grad step	jur/jud law, judge	
flect/flex bend		

Available for purchase from
The Stellar Teacher Company
on TpT



Free Resources

Shout-out to this amazing,
comprehensive, free resource

Free copy available [HERE](#)

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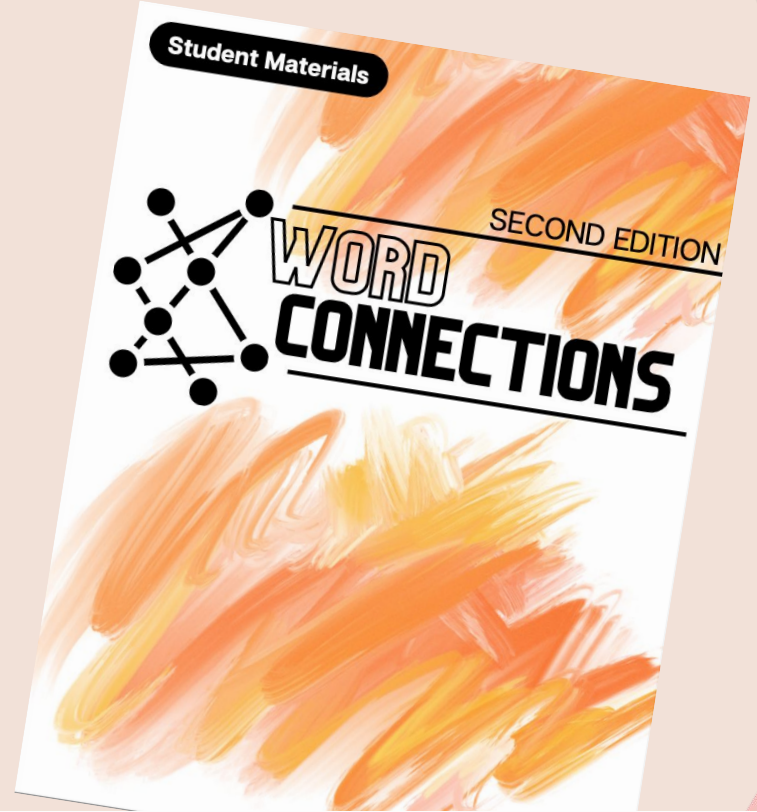
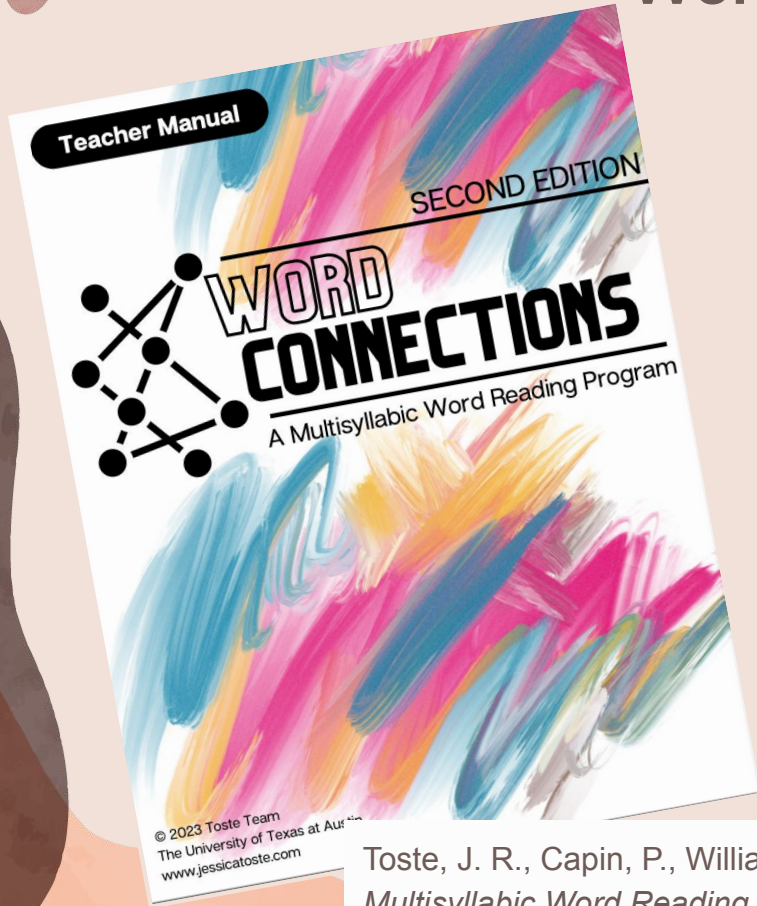
ADVANCED WORD STUDY

Accelerated learning of multisyllabic word
reading and morphology



Created By:
Amber Hicks
Chelsea Kilgore

Word Connections

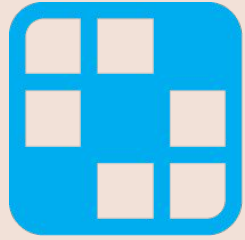


Toste, J. R., Capin, P., Williams, K. J., Kearns, D. M., & Vaughn, S. (2023). *Word Connections: A Multisyllabic Word Reading Program* (2nd ed.). figshare. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.c.6259368>

Mini Matrix-Maker

co un	help <i>do what is needed</i>	ed ing s	
		er	s
		ful	ly ness
		less	ly

Shout-out to



Wordwall

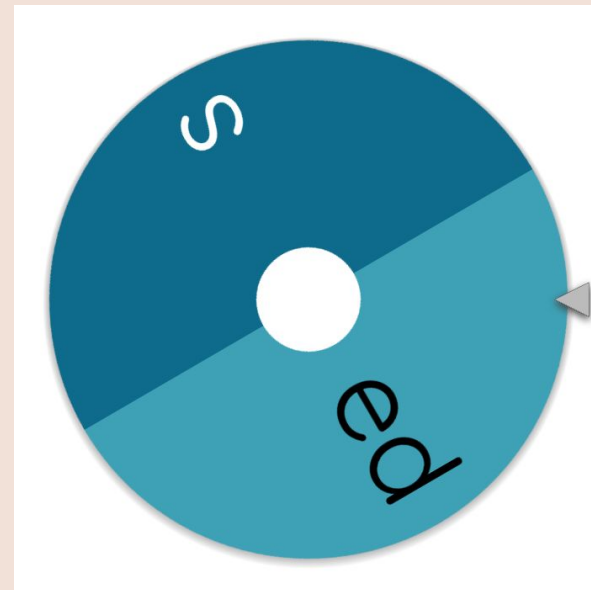
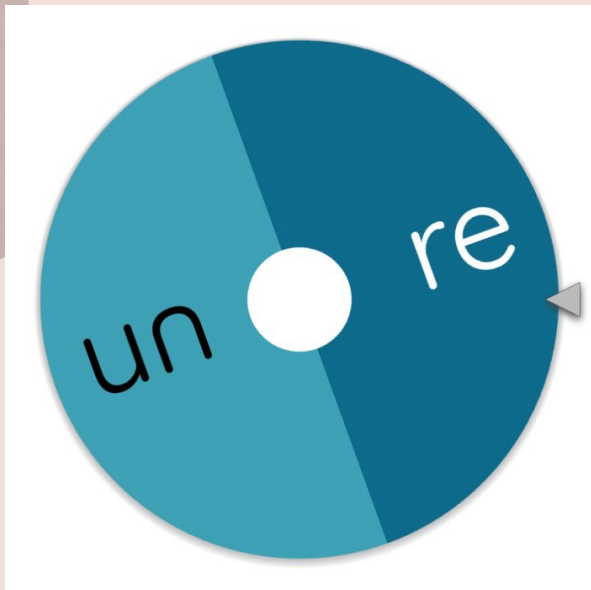
wordwall.net/community

- Huge collection of community-created resources FREE for use
- You can also create 5 activities from scratch before requiring a membership

Spin It! Word Builder



wheel of
names
wheelofnames.com



Questions?

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