



# Transform Your Classroom With a Sound Wall

# Table of Contents

Starting with the Basics . . . . .	4
What is the Science of Reading?. . . . .	5
What is a Word Wall? . . . . .	6
The Deficiency with Word Walls . . . . .	7
Sound Walls are Based on the Science of Reading . . . . .	8
What is a Sound Wall? . . . . .	9
How Do I Make My Own Sound Wall?. . . . .	10
Transform the Way You Teach in the Classroom. . . . .	12
Additional Science of Reading Solutions . . . . .	13

# As educators, you're always looking for new ways of teaching to better serve your students.

This upcoming school year, we want to help you understand the science of reading, and in turn make the transition from the typical word wall to a new and improved sound wall.

Unfortunately, most teacher-preparation programs and professional development series do not prepare teachers to understand and effectively implement the science of reading in their daily instructional practices. Many educators have previously been taught that word repetition with students is the best way of teaching how to read, with word recognition serving as the main goal. While this may work for some students, it doesn't truly break through to the fundamentals of the science of reading.

We're here to show you how the science of reading can transform your classroom. As you set your sights on the fall and welcome a new group of students back to school, we're ready to get you started with a science of reading-aligned sound wall of your very own.



# Starting with the Basics



# What is the Science of Reading?

Spanning multiple decades, the science of reading is a body of research about how humans learn to read. Whereas spoken language typically comes naturally, people need to be taught to understand written language. The science of reading has revealed several key findings, including why students may not learn to read and the kind of instruction that'll most effectively get them on a path to literacy.

The application of the science of reading is called Structured Literacy. The name was introduced by the International Dyslexia Association® (IDA) to differentiate it from reading instruction and programs that aren't wholly based in the evidence of the science of reading—but wrongfully claim to be.

Get a deeper dive about the science of reading and Structured Literacy in our ebook, *The Science of Reading: Trust the Evidence—and the Experts, [here](#)*.



# What's a Word Wall?

You may already be familiar with word walls as being colorful, eye-catching, Pinterest-worthy walls in K–5 classrooms across the country. A word wall is a designated space, or wall, in your classroom that is organized alphabetically using all 26 letters of the alphabet. Sight words or high-frequency words are placed under each letter based on the first letter of each word.

Many teachers load up their word walls at the beginning of the year as an aspirational look at what they'd love their students to learn, but others slowly add words to the wall during the course of the year so as to not overwhelm students.



Courtesy of Justine Marie Bruyère

# The Deficiency with Word Walls

Children learn to talk years before they learn to read or write. We know this is because the human brain is hardwired for spoken language, but not for reading and writing. As a result, children can more easily sound out a word than tell you how to spell it. Reading and writing **must** be directly and explicitly taught.

When we think about a word wall, we have organized words based on where they can be found alphabetically but not based on the sound of the actual word. For example, the word “knee” would be placed under letter K. This means that words are placed based on their visual first letter, instead of their first sound. While “knee” is placed under the letter K, educators understand that it isn’t pronounced with a traditional /k/ sound.

Grouping words in this way only provides students with a means of memorization, but it doesn’t provide them with the ability to learn new or unfamiliar words. They are only able to memorize a word, recognize it in the future, and read and spell only that one word.





# Sound Walls are Based on the Science of Reading

Word walls aren't all bad. They can be a great resource for children in the classroom, especially as a quick reference to find a word as they are working through a writing exercise, for example. But, we're here to suggest a better alternative: Create a sound wall to serve as a focal point in your classroom this school year.

As sound walls teach students phonemes and corresponding graphemes, it is closely aligned with the teachings of the science of reading. In 2000, The National Reading Panel found that explicitly teaching phonemes was a critical component of effective reading and spelling instruction.

It's time to retire your word wall, and replace it with a sound wall.



Watch our webinar, [Explicit Language Teaching is the Heart of Structured Literacy](#), presented by Dr. Louisa Moats as she offers examples of how to teach phoneme awareness, morphological awareness, phoneme-grapheme correspondences, and syllable patterns within an explicit lesson framework.



Listen to our podcast, [How to Use Sound Walls to Transform Reading Instruction](#), with Dr. Mary Dahlgren and Dr. Antonio Fierro, as they share tips about how to use your sound wall to transform reading instruction.



# What is a Sound Wall?

A sound wall is an interactive reading and writing instructional tool for students. It focuses on sound, instead of the letters of the alphabet, with the 44 phonemes in the English language. Sound walls are created to facilitate the connection from speech to print.

A sound wall has two main components—a vowel wall (commonly known as a vowel valley) and a consonant wall. They focus student attention to each specific speech sound, rather than each of the 26 letters, and how that sound is formed by the lips, tongue, or teeth. It serves as a tool for explicit phonics instruction.

## Phoneme Chart:

s sat	t tap	p pan	n nose	m mat	a ant	e egg	i ink	o otter
g goat	d dog	c k click	r run	h hat	u up	ai rain	ee bee	igh light
b bus	f fun	l lolly	j jam	v van	oa boat	oo book	oo boot	ar star
w wish	x box	y yell	z zoo	qu quit	or fort	ur turn	ow cow	oi boil
ch chin	sh ship	th that	ng ring	ear near	air hair	ure sure	er her	

Check out our [Sound Library for Explicit Reading Intervention](#), where we feature short video clips as a valuable resource for students to see, hear, and experience how speech sounds are formed.

# How Do I Make My Own Sound Wall?

There's some amazing resources you can find online to get started, but a few items must be present to be a true sound wall:

- ▶ Pictures of mouths (clipart or real images) that show students what the mouth looks like when producing a particular sound
- ▶ The pictures are paired (placed directly above or below) each of the respective sound cards
- ▶ Commonly used graphemes (spellings) are listed beneath each sound in the frequency that they occur in English.

## Consonant Sounds

**Stops:** When a puff of air comes out of the mouth when making these sounds

- Unvoiced: /p/, /t/, k/
- Voiced: /b/, /d/, /g/

**Nasals:** When you feel a vibration inside your nose

- /m/, /n/, /ng/
- **Tip:** Keep nasal sounds out when segmenting words because of how it changes the vowel sound, making it a more nasal sound.

**Fricatives:** When you use lots of vibration and let air through with a lot of friction

- Unvoiced: /f/, /th/ (*thumb*), /s/, /sh/, /h/
- Voiced: /v/, /th/ (*this*), /z/, /zh/ (*treasure*)

**Affricates:** This falls between a fricative and stop

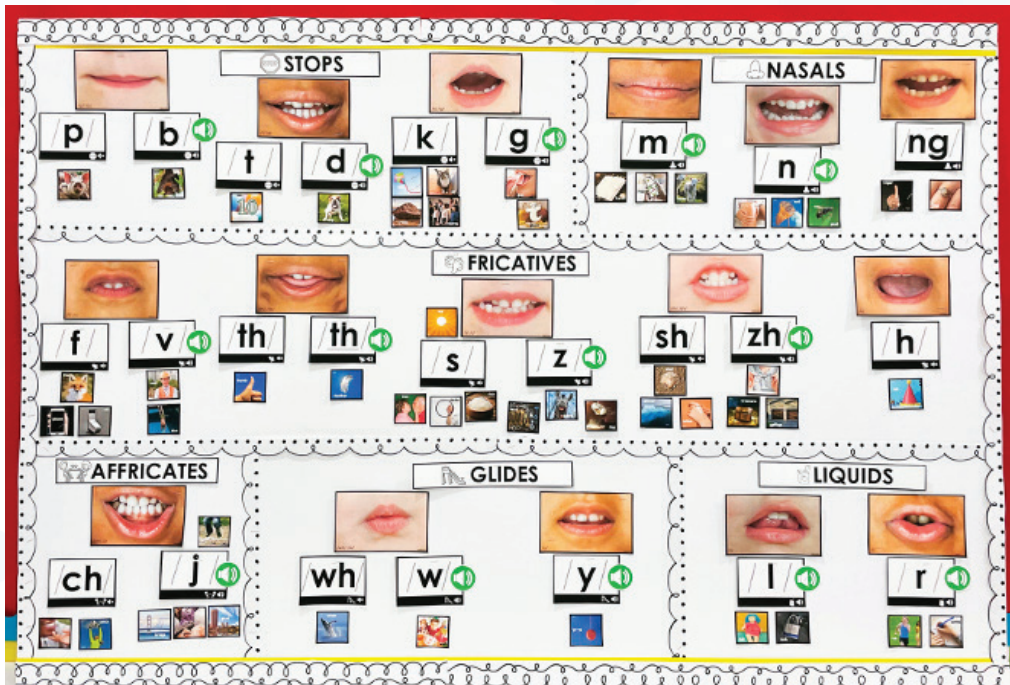
- Unvoiced: /ch/
- Voiced: /j/

**Glides:** This is a very airy sound

- Unvoiced: /wh/
- Voiced: /w/, /y/

**Liquids:** Can best be described as feeling like they fill your mouth up

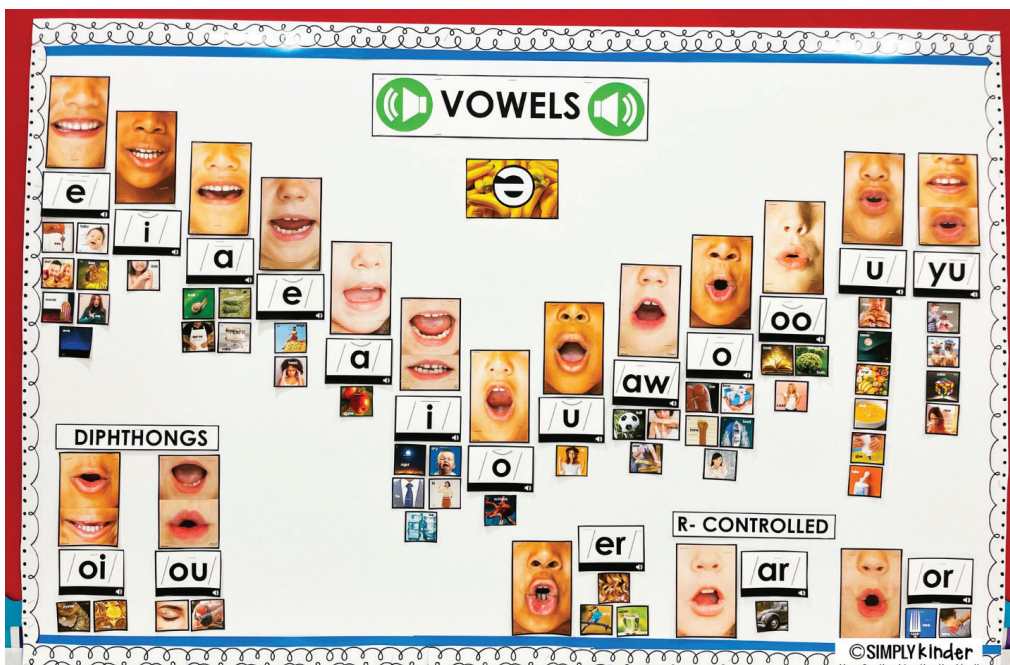
- /l/, /r/
- **Tip:** These attach to vowels and can change them, so try not to use them when segmenting.



Courtesy of Simply Kinder

## Vowel Sounds

There are 19 vowel sounds, and they are usually represented in a V shape to mimic the motion of your chin as you make these sounds.



Courtesy of Simply Kinder

# Transform the Way You Teach in the Classroom

As you begin to introduce your word wall to your new students, encourage them to have the full speaking experience since we already know they're very familiar with spoken language. That is, to look in the mirror as they speak and focus on the way their mouth looks, to feel their mouths as they make certain sounds, to focus on the way their lips and tongue work together to produce all of the sounds they know and use everyday.

We suggest starting slow. Introduce a few new phonemes and graphemes at a time. Help your students master a few new sounds before moving to the next group. Before introducing any new sounds, take a few minutes to quickly go through the existing sounds on the sound wall. This will help your students continually build their knowledge base without creating confusion.





# Additional Science of Reading Solutions

## Reading Success Starts Here

We know a sound wall is just the first step in your science of reading teaching journey. As you continue to explore science of reading pedagogy and learning strategies for your classroom, make sure you check out our easy-to-use, engaging, science of reading-aligned supplemental programs.



Help K–5 students reading below grade level with evidence-based *Voyager Passport*<sup>®</sup> reading intervention. Research-proven and based on science of reading pedagogy, this intervention accelerates student literacy achievement by targeting critical priority skills and providing strategies learners need to become fluent, on-level readers. Typically used as a Tier 2 intervention, the solution delivers a Structured Literacy approach with comprehensive, explicit, and systematic instruction in the five essential components of reading, plus language and writing. Rated Strong by Evidence for ESSA, *Voyager Passport* can be effectively used as a supplement to any core reading curriculum to help students reach proficiency.



Get a [FREE \*Voyager Passport\* toolkit](#) and access the tools and resources educators need to help students reach literacy success.



## *Voyager Passport Includes Reading Rangers*

*Reading Rangers* is an interactive, science of reading-based online practice solution for K–5 students specifically designed to strengthen foundational literacy skills and improve vocabulary, fluency, automaticity, and comprehension. Highly engaging and comprehensive, *Reading Rangers* provides the additional practice students need to be successful in English Language Arts.



Enjoy a [Free Trial of \*Reading Rangers\*](#) interactive online reading practice.

