

FAQ Video Transcripts

View this video and more [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Question: *What are some of the ways explicit phonics instruction can support growth in students' writing?*

Amanda Hartman:

I think that when you look at student development in spelling, in a writer's workshop, kids are starting to learn what the concept of a word is. They're starting to learn how to hear sounds in words, and really work on understanding syllables, and being able to blend and segment, being able to develop some phonemic awareness. Then kids are learning letter-sound relationships and being able to hear and record more letters, and sounds, and words. And then they move towards using more conventions correctly, using high-frequency words from word walls, using parts of words to help you spell new words, learning spelling patterns and phonograms to support you in more conventional writing.

So, in our phonics units of study, we've really thought about how in writer's workshop they're working on all of those things, which are all things that are really rooted in our phonics instruction, but that kids on a daily basis in the writer's workshop are trying to record the words that they want to tell in their stories, to label their information books to teach people what things that they will need. When writers are starting to learn how to do those things, part of learning them is to teach them in action while they're trying to make their pieces.

Phonics instruction is another time when students can be given really explicit instruction around phonics so that, when you want to write the story about baking cookies with your grandma in writer's workshop, you can really think about the composition of that piece and then use the letters and sounds and your writing and spelling skills to capture that story as best you can. In phonics, just as at writer's workshop, kids get to practice using the alphabet chart. In phonics, just as in writer's workshop, kids learn about how to use blends in their writing and reading. Some of the tools that we often use in our writer's workshop, like a word wall, like an alphabet chart, like some spelling patterns, are things that we can teach kids to use and to think about in phonics time to give some real explicit instruction, but also more practice, so that when it comes time for writer's workshop, they can transfer and use these materials then as well.

So, we do. We work on word wall words, just as inside of the units of study in writing, like in small moments in first grade, there are mini lessons on how to use

Units of Study in Phonics, Grades K—2
By Lucy Calkins and TCRWP Colleagues

your snap words to help you write with more efficiency. So, phonics time can be a time where we're introducing new words, where we're also practicing thinking about how to read and spell those words with efficiency so that when it does come time for writer's workshop, kids can use those things.

I think that when you look at the phonics units of study, there's quite a bit of targeted sessions around using these kinds of tools like word walls, and alphabet charts, et cetera. There's quite a bit of targeted practice around phonograms, and studying parts of words, and how that helps you to spell and read other words. That analogy work is really important for our readers and writers so that they're not just learning things by memorization, but learning things by analogy. There's also quite a bit of practice of things like interactive editing, where they can look at pieces of writing and think about how to change them based on some of the things that they're learning in phonics so that, when they're in writer's workshop and they're working by themselves and with partners, they can also work on editing their own pieces. So, I think that phonics instruction should have some really strong activities and practice for students to not just develop in terms of readers, but also in terms of writers.