

**Hip Hop Hope:**  
**Unlocking English Language Learning with Rhythms and Rhymes**

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**Abstract**

Welcome! If you are reading this unit, a keyword or curiosity drew you here. You are interested in learning something new, and you are open to trying out some lessons created by a fellow knowledge-seeker. Maybe you were drawn to the title because you love music, especially Hip Hop. Perhaps you teach English as an additional language, or maybe you know how important rhyme-awareness is for creating phonological awareness, and you know that rhythm and rhyming go hand in hand. Regardless of your reason for choosing this unit, I promise you an engaging journey into the brain and the science behind using music as a teaching tool, especially for teaching English.

**Unit Content**

The ideas for this unit arose from the Teachers Institute of Philadelphia (TIP) seminar “Music and Healing in Philadelphia” led by Dr. Carol Muller, who encouraged us from our first meeting to advocate for ways that our units might become standard practice for teaching in the School District of Philadelphia, especially in the area of Social Emotional Learning (SEL). According to The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning ([CASEL](#)) there are five components of SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. (URL cite) Since the pandemic, teachers in Philadelphia, as in many parts of the country, have been charged with teaching SEL. Poverty, gun violence, a sharp rise in mental health issues among our youth, not to mention post-pandemic grief have caused trauma for many of our students and teachers alike. The consensus among my colleagues in the seminar seemed to be that we haven’t been trained to teach SEL, and there aren’t curricular standards or standard materials to help. With the guidance of Dr. Muller, we believe we have found a way - MUSIC!

Music and musical lyrics are so easily accessible to students and teachers alike. We can access music and create playlists right from our phones. Knowing that we mostly listen to music to improve our mood, many of my colleagues in the seminar wrote units where they’ll include lessons on the brain science showing how listening to music can affect us. Some of their classroom activities will help students learn to regulate their own

emotions through music, and I encourage you to read these units, use the lessons, record your findings, and build upon what they've started. Just search for our seminar title and let your imagination run wild. However, as the only ESOL teacher in the group, and the only one working with kindergarten students, my unit looks quite different in order to meet my students' need.

### ***My Students Need...***

I teach ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) at a K-5 school with one of the highest populations of English Learners (ELs) in the city. When I started at the school 12 years ago, about 26% of our students were in the ESOL program, but the numbers have been steadily rising. In the past three years, our numbers have increased six percent each year. Currently we have 1251 students, and 58% of them are enrolled in the ESOL Program while an even greater number hear and speak a language other than English at home. If the trend continues, we may see 64% next year!

Oftentimes, teachers feel ill-equipped to deal with the needs of their ELs, especially those just arriving to our country. Students typically go through a "silent period" in their preproduction stage where they take in the new language but do not speak. This generally lasts for six weeks depending on the child. According to the School District's English Language Development standards: For English Learners, silence is a "recipe for stagnation... and perpetuates an inequitable power dynamic between students whose voices shape the classroom community and students without voice." (Espino Calderon, et al, 2020).

Newcomers have often experienced their own trauma upon coming here. They have left friends, family, and beloved pets behind. They may have even had a perilous journey leaving them with scars we can only imagine. My students need healing and a safe, predictable environment. Teachers need engaging, non-threatening tools to help assimilate them to a new country, city, school, and classroom. Classroom teachers become language teachers, too. Our ELs need spoken language first before they can read, write, or learn new content in English. The ideas in this unit could provide a solution.

Our ELs come to our school throughout the school year in all of the grades, however, a very large percentage start our school in kindergarten. This school year was our first to have a Head Start Program where two classes also had large numbers of ELs. Of the seven kindergarten classrooms with 30 students in each class, there were 125 students shown to need ESOL services after having been given the WIDA screener. That's 60%! Brain science tells us that the earlier children learn a second language, the better. Yet, because the Pennsylvania Department of Education still hasn't required kindergarten to be compulsory, it was only this past school year that a teacher was designated to provide ESOL services to all kindergarten ELs every day. That teacher was me!

Now I must give full disclosure; I have been on a spring sabbatical during the seminar so I didn't have the benefit of trying out any of these *new* musical ideas on my students, but I do have the hindsight and memory of how I incorporated songs and rhythmic chants to help my students learn the alphabet, the colors, and the body parts. Nearly everything I did with them was singing, call and response, and rhythmic chanting based on the videos I'd found online and would show the students on my smartboard. I also used an alphabet video which I created during the pandemic that included hand motions to go with certain icons. I've been using this song (acapella) every year since I learned it, and adapted it, from my daughter who brought it home from kindergarten 15 years ago. It's based on the song, "Who Let the Dogs Out," and with each letter there is an associated hand motion – for example bouncing a ball for the letter B. "Who let the 'B' out – b, b, b, b, b," while bouncing your hand like you're bouncing a ball. Adding those hand motions and doing it as a song has had a very positive effect with my 2nd-5th graders over the years - especially with students who'd been in our school for a few years and still hadn't learned the alphabet.

One of the other kindergarten teachers also used hand motions for her alphabet instruction, and by November, I noticed that when I was assessing her students on their knowledge of letter sounds, they would automatically make the hand motion she taught to go with the letter sound - just like my students have always done. This teacher and I were definitely on to something because, based on November assessments, more K students were correctly connecting letters to sounds from her class. Seems I've always known intuitively that using music, rhythm, movement, and chanting were engaging and effective ways to teach ELs. Through what I've learned about music and the brain in this seminar, I now have proof!

The brain science on music and language development also supports what I've been learning from Karen Taylor, co-creator of The Color Vowel® Approach this semester. (See detailed information about this approach in the Teaching Strategies section below.) Since 2016, I've been using the Color Vowel Approach with great success, and this spring I've pursued Level Two training. Two of the classes: "Rhythms and Chants" and "Prosody," combined with all that I've been learning about Hip Hop and also the brain, got me thinking about adding beats to enhance my practice and create videos that students will want to watch again and again.

### ***My Hip Hop Promise***

Here's some exciting news: Music can change your brain! Listening to music elicits emotion, encourages repetition, and helps focus attention. Moving to, drumming, clapping along with, and singing or chanting in a group are activities that strengthen the brain and help create a positive environment for learning. There are many implications for using music as a language learning tool. Dr. Ani Patel, in his presentation for the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (2013) entitled "Exploring the Impact of Music on Brain Function" explained that many scientists have found

“overlapping brain networks that process the acoustic features of speech and music.” Through the content presented in our seminar and my own deep dive into Hip Hop, I have created a unit which will help teachers capitalize on the rhythms and stress patterns of English in order to turn any content into a chant or “rap.” You can use the videos and classroom activities I’ve created to teach the alphabet sounds using hand motions, to identify the vowel sounds in the stressed syllable of words, to discriminate rhyming vs. non-rhyming words, and to speak “chunk phrases” all to the rhythm of Hip Hop beats. You will also learn how the current “best practices” for teaching phonological awareness combine beautifully with The Color Vowel© Approach, which helps students identify and produce the 16 vowel sounds in English. Using Hip Hop beats can enhance these strategies. Most importantly, you will see how the intentional inclusion of music in your everyday activities can create a positive classroom environment of predictability, fun, and cohesion as you and your students synchronize yourselves through Hip Hop beats.

### ***Our Brains - The Science Supporting Music in All Classrooms***

One of the first books we read in our seminar was *Music Cognition: The Basics* by musician and neuroscientist Henkjan Honing (2021). Honing seeks to understand how the cultural and biological factors that contribute to music and musicality have evolved. Knowing that all cultures have music, he argues that “we are all musical creatures.” Musicality is innate in all but a rare 2% of the population. We all have the capacity to make and respond to music. Music activates the oldest part of our brain; the same area as food, sex, and reward.

Throughout our seminar, Dr. Muller shared resources about the effects of music on the brain. We read about the neuroplasticity of the brain in Dr. Richard Davidson and Sharon Begley’s book, *The Emotional Life of Your Brain: How its unique patterns affect the way you think, feel, and live – and how you can change them* (2012). Neuroplasticity is best defined as “the ability of the nervous system to change its activity in response to intrinsic or extrinsic stimuli by reorganizing its structure, functions, or connections” (Mateus-Aparicio & Rodriguez-Moreno, 2019). Rick Hugarir, chair of neuroscience at John Hopkins School of Medicine, describes neuroplasticity in simpler terms as your “brain’s ability to consistently form and re-organize neuronal connections and to rewire itself” (Magsamen & Ross, 2023).

The six emotional styles that Davidson and Begley outline in their book are: resilience, outlook (positive or negative), self-awareness, social intuition, sensitivity to context, and attention or ability to focus. Thanks to the neuroplasticity of our brains any emotional style can be changed and enhanced in positive ways through the cultivation of experiences like listening to and participating in music.

Music can heal more than our emotional state. According to the [American Music Therapy Association](#), music therapy interventions can address a variety of healthcare & educational goals:

- Promote Wellness
- Manage Stress
- Alleviate Pain
- Express Feelings
- Enhance Memory
- Improve Communication
- Promote Physical Rehabilitation

Today, the fact that music can alleviate the symptoms of dementia, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and help brain-injured patients is well-documented. Magsamen & Ross in their book "Your Brain on Art" (2023) wrote about Concetta Tomaino, executive director and co-founder of the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function in New York State. Tomaino is recognized as one of the first music therapists. In 1978, she brought a guitar into a dementia ward and started singing an old familiar tune, "Let Me Call You Sweetheart." The effect it had on the ward was astonishing: "patients who were screaming fell silent. Those who were asleep woke up. And half of them began singing along" (Magsamen & Ross, p. 120).

In the 1980s, Tomaino paired up with [Oliver Sacks](#), neurologist and author, who had already published "Awakenings" about a group of patients who, in the early 20th century, had survived the great encephalitis lethargica epidemic. You may have seen the 1990 Academy Award-nominated film of the same name starring Robert De Niro and Robin Williams. Working together, they explored how dementia patients became "mobilized and animated around rhythm" (p. 122). They found the best form of music therapy to be live interactive music, where the therapist supports patients through improvisational music-making (Magsamen & Ross, 2023). In all of the research I read about the effects of music on the brain, there was a common consensus that listening alone did not have the same impact as *making* music or at least *moving to* music. This is why every lesson and activity I've created includes using hand motions, stomping, clapping, or drumming.

Watching Tomaino and Sacks talk about their work in the documentary film "Alive Inside" (2014) was eye-opening. I saw patients who'd been completely non-verbal come awake and start to hum, sing, and move along to the music of their youth. Sack explained, "Part of the reason why musical memories are so strong has to do with the way music enters our brains in the first place. Music can activate more parts of the brain than any other stimulus." Music also records itself in our motions and emotions in the cerebellum. (Alive Inside)

The idea that music is connected to memory is intuitively logical to anyone who's ever gotten a song stuck in their head, and memory is essential when learning a new language (Werner, 2018). As Sack explains, "In the hippocampus we create memories around the experiences of hearing music" (Alive Inside). Growing up in the 70s, I

watched “School House Rock” videos every Saturday morning, and to this day I can sing the Preamble to the Constitution along with many other songs from my youth.

Extensive research has shown that using songs is an effective language-development strategy with English Language Learners (Schoepp, 2001). Rhythm and beats help students speak in phrases or sentences instead of words, and the word repetition assists retention (Li & Brand, 2009, p. 79). Carolyn Graham, a jazz singer and teacher of English created “Jazz Chants” which are poems and chants which highlight the stress and intonation patterns of conversational American English. Shirley Thompson, co-creator of the Color Vowel® Chart has provided a formula for creating a rhythmic chant out of any phrase. The chants in the Classroom Activities section will follow the same formula so that teachers have a sustainable and efficient tool for creating their own chants.

### ***The “Critical Period” for Language and Music***

Patricia Kuhl, Co-Director at the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences, University of Washington, Seattle, and her team have performed research on the effect of music and language on the baby brain using Magnetoencephalography (MEG) imaging. Their research proved that music lights up every part of the brain – not just auditory processing but the social, cognitive, and linguistic areas, as well (Kuhl, 2014). First, let’s focus on the linguistic areas. Honing and Kuhl both agree that infants are sensitive to any number of musical features that are common across cultures (Honing, p. 35-38). The same is true for language. The baby’s brain is like a little computer that creates a database of all of the phonemes that they hear in the motherese being spoken to them. Motherese, a.k.a., Infant Directed Speech, is the sing-songy speech parents use to talk to their babies using exaggerated melodic contours, a slower tempo, a higher pitch, and greater rhythmic variation. According to Honing, “During the earliest months, the musical information of a word is much more important than its specific meaning” (p. 6).

Kuhl identified the “critical period” as the time when the neural pathways are solidified into responding to and being able to create the phonemes of their mother tongue. The optimal critical period, or window of opportunity, appears to be between 6-8 months old when what’s coming in the environment floods the baby brain and makes a huge difference - for both language and music (Kuhl, 2014). The window of opportunity doesn’t shut completely after the critical period, but it narrows. Typically, children who learn a language between ages of zero and seven will learn it a lot more completely. Every two years there’s a small decrease in ability to learn a second language.

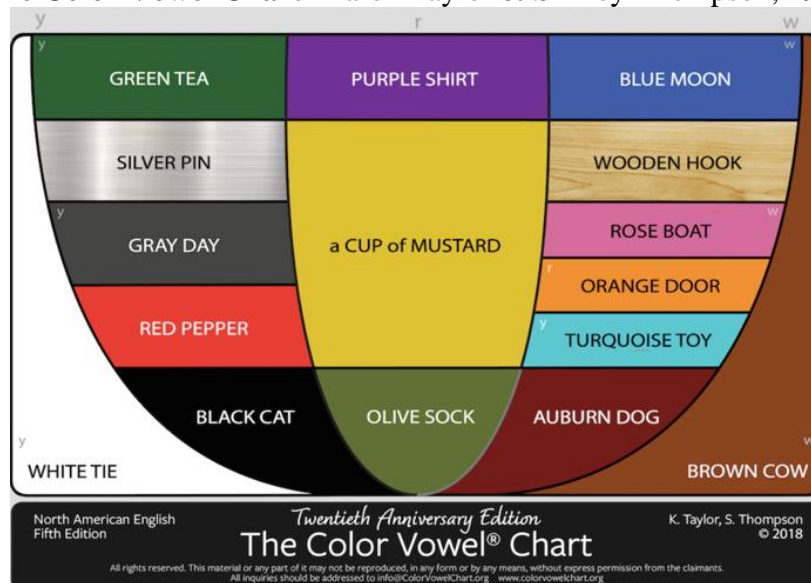
## **Teaching Strategies**

### **The Color Vowel Approach?**

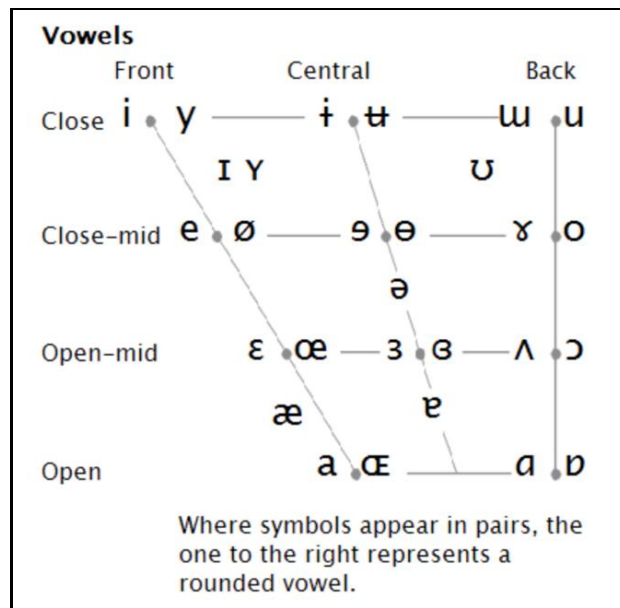
The Color Vowel® Approach was created by Karen Taylor and Shirley Thompson in 1999 and was used widely with English students at the University of Maryland and George Washington University respectively. Dr. Robin Barr, Linguist in Residence at American University, tested the approach with her vast linguistic knowledge, and together they've been adding to the approach with input from teachers using it in the field. I'm hopeful that the videos created here will add to the growing library of resources available for teachers using the Color Vowel Approach.

The Color Vowel® Chart is the primary visual tool. It's based on the phonemic symbols that linguists used in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). They represent the vowel sounds that humans can produce with the tongue, jaw, and lips, based the space of the mouth in profile. The so-called “smiling” vowels are on the left, and the more rounded vowels are on the right.

**The Color Vowel Chart- Karen Taylor & Shirley Thompson, 1999**



## Vowels on the International Phonetic Alphabet Chart



<https://www.internationalphoneticalphabet.org>

For years English has been taught using this IPA. Even today, adult students all over the world not only have to learn our Latin script alphabet, they have to learn the symbols for each sound. The Color Vowel® chart simplifies the IPA. The Color Vowel Approach is based on brain science and linguistic expertise which informs us that English is a stressed-timed language, and every word has a primary stressed syllable. The stressed syllable receives more *time on vowel* and is essential for comprehensibility. If we hear the stress in the wrong place, then we may have trouble understanding the word. For example, in a conversation with a colleague who's a native Chinese speaker, I heard her say "alzheImer" with the stress on the second syllable. I was trying to imagine what a ZIEMer was. It took a moment to realize, based on context, that she was saying "ALZheimers." This is just one example where stress, or accent, on the wrong syllable can make a non-native speaker difficult to understand.

We don't think about the rhythm and musicality of our language or about the sounds we're producing because speaking English is "innate" for us, but time on vowel is a necessary ingredient for comprehensibility.

The stressed syllable is also important at the phrase level where the word we stress, combined with pitch intonation, affect the meaning of words and phrases. Take for example the following sentence, "I ordered two blueberry muffins" and how the placement of stress can impact the meaning of the phrase, Imagine you're at a bakery. After looking into your little bag, you realize you didn't get what you ordered.



I ordered <i>two</i> blueberry muffins.	You got only <i>one</i> muffin, or maybe <i>three</i> .
I ordered two <i>blueberry</i> muffins	You got <i>chocolate chip</i> muffins instead.
I ordered two blueberry <i>muffins</i> .	Maybe you got two blueberry <i>scones</i>

Thompson







Shirley

“Rhythm is a necessary ingredient of linguistic communication” (Kraus, 2018).

When I first heard about The Color Vowel® approach from a colleague, I did a Google search and saw that the Peace Corps and the Department of State were using this program to teach English in other countries. I learned enough from the online videos to put it to use in class, but I wanted to be sure I was doing it effectively so I completed Level One Training with Karen Taylor at the English Language Teaching Solutions center in Washington, DC.

I found the approach to be especially effective with 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> graders who hadn’t yet mastered the symbols and sounds of English. Some of them may have had dyslexia from what I observed. The chart, and learning the color sounds, got students to listen, to focus on their ears and their mouths on the primary stressed syllable. They had fun and gained confidence in “catching” the vowel sound with their hand while identifying the vowel’s color using the open hand technique (See the CV Video to learn the open hand technique). This translated into increased confidence in knowing what vowel(s) to use in their writing.

After collecting a number of words that have the same color (Ex: GREEN TEA teacher, please, receive) students explore the patterns of the letter/symbol representations of the sound. This sparks their curiosity. To bring brain science back into this discussion, Magsamen and Ross argue that “curiosity has been baked into the human brain as an evolutionary need” (p. 172). The hippocampus is most responsible for our curious nature, and when our curiosity is satisfied, the brain’s reward chemical, dopamine, flows through your body. Students gain confidence in finding spelling patterns and become comfortable with the fact that one sound can have many different spellings and one letter can represent many different sounds. For example:

<u>O</u> ne	A CUP OF MUSTARD	
W <u>o</u> man	WOODEN HOOK	
Tw <u>o</u>	BLUE MOON	
W <u>o</u> men	SILVER PIN	
Go <u>o</u>	ROSE BOAT	
St <u>o</u> p	OLIVE SOCK	
W <u>o</u> w	BROWN COW	

Karen Taylor (year?)

***But we already have a phonics curriculum***

To be clear, phonics involves print while phonemic and phonological awareness are oral and auditory. “Phonological awareness is the understanding of different ways that oral language can be divided into smaller components and manipulated” (Chard and Dickson, 1999). Rhyming, putting small words together to make compound words, breaking apart words into syllables or onset-rime, these are all phonological awareness skills. Phonemic awareness is a sub-category of phonological awareness where students should be able to hear, blend, and segment words into the smallest units of sound (or phonemes) that they hear. For example, the four sounds in /f/ /l/ /a/ /p/ can be blended to make the whole word flap.

In their book, “Know Better, Do Better,” (2019) David and Meredith Liben say, “It is not an option to skip or shortchange phonemic awareness! Children without master of it will inevitably struggle.” Too many teachers think phonics and phonemic awareness are interchangeable.

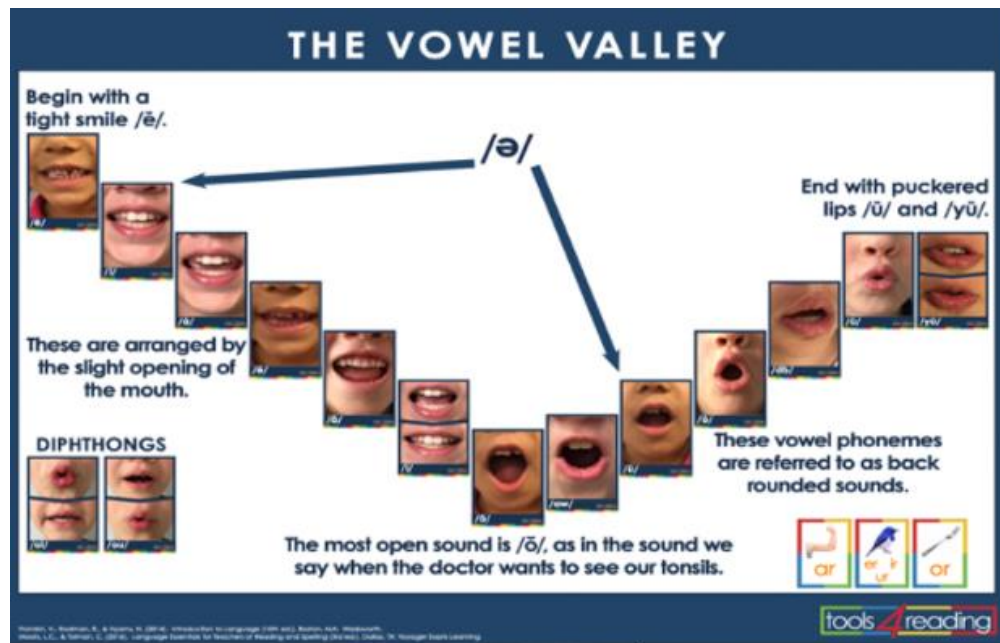
### ***The curse of knowing but not-knowing***

Studies indicate that many teachers struggle with metalinguistics and the knowledge of phonological awareness (Carson and Bayetto, 2018). Because speaking English is so innate for all native-English-speaking teachers in our city, they don’t ever need to analyze what the mouth is doing. This is part of the “Curse of Knowledge” - unhealthy assumptions – such as forgetting how hard it was to learn how to do something. (Edutopia cite) Teachers, if you have English Learners in your class, and you think that they will just “pick up” English, or if you think that they understand you because they can use Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), you are suffering from the curse! The same goes with reading! We are under the assumption that if we show the letters to the students enough times, they’ll learn them. Brain science and reading research have taught us that students cannot and will not be able to read without phonological awareness first and without language comprehension.

In her book, “Speech to Print” (2020), Louisa Cook Moats states, “Perception of, memory for, and the ability to think about phonemes play a central role in learning to speak, read, and spell.” She also says:

“One of the most robust findings of modern reading research is that proficient reading and spelling are strongly associated with the ability to identify, remember, separate, combine, and manipulate phonemes, and to do so rapidly and without effort (Kilpatrick, 2015).

These are the kind of activities K-2nd grade teachers have been doing at our school through the Heggerty© Program. If your school doesn’t have the Heggerty program or you haven’t had a chance to see what LETRS® (Language Essentials for Teachers or Reading and Spelling) has to offer, I strongly recommend you check out the resources! To meet our students’ needs our reading specialist brought these programs to our school along with Kid Lips™ (Tools for Reading) One component of Kid Lips was The Vowel Valley.



Tools 4 Reading©

When I saw this, I exclaimed, “That goes perfectly with the Color Vowel® Approach!



Tools 4 Reading©

Here's the Vowel Valley on a classroom bulletin board with the icons to help students remember the sound. The problem is, for English Learners, the word "edge" (for "short" e) won't be evident. Same with the "apron" ("long" a). Can you see how replacing these icons with colors could be beneficial? So simple!

Kid Lips also came with instructions to label the sounds as "fricatives" and "affricates," but unless you've had a course in linguistics, you probably don't know what those are, and why burden students with these big academic words. The curse! We don't have to think about our own speech sounds, it's automatic. If we've never thought about how all of these sounds work in different linguistic environments (when a voiced /d/ sounds like a voiceless /t/), or analyzed them, then how can we teach them? In addition, teachers have been so ingrained to talk about long and short vowels that they are very reluctant to change. We all have to agree on this fact - English has 16 vowel sounds. There are simply not five vowels with each vowel making two sounds. That's false advertising! Many teachers at my school took down their Vowel Valley and Kid Lips icons because they weren't using them as a teaching tool. They didn't see the value.

What the Color Vowel Chart does so beautifully is that it provides a simple, comprehensible, and easy-to-use tool for identifying the stressed vowel sound in a word. Beginning level ELs learn the colors in English and the icons to match the colors.



In the Classroom Activities section, you will see how to "skate" around the chart, pull out the color of a word, identify the colors of your students' names, and, hopefully you will explore the approach further at <https://www.colorvowel.com>. All of you teachers of ELs will appreciate the simplicity and sustainability of this approach. With the ease of the Color Vowel Organizer as a way for students to collect and categorize the words they're learning, we can focus on the larger task of increasing our students' vocabulary! And adding the element of rhythm, i.e., Hip Hop beats will make practicing the colors engaging and fun!

### ***What about Vocabulary?***

Gough and Tunmer came up with "The Simple View of Reading" in 1986, and I only learned about it this year through optional LETRS PD at my school.

# The Simple View of Reading



Gough and Tunmer  
(1986)

When you see it like this and realize  $1 \times 0 = 0$ , it should be very clear that more emphasis needs to be placed on language comprehension. Language comprehension means understanding the meaning of words, but it also must include phonological awareness to make students aware of how the word is pronounced in order for them to read and write the word.

One hundred percent of our students are considered economically disadvantaged. Whether or not they receive welfare subsidies is unimportant, what is important is that even our native-English speaking students need explicit instruction in vocabulary. See the chart below with findings from Hard and Risley 1995, 2002.

# Meaningful Differences

	Words heard per hour	Words heard in a 100-hour week	Words heard in a 5,200 hour year	4 years
Welfare	616	62,000	3 million	13 million
Working Class	1,251	125,000	6 million	26 million
Professional	2,153	215,000	11 million	45 million

Hart & Risley 1995, 2002

*Colorado Reading First*

15

Hart and Risley 1995, 2002

This is before smart phones and tablets became the new mother's helper! It's obvious to anybody who's witnessed babies in stores or restaurants being entertained by phones and tables that parents are surely talking less and less to their children. The good news is vocabulary can be taught rhythmically. It's not hard. Just add a beat to the naturally occurring stresses in the words and phrases. For example: Say, "Identify means to see and know." Now, add extra stress on the stressed syllables: "IdEntify means to SEE and KNOW." Clap your hands to a beat so that the claps land on 2nd and 4th syllables of Identify and also on the words see and know. Now you have a chant and a chant is meant to be repeated.

You add your own phrases to a familiar tune as long as you keep the original syllable and stress pattern. Adding corresponding gestures, either from an [American Sign Language online dictionary](#) or one you and your students create to link a motion to word will help facilitate both short and long-term memory of a word. Adding rhythmic repetition can help students focus attention and remember the word. And it's FUN!

## Classroom Activities

### Unit One - "Hi, My Name is..."

We must learn to correctly pronounce all of our students' names, especially our ELs. At the kindergarten level, getting our students' names right is extremely important as that pronunciation, or mispronunciation, may follow them throughout their school life. If your school has a Language Line interpretation service, use it to ask the parents of your ELs how to pronounce their names the way they want it said. When students are explicitly taught to learn their classmates' names, you are creating a positive classroom community where everyone is valued.

Using your students' names as the starting point for language and literacy instruction has so much potential! When students see a letter they recognize from their name, their face lights up. They raise their hand to let you know, "That's in my name!" Capitalize on their names for shared writing activities, too. Ex: "I hear a /b/ sound... who's name starts with a /b/ sound? Yes! Let's write "B" as in Bianca."

You can review the names with this song ([insert link](#)) and categorize classroom names in different ways as a part of your morning routine.

- Count the letters in each student's names; graph the results.
- Put the names in alphabetical order; graph the results.
- Clap the number of syllables in our names; graph the results.\*
- Identify the stress pattern of our names; graph the results.\*
- Identify the COLORS of our names; graph the results. (To be done after introducing the Color Vowel® Chart)

\*You will see these ideas explained below.

*Objectives:* Students will be able to identify the number of syllables in each name. Students will be able to identify the stressed vowel pattern in their name and their classmates' names. Students will be able to identify the Color Vowel of their classmates' names.

### *Standards:*

CC.1.1.PK.C Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes). Count syllables in spoken words. Segment single syllable spoken words. Isolate and pronounce initial sounds.

CC.1.1.K.C Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

RF.K.2.B Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words.



*Materials:* Smartboard or whiteboard, later poster materials, list of names. Kazoos for each child (optional). Two jars and popsicle sticks with all student names on them so you can randomly pull names from the “in” jar and move to the “out” jar.

*Highly-recommended Techie Option:* Take pictures of all students and insert them in a power point with a text box underneath showing their name. Group these two together. You can move the picture/name of the student in the correct column instead of writing their name. This will be much more meaningful at the beginning of the year in kindergarten and a great way for students to start learning each other’s names.

*Activity #1: Syllable Awareness. Clap our names.*

*Number of Days:* Three-Five. Depending on the number of students in your class, and their attention spans, I recommend doing this with five or so names per day. Always review the names from the previous days’ lessons.

*Steps:*

1. Write the numbers ONE (1) through FOUR or FIVE (for the name with the most syllables) at the top of each column you create on the smartboard or whiteboard.
2. Model with your own name. Clap it. Count the claps. Encourage students to say and clap your name, too. Write your name in/drag your photo to the correct column.
3. Repeat with students’ names. Write the name or slide the photo into the correct column.

*Hip Hop Version:* Pull up your online graph of names or show the poster you made. Play, “Hi My Name is...” and sing all the “one-clap” names, then the “two-clap” names, then the “three-clap” names.

*Activity #2: Stress Awareness. Stretch our names.*

*Number of Days:* Three-Five.

In order to help students begin to notice the prosody of our stress-timed language, you will use the “open-hand technique” (Karen Taylor) on the stressed syllable. To see the open-hand technique in action click on any of [COLOR VOWEL](#) videos below.

The open hand technique works wonderfully for showing the longer amount of time on the stressed syllable of a word. You just reach your hand out as you flatten it - as though you are giving a “high five” right in front of you.

\_\_\_\_\_

A one-syllable word/name has this stress pattern (GRAPES)

\_\_\_\_\_



A two-syllable word with the stress on the first syllable. (APPLES)

\_\_\_\_\_



A two-syllable word with the stress on the second syllable.  
(SOME JUICE)

\_\_\_\_\_



A three-syllable word with the stress on the first syllable. (ORANGES)

\_\_\_\_\_



A three-syllable word with the stress on the second  
syllable. (BANANAS)

\_\_\_\_\_



A three-syllable word/name with the stress on the third syllable.  
(SCRAMBLED EGGS)

\_\_\_\_\_



A four-syllable word/name with the stress on the first syllable.  
(WATERMELON)

\_\_\_\_\_



A four-syllable word/name with the stress on the second syllable.  
(SPAGHETTI SAUCE)

\_\_\_\_\_



A four-syllable word/name with the stress on the third syllable.  
(BAKED POTATO)

\_\_\_\_\_



A four-syllable word/name with the stress on the fourth syllable.  
(RED BEANS and RICE)

*Steps:*

1. *Day One:* Start by reviewing the poster or slide you made showing all of the names organized by the number of syllables in each name. Tell the students, “Today we will hum the names that have two claps.” This will be the time to differentiate between two different stress patterns - think of DAvid vs. daVID. Hum the names and have students repeat after you. Divide the two-syllable names into two columns. If you don’t have any two-syllable names with the stress on the second syllable, move into three-syllable names.
2. *Day Two:* Show this slide [CLICK HERE](#). Begin by teaching the names of the foods on the slides and showing their stress pattern by reaching out and opening your hand on the stressed syllable.
3. Test a stress pattern that isn’t correct. (EX: BANanas) Shake your head on the incorrect pattern, and nod your head on the correct pattern. Always have the students repeat after you.
4. Begin with your own name showing curiosity about the way to say it. If you have a lot of ELs in your class, be sure to keep your talking simple, brief, and as demonstrative and physical as possible. Do not repeat yourself rephrasing what you said. That just creates confusion for ELs. EX: My name is “HORner” (Nodding my head and reaching out my hand on the first syllable). It’s not “HorNER.” (Shaking my head and reaching out my hand on the second syllable).
5. This sounds like Apple. I’ll put my name under APPLE.
6. Proceed to choose popsicle sticks names out of the jar, test the stress patterns using the open-hand technique and add them to the appropriate column.
7. *Days Three-Five* Continue adding names to the chart.

*Hip Hop Version:* Pull up your online graph of names or show the poster you made. Play, “Hi My Name is...” and sing all the GRAPE names, then the APPLE names, then the SOME JUICE, names, etc.

In addition to the Open-Hand technique, you can have students stand up and stretch their arms wide for the stressed syllable. You could demonstrate stretching the syllable with a long rubber band or exercise band.

*Assessments:* Can students identify and correctly say each of the food words on the slides demonstrating the stressed syllable with their open hand. Can students identify each of their classmates when shown their picture? Can they say everyone’s name demonstrating the stressed syllable with their open hand or stretched arms?

*Unit 2 - The Sounds of the Alphabet*

The rationale for using an alphabet song with motions is to provide students with a kinesthetic mnemonic device. I know from having used a similar alphabet song in the

past that students never tire of repeating this song as a warm-up to any phonics lesson. As part of the Heggerty program, teachers lead K-2 students in a sound review showing letter cards with icons; however, the pictures don't lend themselves to any kind of motion. Combining my colleagues hand signals with mine, and highlighting my mouth as it makes the different sounds should really enhance this practice.

[CLICK HERE for the Alphabet Song](#)

*Objectives:* Students will be able to make each letter sound correctly with attention to voiceless consonants: /f/, /k/, /s/ and /t/. Students will be able to identify each letter with its motion and the correct sound.

*Standard:* RF.K.1.D Recognize and name all upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet.

*Materials:* The alphabet icon chart displayed on a smart board or printed in a large format for all students to see. Individual alphabet icon charts for each student. Clear "chips" for playing bingo. White boards, wipe-off markers, erasers (I use clean socks that have lost their partner as erasers.)

*Activity #1:* Learn the song!

*Number of Days:* 180! Especially at the Pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level this song can be used as part of your daily warm-up for your phonics lesson.

*Steps:*

*Days One through Three (or more)*

1. Play the song and sing along while doing the motions. Encourage students to join you in clapping and trying out the motions.
2. Students can try just making the motions along with you.
3. Student can also just lip sync along with you.
4. By the third or fourth day, students should be able to join you in singing along.
5. As students become familiar with the song, you could ask individual students or groups of students to lead the song in front of the class. They love this!

*Activity 2:* Introduce the chart. [Click here for the Alphabet Chart with icons.](#)

I would encourage you to display this slide on your smart board and also to print a copy for each student. You may want to laminate the chart. This chart could reside in your students' writing folders as it will help them when it comes time to write using inventive spelling. Invented spelling refers to young children's attempts to use their best judgments about spelling (Lutz, 1986).

*Steps:*

*Days One through Three (or more)*

1. Display the Alphabet Icon chart on the smart board. Say, “I’m thinking of a name that starts with /b/” while bouncing an imaginary basketball. Students have to guess which name you’re thinking of.
2. Repeat with other students’ names.

*Activity 3:* Students learn to use their own individual Alphabet Icon chart.

*Steps:*

*Days: Ongoing*

1. Play bingo with the alphabet chart. Give students clear chips as markers. Make the sound and motion to go with a certain letter. Students have to find and mark it on their individual alphabet chart.
2. In small groups, practicing finding the correct icon on the chart after you make a sound.
3. As students learn to write the letters, you could have them work with a partner to make the sound and motion for each letter in their names, or other words you’re working on, while the other partner writes the letters.
4. You can repeat the above activity as a whole class. The leader makes each letter sound as the other students write the letters on their white boards. Don’t worry too much about spelling in the beginning. If they at least write a letter “e” for a “long e” sound, they’re getting close!

*Assessments:* Can students identify and correctly say each letter sound using a hand motion? Can they write the letter that corresponds with the sound? Can they say the name of the letter as well as the sound that it makes?

*Unit 3: Introducing the Color Vowel Chart*

I hesitate to delve too deeply into the Color Vowel® Approach without giving all of the background information. You should have a set of Color Vowel cards with each icon on them and introduce three colors at a time. For example, you would start with vowel sounds that are pretty far apart on the chart: (GREEN TEA, BLACK CAT, BLUE MOON). These lessons are outlined in the

*Objectives:* Students will be able to identify the 16 vowel sounds by their color. Students will be able to use the open hand technique on the stressed syllable. They then “catch” and “pull-out” the vowel sound.

*Standard:* RF.K.3.B Associate the long and short sounds with common spellings (graphemes) for the five major vowels

*Objectives:*

- Students will be able to identify the stressed syllable of a word and the ‘color’ of the vowel sound.
- Students will be able to use the Open Hand technique to demonstrate their awareness of stress.

*Materials:*

COLOR VOWEL Flash Cards

A COLOR VOWEL Chart poster

[Click her for a video of my Color Vowel Chant with beats](#)

*Activity One: Learning the Color Vowel Chart*

*Number of Days:* Ongoing. Show the chart and vowel sounds as part of your daily phonics warm-up routine.

*Steps:*

1. Depending on the level and knowledge of your students you’ll need to make sure they know all of the colors represented on the chart. Find a way to teach “wooden” and “silver.” Students will learn the icon names as you do the video repeatedly.
2. Participate along with me and encourage the open hand technique.

*Activity Two: Identify the colors of our names.*

*Number of Days:* Three to five depending on the number of students you have and their attention level (age).

*Steps:*

1. Refer back to the chart where you made of graph of the stressed syllables in each name. You can “catch” the vowel sound by using your open hand and repeating the stressed vowel. For example: HORner, HORner, HOR, OR, OR, OR, OR... hmmm. I hear ORANGE. My name is ORANGE!
2. Always underline only the vowel. Not the letter “r” in this case.
3. Underneath the underlined vowel, write ORANGE (or whatever color the name might be) under that vowel.
4. For “r” moving vowels – like Karen, or Terry... you must isolate the vowel that comes right before the “r”. There may be regional differences, but in Philadelphia, we’d say Karen and Terry are RED names.

NB: There will be regional differences and dialects of English which must be honored. If a student hears their name as a certain color, you should honor it.

Also, it’s important to test out all of the colors the name *isn’t*. Ex: “Is it SILVER PIN Tim, or OLIVE SOCK Tom. BLACK CAT Tam, or ROSE BOAT Toom?” Have fun with it!

It is my great hope that you will explore all that the COLOR VOWEL chart has to offer. This unit is meant to give you a brief introduction and whet your appetite. I hope you will think about creating chants for your students with simple phrases or content that they need to learn. I will be uploading many more videos on my YouTube channel over the course of this summer. I've only just begun, and I hope you will "Like" and "Subscribe" and infuse your classroom with rhythm!

In the APPENDIX, you will find links for many HIP HOP video sites with songs for rhyming and learning basic English Vocabulary. I encourage you to play one song repeatedly until it's learned! Participate with your students so that they see the importance of doing the song.

### Resources

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## Appendix

CC.1.1.PK.C.PK.C Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes). Recognize rhyming words and when two or more words begin with the same sound (alliteration). Count syllables in spoken words. Segment single syllable spoken words. Isolate and pronounce initial sounds.

CC.1.1.K.C Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes). Recognize and produce rhyming words. Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words. Blend and segment onsets and rimes of single-syllable spoken words. Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sound (phonemes).

RF.K.2. Recognize and produce rhyming words.

RF.K.2.B Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words.

*Hip Hop Songs, Rhymes and More – Click on the links to explore! Be sure to participate with your students!*

[ABC – Hip Hop](#)

[Flocabulary](#)

[Gracie's Corner](#)

[Jack Hartmann](#)

[Make a Move, Make a Rhyme](#)

[I Can Move My Body Like Anything](#)

[Boom Chicka Boom](#)

[Rocco Rocco The Rhyming Rhino](#)

[Jools TV](#)

[Snoop Dogg's Doggy Land](#)