

Instructional Strategies

Secret Messages

Secret messages give students the opportunity to manipulate phonic elements and are especially helpful for providing practice with onsets and rimes. Secret messages are formed by adding or deleting parts of words and can be geared to virtually any decoding skill at any level of difficulty. At the easiest levels students can manipulate beginning and ending consonants. At more advanced levels they may manipulate vowels, syllables, prefixes, suffixes, and even roots. Once students become proficient at solving secret messages, they can be challenged to create their own. Secret messages should be composed in such a way that new elements being substituted for old elements have the same sound as the old elements. For instance, taking the r from raid and substituting p so as to make paid is acceptable. But substituting pl for r in raid would not be since the aid in plaid is not pronounced in the same way as the aid in paid. Although they are a game-like activity, secret messages should also meet specific instructional objectives. The sample secret message is designed to reinforce the -at pattern. Answers to each line will form a new sentence!

Sample Secret Message

Take the H from hats and put C in its place. _ _ _ _ _

Take the t from to and put d in its place. _ _ _

Take the h from hot and put n in its place. _ _ _ _

Take the b from bike and put l in its place. _ _ _ _ _

Take the b from bats and put r in its place. _ _ _ _ _

Assessment Strategies

Illustrations

Assess young students' reading comprehension or listening skills by delivering this interdisciplinary formative assessment. Drawing while students learn allows them to capture a concept, image, event, or object and frees up cognitive space so that students can begin to think critically. The activity starts by either reading a story passage out loud or having students read it individually. Irrespective of who reads, each student must draw the content depicted in the passage. If the passage already has an accompanying illustration, you can show it to students afterward.

For example:

- Sketch a few characters from the story
- Add a key detail to each character
- Draw arrows between the characters showing their relationships
- Add some details about the setting

Mini-White Boards

Each student, or groups of students, has a mini-whiteboard. As they work through questions, they can share them either with you as a class or you can walk around the classroom and see their responses. You can provide immediate feedback to every student!



Classroom / Time Management Strategies

FREE Punch Cards

Punch Cards create an attainable goal and provide students with a visual representation of achievement! You can decide how many punch spots to put on the card, this can change throughout the year as needed. Perhaps at the beginning of the year you want the students to attain rewards more often, so start with five punch spots. Later in the year you can increase the punch spots to ten. Print punch cards on tag board and place the student's names on the individual cards. Watch for good behavior choices and punch the student's card with a fancy shape punch. When a student fills all punch spots, the card goes home with a positive note from you or another determined reward.