



SPRINGER
Learning Center



THE EMPOWERED
Learner Conference
The Power of Executive Function

February 13, 2026



Wendy Strickler, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Reading
Science

Megan Schneider Dinnesen, Ed.D.
Associate Professor, Special
Education

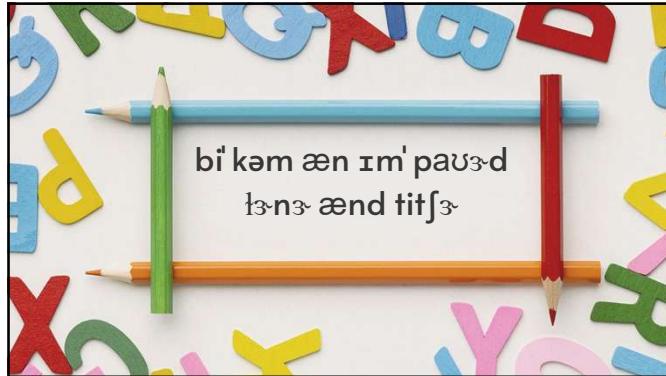




A **M** **Y** **U** **E** **S**

b = /b/
p = /p/
I = short i
k = hard k
aa = /a/
ee = r blend "er"
m = /m/

d = /d/
t = /t/
i = ee
tj = "ch" sound consonant blend
ə = uh
au = ow
n = /n/



Too hard?

Frustrating?

Why?

What are the domains of Executive Functioning?

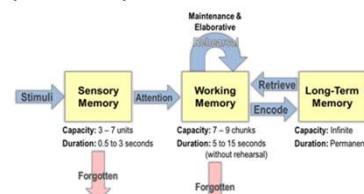
- Attention
- Working Memory
- Inhibitory Control
- Flexibility
- Initiation/Motivation
- Self-Monitoring
- Emotional Regulation
- Planning & Organization



Impacting Attention and Working Memory

What is Cognitive Load?

- Effort
- Amount of information processing
- Mental load



Cognitive Overload



- Information coming in at a faster rate than it can be processed and retained
- Less learning!

Relevant at every age across learning experiences

PAUSE for TURN & TALK — When have you recently experienced cognitive overload?
What are signs that students are experiencing cognitive overload?

What to do differently?

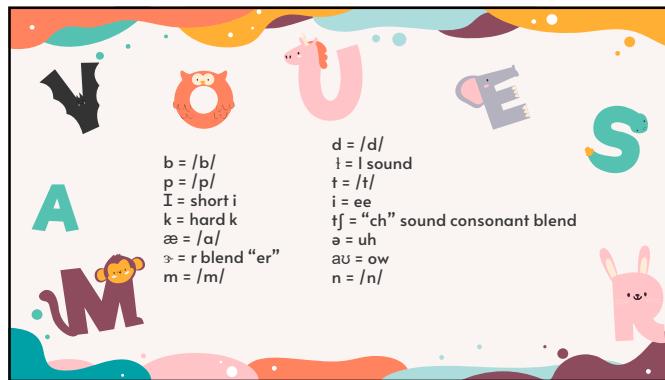
Focus on Learning**Reduce visual and verbal distractions**

Visual:



Verbal:





New sounds

n = /n/

æ = /a/

d = /d/

æ=/a/
n = /n/
d = /d/

ænd

Instructional focus

Increase consistency in

Routines (instructional and practice)

Language



When content is new → familiar routine

When content is new → consistent language is key (across teachers, lessons, tiers)

INTRODUCE CLEAR ROUTINE (explicit instruction) AND CLEAR AND CONCISE LANGUAGE

1. State Goal/Purpose	1 minutes
2. Warm Up - Phonological Awareness - Review previous sounds - Review Sight Words	7 minutes
3. Teach a new concept - New phonics skills - New sight word	5-7 minutes
4. Blend Sounds; Practice Word Reading	5-7 minutes
5. Dictation (Spelling)	5 minutes
6. Fluency with Connected Text - Decodable readers - Reading decodable sentences	5-7 minutes
7. Restate Goal	1 minute

Content focus

- ❖ Build or activate background (priming)
- ❖ Chunk content
- ❖ Blocked practice before interleaving
- ❖ Massed practice before distributed
- ❖ Clear feedback





New sounds

n = /n/

æ = /æ/

d = /d/

Activating Background Knowledge (Priming)

b = /b/**p** = /p/**m** = /m/**k** = /k/**d** = /d/**n** = /n/

Chunk content: Retrieval first

b = /b/ **p** = /p/ **m** = /m/**d** = /d/ **n** = /n/

Chunk content: New

i = ee **tʃ** = /ch/ sound **ə** = uh

Blocked and massed practice with feedback

Next set with blocked practice and feedback

I = short i

ɜ = r blend “er”

əʊ = ow

Interleaving

ænd	min
dæn	pitʃ
ɜn	kæn

Read this sentence...

bi'kəm æn ɪm'paʊəd ɪz-nə
ænd tɪfʒ̩

Contact Information

Wendy Strickler, Ph.D.

Associate Professor

wendy.strickler@msj.edu

Megan Dinnesen, Ed.D.

Associate Professor

megan.dinnesen@msj.edu





Springer School and Center empowers students with dyslexia, ADHD, and executive function challenges through four pillars: Springer Diagnostic Center, Springer Lower School & Middle School, Springer High School and Springer Learning Center.

Learn more at Springer-LD.org.
