Phonemic Awareness Development: A Diagnostic for Instruction (PADDI)

Welcome to the PADDI,

The PADDI is a set of free, informal diagnostic tools designed to help teachers identify where to begin phonological awareness instruction with students of any age. Using the PADDI, teachers can identify and teach phonemic awareness skills to fuel reading and spelling development. Teachers can use PADDI scores and qualitative information to check accuracy and efficiency at each PA level, then use this information to group students for PA instruction. The PADDI makes it easy to document student mastery of phonemic awareness concepts and track progress.

The PADDI includes two diagnostic assessments. Both assessments appear in three forms (A, B, C) so that teachers can monitor progress over the school year.

1. The PADDI – Kindergarten through Adult (PADDI – KA) identifies where to begin instruction for those who demonstrate phonological awareness at a basic syllable level or above. It uses a deletion task (for example, say "part" without the /p/) to assess the ability to isolate and manipulate speech sounds in spoken words. Performance on deletion tasks is highly correlated with later reading and spelling skills.
2. The PADDI – Foundations (PADDI – F) is designed for preschool students and those who have difficulty on the practice items of the PADDI – KA. It uses segmentation and blending tasks to assess a student's ability to isolate and combine speech sounds in spoken words. These skills support accurate decoding and spelling by sound.

Like previous, informal phonemic awareness assessments, the PADDI – KA uses standard oral deletion tasks to assess an individual's ability to isolate and manipulate speech sounds in spoken words. The ability to easily perform deletion tasks indicates efficient phonological processing that is crucial for reading and spelling development. Phonological processing that is automatic at the phoneme level supports fluent decoding, orthographic mapping, word recognition, and spelling (Kilpatrick, 2016, 2020; Paige & Rupley, 2026). The PADDI –KA presents a similar sequence of items as the Test of Auditory Analysis Skills (Rosner, 1975): syllable deletion, deletion of first sounds, deletion of final consonant sounds, deletion of the first sound in initial consonant clusters, then the deletion of the second sound in initial consonant clusters. Like the Phonological Awareness Screening Test (PAST; Kilpatrick, 2016), responses are scored for accuracy and speed.

The PADDI – KA includes several novel features that support effective assessment and instruction. Syllable items are limited to two-syllable words to get students to phoneme-level instruction sooner. To reduce linguistic bias in PA assessment, we made every effort to include items that are phonologically friendly to speakers of General American English, African American English, and Spanish-speakers (see more information on page 24). To facilitate grouping of students with more advanced PA skills, the PADDI includes a few additional items that assess final cluster deletion. The scoring system accounts for accuracy and efficiency while maintaining ease of score interpretation.

Author Note. We thank Dr. Dandan Wei for her many contributions to the PADDI. We are grateful to teachers across the country who provided feedback to make this a more useful tool.

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Carol Tolman, Ed.D. is an author and international literacy consultant for states, districts, and schools across all grade levels. As co-author of LETRS 3rd Edition, Carol supports professional development and coaching experiences for all literacy stakeholders.

The PADDI is an open-source tool for educators and parents. Feel free to copy and share it in its original form. Please reference this work as: Ashby, J., Lang, J., Farrall, M.L., Beenen, K.T., Paulson, L.H., & Tolman, C. (2026). *Phonemic Awareness Development: A Diagnostic for Instruction*. https://pearsforteachingreading.org

Learning to Give the PADDI

The PADDI is designed with educators in mind, yet all tools take a little time to learn. Before giving it to a student, you will find it helpful to read and highlight instructions that describe the presentation of items, prompting, and feedback. In addition, be sure to attend to the stopping rule and the point system for scoring. Once you are familiar with the tool, you could practice giving the PADDI to a friend before you give it to any students. With this preparation, you will find it easier to give the PADDI (pronounced "paddy") when you work with a student. Familiarity with the PADDI encourages confident administration and minimizes worries about "what do I do next?". A little practice allows you to focus on the quality of the student's responses.

PADDI – Kindergarten through Adult (K-A)

The PADDI-KA is an informal diagnostic that guides instruction; it is not a screening tool. It can make useful contributions to all phases of the four-part problem-solving process. Educators can administer the PADDI to identify gaps in PA performance then group students for PA instruction. This informal diagnostic also provides key information for setting instructional goals, planning specific lesson activities, and monitoring progress. The PADDI is suitable for students diagnosed with dyslexia and specific learning disorders. However, it alone cannot identify a phonological deficit. Three forms are provided so that students' PA skills may be initially assessed then reassessed throughout the school year. Reassessment with the provided alternative forms can identify response to intervention. Pilots of the PADDI forms affirm item selection choices, item gradients, and teacher perceptions of useability.

General Directions for Administration

Materials: Test Record Form and a pencil. When assessing kindergarten students, have a copy of the PADDI - Foundations on hand to assess more fundamental skills as needed (see page 17).

Starting Point: Students age 5 + should begin with the practice items on the PADDI - KA. If a student's answers are incorrect on both practice items, shift to administering the PADDI - F, which tests more fundamental phonological skills. If a student responds incorrectly to Item 2, shift to administering the PADDI – Foundations.

Item Presentation: Be sure that the student is facing you and looking at your mouth as you say each word normally. The student should echo, or repeat, each item after you say it. If they forget the word, it is fine for you to say it again and ask them to repeat it. *Please note this with an "R" on the score sheet*.

The / symbol refers to the speech sound of the letter between the / /. For /s/, you would say "sssss". Always say the speech sound(s) between the / / marks. Do not say the letter name.

Prompt (as needed to gain attention at the start of each item)**: "**Listen carefully…"

- Teacher: Say "daylight." Student: daylight.
    - This step can be repeated if you are uncertain that the student has said the correct word. Accept dialect-based and language-based variations, noting them in the blank.
- Teacher: Now say it again without the "day". Student: Light.

Recording automaticity: Two points are awarded for responses provided within 2 seconds. Thinking "one thousand-one; one thousand-two" takes about 2 seconds. Accurate answers provided after you finish this counting phrase should be discretely scored as a 1. Using this approach minimizes student anxiety and allows them to continue responding at their own pace.

Record possible errors: If you think an answer may not be correct, *note the student response in the item blank*. Do not circle a score at this time. Continue to administer items until you are certain they met the stopping rule, then review their responses.

Feedback: Provide corrective feedback ***only*** during the Practice and on Test Item 3. The items on the PADDI should never be demonstrated or taught to the student.

Stopping rule: If a student answers the second practice item correctly, continue administering the PADDI-KA items until they score 3 consecutive incorrect responses (0's) on the test items (1 - 20). *Discontinue after 3 consecutive 0's*.

Directions for Scoring

- Give 2 points for accurate and confident responses provided within 2 seconds.
- Give 1 point if the response is correct but uncertain or slow (i.e., delayed beyond 2 seconds).
- Give 0 points if the response is incorrect.

Articulation Considerations when Scoring

Students' dialect, first language, and articulation development should be considered when scoring a response.

Do not penalize students for mispronunciations due to dialect, language, or articulation. Judgements about item correctness should be based on the student's initial production of the item, which will provide the initial phoneme string they will be considering when performing the deletion task. If the correct segment is deleted and the remaining sounds blended to produce a new word, score the item as correct.

- The pronunciation of initial blends with -r may differ among some English language learners. Items are scored correct if pronounced with the trilled /r/.
- A student who responds "meese" to the prompt, "say mist but don't say /t/", has demonstrated accurate phoneme deletion despite the dialectal difference in vowel pronunciation. The student would receive full credit (2) if they respond confidently within 2 seconds. They would receive a 1 if they responded after 2 seconds.
- A student who pronounces /r/ as /w/ will receive credit for their response as long as the deletion is completed correctly. For example, the student who repeats road as "woad", then responds "woe" to "Say road without the /d/" would receive full credit (2) if they respond within 2 seconds. They would receive a 1 if they responded after 2 seconds.

PADDI – KA Specific Directions for Administration

Step 1: Directions for Practice Items and Test Items 1 - 2

*For students in K -1, say "**In this game, you will play with sounds in words. Let's practice."***
*For older students, say "**In this task, you will work with sounds in words. Let's practice."***

Practice 1: Say to the student, ***Now I want you to say a word without one of its parts. Are you ready? Listen carefully. Say "daylight."*** The student should say "daylight." ***Now say it but don't say "light".*** The student should say "day."

- Correct response: Say, ***"That's right. Let's try another one.*** Go to the next practice item.
- Incorrect response: Say ***Let's try that again. Daylight without "light" is "day". Now you try it*: *Say "daylight".*** The student should say "daylight." ***Now say it but don't say "light".*** The student should say "day". If the response is correct or incorrect, say ***Let's try another one*** and continue to next practice item

Practice 2: Say to the student, ***Listen carefully. Say "outside."*** The student should say "outside." ***Now say it but don't say "out."*** The student should say "side."

- Correct response: Say, "***That's right.***" Go to test Items 1-2.
- Incorrect response: Say ***Let's try that again. "Outside" without "out" is "side".*** Say ***Let's try that again. Say "outside."*** The student should say "outside." ***Now say it but don't say "out."*** The student should say "side." If the response is correct, say, "***That's right.***" Go to test Items 1-2 and do not provide feedback. If the response is incorrect, discontinue and say ***"Let's try something different."*** Go to the Foundations level and begin with the Practice Items.

Step 2: Directions for Test Items 3 onward

Now let's try something a little different. This time we will take away just one sound. Listen carefully. Say "meet." The student should say "meet." ***Now say it but don't say /m/.*** The student should say "eat."
Note: The // symbols refer to the letter sound. Always say the sound of the letter between the / / marks. Do not say the letter name. Use the prompt, "listen carefully," as needed.

- Correct response: Say, "***Let's do some more."*** Continue with the next items in sequence until the student misses three responses in a row. Then stop the assessment.
- Incorrect response on Item 3: Say***, "Meet without /m/ is eat"***.
- Only provide feedback on Item 3.
- Continue with the next items in sequence until the student misses three items in a row. Then stop the assessment.

The present, beta version of this informal diagnostic is not yet fully validated. Educators who are concerned about test-retest reliability may choose to simply readminister the original form at three-month intervals to document progress.

Student Initials_____ Date_____ Circle Student's Information: K 1 2 3 4+
English Language Learner/ Title 1/ Dyslexic

PADDI- KA Scoring Form A

Provide feedback only for the shaded items.
Note all incorrect responses. Stopping Rule: Stop after the student provides 3 incorrect responses in a row.

	Item	Instructions	correct	Score / Response	Deletion Type
	Say daylight	**Now say it but don't say "light"**	day	Y N	Syllable
	Say outside	**Now say it but don't say "out"**	side	Y N	Syllable
1	**Say houseboat**	**Now say it but don't say "house"**	boat	2 1 0_____	Syllable
2	**Say photo**	**Now say it but don't say "toe"**	pho	2 1 0_____	Syllable
3	**Say meet**	**Now say it but don't say /m/**	eat	2 1 0_____	First Sound
4	**Say cone**	**Now say it but don't say /k/**	own	2 1 0_____	First Sound
5	**Say fade**	**Now say it but don't say /f/**	aid	2 1 0_____	First Sound
6	**Say tune**	**Now say it but don't say /n/**	to	2 1 0_____	Last Sound
7	**Say toad**	**Now say it but don't say /d/**	toe	2 1 0_____	Last Sound
8	**Say bloom**	**Now say it but don't say /m/**	blue	2 1 0_____	Last Sound
9	**Say plane**	**Now say it but don't say /p/**	lane	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
10	**Say broom**	**Now say it but don't say /b/**	room	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
11	**Say smash**	**Now say it but don't say /s/**	mash	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
12	**Say blown**	**Now say it but don't say /l/**	bone	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
13	**Say grain**	**Now say it but don't say /r/**	gain	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
14	**Say smell**	**Now say it but don't say /m/**	sell	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
15	**Say bolt**	**Now say it but don't say /t/**	bowl	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
16	**Say bump**	**Now say it but don't say /p/**	bum	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
17	**Say meant**	**Now say it but don't say /t/**	men	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
18	**Say gasp**	**Now say it but don't say /s/**	gap	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
19	**Say left**	**Now say it but don't say /f/**	let	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
20	**Say hind**	**Now say it but don't say /n/**	hide	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound

2 points = Automatic & Correct 1 point= Correct only 0 points = Incorrect

There is no penalty if Spanish speakers pronounce items with a trilled r.

TOTAL POINTS_____/40

PADDI – KA Checklist for Instruction

Teacher _____ Student _____

Date of PADDI – KA administration _____

Form: A B C

Item #	Score	PA Concept & EFRS* Level	Interpreting Scores and Planning Instruction
1		**Syllable** D1 & D2	"Say steamboat, but don't say /boat/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting syllables, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
2			
3		**First Sound** F1	"Say seat, but don't say /s/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 3 sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
4			
5			
6		**Last Sound** I2	"Say toad, but don't say /d/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 3 sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
7			
8			
9		**Beginning Blends, First Sound** H1	"Say pride, but don't say /p/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
10			
11			
12		**Beginning Blends, Second Sound** K1	"Say clone, but don't say /l/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
13			
14			
15		**Ending Blends, Last Sound** I1	"Say felt, but don't say /t/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
16			
17			
18		**Ending Blends, Next-to-Last Sound** M1	"Say pond, but don't say /n/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
19			
20			

Note: EFRS refers to Equipped for Reading Success (Kilpatrick, 2016)

Student Initials_____ Date_____ Circle Student's Information: K 1 2 3 4+
English Language Learner/ Title 1/ Dyslexic

PADDI- KA Scoring Form B

Provide feedback only for the shaded items.
Note all incorrect responses. Stopping Rule: Stop after the student provides 3 incorrect responses in a row.

	Item	Instructions	Correct	Score / Response	Deletion Type
	Say daytime	**Now say it but don't say "time"**	day	Y N	Syllable
	Say eyesight	**Now say it but don't say "eye"**	sight	Y N	Syllable
1	**Say homeroom**	**Now say it but don't say "home"**	room	2 1 0_____	Syllable
2	**Say banjo**	**Now say it but don't say "joe"**	ban	2 1 0_____	Syllable
3	**Say face**	**Now say it but don't say /f/**	ace	2 1 0_____	First Sound
4	**Say beat**	**Now say it but don't say /b/**	eat	2 1 0_____	First Sound
5	**Say cape**	**Now say it but don't say /k/**	ape	2 1 0_____	First Sound
6	**Say same**	**Now say it but don't say /m/**	say	2 1 0_____	Last Sound
7	**Say bean**	**Now say it but don't say /n/**	be	2 1 0_____	Last Sound
8	**Say great**	**Now say it but don't say /t/**	gray	2 1 0_____	Last Sound
9	**Say clean**	**Now say it but don't say /k/**	lean	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
10	**Say price**	**Now say it but don't say /p/**	rice	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
11	**Say slick**	**Now say it but don't say /s/**	lick	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
12	**Say clone**	**Now say it but don't say /l/**	cone	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
13	**Say preach**	**Now say it but don't say /r/**	peach	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
14	**Say snore**	**Now say it but don't say /n/**	sore	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
15	**Say felt**	**Now say it but don't say /t/**	fell	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
16	**Say paste**	**Now say it but don't say /t/**	pace	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
17	**Say lamp**	**Now say it but don't say /p/**	lamb	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
18	**Say nest**	**Now say it but don't say /s/**	net	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
19	**Say limp**	**Now say it but don't say /m/**	lip	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
20	**Say rind**	**Now say it but don't say /n/**	ride	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound

2 points = Automatic & Correct 1 point= Correct only 0 points = Incorrect

There is no penalty if Spanish speakers pronounce items with a trilled r.

TOTAL POINTS _____/40

PADDI – KA Checklist for Instruction

Teacher _____ Student _____

Date of PADDI – KA administration _____

Form: A B C

Item #	Score	PA Concept & EFRS* Level	Interpreting Scores and Planning Instruction
1		**Syllable** D1 & D2	"Say steamboat, but don't say /boat/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting syllables, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
2			
3		**First Sound** F1	"Say seat, but don't say /s/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 3 sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
4			
5			
6		**Last Sound** I2	"Say toad, but don't say /d/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 3 sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
7			
8			
9		**Beginning Blends, First Sound** H1	"Say pride, but don't say /p/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
10			
11			
12		**Beginning Blends, Second Sound** K1	"Say clone, but don't say /l/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
13			
14			
15		**Ending Blends, Last Sound** I1	"Say felt, but don't say /t/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
16			
17			
18		**Ending Blends, Next-to-Last Sound** M1	"Say pond, but don't say /n/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
19			
20			

Student Initials_____ Date_____ Circle Student's Information: K 1 2 3 4+
English Language Learner/ Title 1/ Dyslexic

PADDI- KA Scoring Form C

Provide feedback only for the shaded items.
Note all incorrect responses. Stopping Rule: Stop after the student provides 3 incorrect responses in a row.

	Item	Instructions	Correct	Score / Response	Deletion Type
	Say outshine	**Now say it but don't say "shine"**	out	Y N	Syllable
	Say roommate	**Now say it but don't say "room"**	mate	Y N	Syllable
1	**Say skylight**	**Now say it but don't say "sky"**	light	2 1 0_____	Syllable
2	**Say dollar**	**Now say it but don't say "er"**	doll	2 1 0_____	Syllable
3	**Say base**	**Now say it but don't say /b/**	ace	2 1 0_____	First Sound
4	**Say note**	**Now say it but don't say /n/**	oat	2 1 0_____	First Sound
5	**Say shape**	**Now say it but don't say /sh/**	ape	2 1 0_____	First Sound
6	**Say loaf**	**Now say it but don't say /f/**	low	2 1 0_____	Last Sound
7	**Say tune**	**Now say it but don't say /n/**	to	2 1 0_____	Last Sound
8	**Say price**	**Now say it but don't say /s/**	pry	2 1 0_____	Last Sound
9	**Say blown**	**Now say it but don't say /b/**	loan	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
10	**Say slung**	**Now say it but don't say /s/**	lung	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
11	**Say brace**	**Now say it but don't say /b/**	race	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
12	**Say place**	**Now say it but don't say /l/**	pace	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
13	**Say crave**	**Now say it but don't say /r/**	cave	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
14	**Say snail**	**Now say it but don't say /n/**	sail	2 1 0_____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
15	**Say halt**	**Now say it but don't say /t/**	hall	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
16	**Say limp**	**Now say it but don't say /p/**	limb	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
17	**Say guest**	**Now say it but don't say /t/**	guess	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
18	**Say rasp**	**Now say it but don't say /s/**	rap	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
19	**Say weft**	**Now say it but don't say /f/**	wet	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
20	**Say pond**	**Now say it but don't say /n/**	pod	2 1 0_____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound

2 points = Automatic & Correct 1 point= Correct only 0 points = Incorrect

There is no penalty if Spanish speakers pronounce items with a trilled r.

TOTAL POINTS_____/40

PADDI – KA Checklist for Instruction

Teacher _____ Student _____

Date of PADDI – KA administration _____

Form: A B C

Item #	Score	PA Concept & EFRS* Level	Interpreting Scores and Planning Instruction
1		**Syllable** D1 & D2	"Say steamboat, but don't say /boat/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting syllables, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
2			
3		**First Sound** F1	"Say seat, but don't say /s/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 3 sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
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5			
6		**Last Sound** I2	"Say toad, but don't say /d/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 3 sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
7			
8			
9		**Beginning Blends, First Sound** H1	"Say pride, but don't say /p/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
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12		**Beginning Blends, Second Sound** K1	"Say clone, but don't say /l/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
13			
14			
15		**Ending Blends, Last Sound** I1	"Say felt, but don't say /t/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
16			
17			
18		**Ending Blends, Next-to-Last Sound** M1	"Say pond, but don't say /n/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
19			
20			

Note: EFRS refers to Equipped for Reading Success (Kilpatrick, 2016)

Sample PADDI - KA Scoring Form

Student Initials YS. Date 2/14/2024 Circle Student's Information: K (1) 2 3 4+
MLL / ELL / ESL/ Dyslexic/ (Title 1)

PADDI- KA Scoring Form (A)

Provide feedback only for the three shaded items.
Note all incorrect responses. Stopping Rule: Stop after the student provides 3 incorrect responses in a row.

	Item	Instructions	Correct	Score / Response	Deletion Type
	Say daylight	Now say it but don't say "light"	day	(Y) N	Syllable
	Say outside	Now say it but don't say "out"	side	(Y) N	Syllable
1	Say houseboat	Now say it but don't say "boat"	house	(2) 1 0	Syllable
2	Say photo	Now say it but don't say "toe"	pho	(2) 1 0	Syllable
3	Say meet	Now say it but don't say /m/	eat	(2) 1 0	First Sound
4	Say cone	Now say it but don't say /k/	own	(2) 1 0	First Sound
5	Say fade	Now say it but don't say /f/	aid	(2) 1 0	First Sound
6	Say toad	Now say it but don't say /d/	toe	(2) 1 0	Last Sound
7	Say tune	Now say it but don't say /n/	to	2 1 (0) too	Last Sound
8	Say bloom	Now say it but don't say /m/	blue	(2) 1 0	Last Sound
9	Say plane	Now say it but don't say /p/	lane	2 1 (0) pain	Consonant Cluster First Sound
10	Say broom	Now say it but don't say /b/	room	2 1 (0) boom	Consonant Cluster First Sound
11	Say smash	Now say it but don't say /s/	mash	2 1 (0) ash	Consonant Cluster First Sound
12	Say blown	Now say it but don't say /l/	bone	2 1 0	Consonant Cluster Second Sound
13	Say grain	Now say it but don't say /r/	gain	2 1 0	Consonant Cluster Second Sound
14	Say smell	Now say it but don't say /m/	sell	2 1 0	Consonant Cluster Second Sound
15	Say bolt	Now say it but don't say /t/	bowl	2 1 0	Consonant Cluster Last Sound
16	Say bump	Now say it but don't say /p/	bum	2 1 0	Consonant Cluster Last Sound
17	Say meant	Now say it but don't say /t/	men	2 1 0	Consonant Cluster Last Sound
18	Say hind	Now say it but don't say /n/	hide	2 1 0	Consonant Cluster Penultimate Sound
19	Say left	Now say it but don't say /f/	let	2 1 0	Consonant Cluster Penultimate Sound
20	Say gasp	Now say it but don't say /s/	gap	2 1 0	Consonant Cluster Penultimate Sound

2 points = Automatic & Correct 1 point= Correct only 0 points = Incorrect

There is no penalty if Spanish speakers pronounce items with a trilled r.

TOTAL POINTS 14

Sample PADDI - KA Checklist for Instruction

Teacher Jane Student V. S

Date of PADDI – KA administration 2/14/26

Form: (A) B C

Item #	Score	PA Concept & EFRS* Level	Interpreting Scores and Planning Instruction
1	2	**Syllable** D1 & D2	"Say steamboat, but don't say /boat/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting syllables, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
2	2		
3	2	**First Sound** F1	"Say seat, but don't say /s/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 3 sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
4	2		
5	2		
6	2	**Last Sound** I2	"Say toad, but don't say /d/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 3 sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
7	0		
8	2		
9	0	**Beginning Blends, First Sound** H1	"Say pride, but don't say /p/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
10	0		
11	0		
12		**Beginning Blends, Second Sound** K1	"Say clone, but don't say /l/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
13			
14			
15		**Ending Blends, Last Sound** I1	"Say felt, but don't say /t/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
16			
17			
18		**Ending Blends, Next-to-Last Sound** M1	"Say pond, but don't say /n/" ○ All 2's: learning completed ○ 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks ○ Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting 4-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
19			
20			

Note: EFRS refers to Equipped for Reading Success (Kilpatrick, 2016)

Interpreting Scores and Planning Instruction with the PADDI - KA

Obtaining interpretable scores. Educators who administer this diagnostic should familiarize themselves with the test forms and instructions prior to use. Realistically assess the student's engagement during administration of the PADDI - KA. Do not interpret scores if the student was disengaged, distracted, sick, or did not understand the instructions; readminister an alternative form at a later date. PADDI items should be reserved for assessment purposes only.

The need for phonemic awareness (PA) instruction is not based on a student's age or grade. It is dependent on the student's level of reading and spelling skill development. When reading and spelling fall below expectations, data-based phonemic awareness instruction can make a key contribution to reading and spelling growth. For instance, if a first grader scores below the benchmark for phonemic awareness on a universal screener, the teacher can administer the PADDI to find where to begin explicit instruction. If a 5th-grade student scores below the benchmark for oral reading fluency, the teacher can administer the PADDI to discover which phonemic awareness skills are mastered and where to begin explicit PA instruction. In combination, PA and prescriptive phonics instruction will support continued reading growth throughout high school and into adulthood. For more information about PA instruction, get ready for the latest Teaching Phonemic Awareness in 2026 guide, which will be available soon.

Using the PADDI - KA to capture PA skill progression. The PADDI – KA items assess simple phonological concepts in the early items and more complex phonological concepts in the later items (see Table 1). This sequence of PA levels parallels empirically supported learning progressions for phonological awareness (e.g., Anthony et al., 2002). Note that the learning progression is more complex than Table 1 suggests. For example, kindergarteners may begin instruction and practice with two-sound words (e.g., /it/ or /she/) before working with three-sound words (e.g., /sit/ or /fight/). Table 2 presents an approximate timeline for PA skill development in typical readers.

Table 1. *The Phonological Sequence of PA Concepts in the PADDI-KA*

PADDI-KA Items	PA Concept Level	Number of Phonemes in Practice Words
1 – 2	1. Syllable	*
3 – 5	2. First sound	2 or 3
6 – 8	3. Last sound	2 or 3
9 – 11	4. First sound in beginning blends	4
12 – 14	5. Second sound in beginning blends	4
15 – 17	6. Last sound in final blends	4
18 – 20	7. Next-to-last sound in final blends	4

Table 2. *Phonological Awareness Development: Goals for Typical Learners*

Phonological Awareness Skills	Age/Grade Expectations
Blending Syllables	3-4 years of age
Segmenting Syllables	3-4 years of age
Blending first sounds-rest of the word	4 years of age
Blending sounds in single syllable words	4-5 years of age
Segmenting first sounds in words	December of Kindergarten
Segmenting sounds in CVC words	April of Kindergarten *
Segmenting sounds in CCVC or CVCC words	Grade 1

* CVC word segmenting is a foundational skill for decoding and spelling simple words.
Adapted from O'Connor (2014)

Using the PADDI - KA for instructional planning. High-quality instruction requires a plan that will lead students on a journey from the edge of their present knowledge to understanding a new concept to applying that new concept independently. Many decisions are involved in helping students along this progression from novice to master. This section describes one flow of these decisions according to best practices for effective teaching.

After completing the PADD – KA, transfer the information from scoring form onto the Checklist for Instruction, which can be copied on the back of each scoring form. A sample completed checklist appears on page 13 for your convenience. Use Table 3 to interpret the checklist for your student.

Table 3. *Interpreting Performance at a given PA Level and Planning Instruction*

Scores	Performance Description	Instructional Criteria
All 2's	Accurate, efficient, and confident responses	Learning is complete for this PA level.
1's & 2's	Accurate but hesitant responses	Plan practice activities for this PA level.
Any 0's	Incorrect responses	Explicit instruction required for this PA level.

The highest PA level for which a student scores all 2's is the edge of their present PA knowledge. A score of all 2's indicates that the student is accurate, confident, and efficient enough with this PA concept to support decoding, spelling, and orthographic mapping (word recognition).

The type of PA activities in your lessons will depend on how a student scores at that PA level. If the student scores mostly 1's for a PA level, this indicates that they are accurate, but not efficient enough for this PA concept to support orthographic mapping, word recognition, and spelling. The student understands the task but needs more guided and independent practice with deletion at this level to gain confidence and efficiency. Begin your instruction by reviewing deletion examples with the PA concept, modeling how to use blank tokens as a memory scaffold if needed. Provide some guided practice to check for accuracy with the deletion task. When the student is confident with the tokens, begin to fade the scaffold by having the student use tokens on only the first half of the items. When accuracy with last sound deletion without any scaffolding reaches 90%, transition the student to fully oral practice to build confidence and ease. When they reach 95% accuracy, the next instructional goal becomes segmenting and blending the first sound in beginning consonant clusters.

If a student scores any 0's for a PA level, this indicates that they are not accurate with deletion at this level. The PA concept may need to be taught from scratch, beginning with the easier task of blending or segmenting. Provide explicit instruction blending and/or segmenting spoken words at this level. Students who can segment and blend at this PA level with 90% accuracy, can then practice segmenting and blending in a unified routine. Students who practice blending and segmenting in the same instructional activity show stronger transfer of PA skills to decoding (Davidson et al., 1994). Once a student can confidently segment and blend words at the last sound level, then the next instructional goal is to practice deletion at the last sound level. Students who can accurately and confidently delete the last sound, can move to the next instructional goal of segmenting and blending the first sound in beginning consonant clusters.

Scores indicate the PA Task for instruction. A student's scores indicate whether instruction should focus on fundamental blending and segmenting tasks or whether instruction should focus on deletion tasks. The instructional task sequence for each PA concept level is blending, segmenting, then deletion.

The PADDI - KA assesses deletion skill, which requires the automatic manipulation of speech sounds. *Performance on deletion tasks is supported by performance on blending and segmenting tasks.* Confident and efficient deletion skills rest on a foundation of proficient blending and segmenting skills. In other words, a student who scores all 2's at one PA level can usually blend and segment sounds at that level. Conversely, inaccurate deletion skills usually indicate incomplete segmenting and/or blending skills at that level. A student who scores a 0 at a PA level will need instruction to strengthen segmenting and/or blending at that level. If a student can confidently blend several items at this PA level, then begin teaching the segmentation task. Once blending and segmenting are proficient (95%) for this PA level, then the instructional goal becomes deletion at this level. Once deletion at this level is proficient, then the instructional goal becomes segmenting and/or blending at the next PA level where scores are lower than 2's.

Finding words for PA instruction. Teachers who are knowledgeable about the phonological structure of words can use many sources to find words for teaching and practicing the PA skills identified by the PADDI - KA. For example, PA tasks within 95% Group, Heggerty, and/or Lindamood Bell LIPS can be used if teachers are careful about aligning the chosen words to the student's proficiency level on the PADDI. Table 1 supports the alignment of PA activities with student proficiency on the PADDI - KA.

Teachers who prefer a single source for PA items may consult Equipped for Reading Success (EFRS; Kilpatrick, 2016), which supplies an extensive list of spoken words for teaching PA. EFRS offers "One Minute Activities" at each level of phonological/phonemic awareness. Table 4 aligns the PADDI-KA items, PA Concept Levels, and the EFRS Level that provides appropriate instructional items. These words can be used in numerous ways for instruction and practice with one student or a small group.

Table 4. *Alignment of the PADDI - KA and Equipped for Reading Success*

PADDI-KA Item	PA Concept Level	EFRS Level
1 – 2	Syllable	D1 and D2
3 – 5	First sound	F1
6 – 8	Last sound	I2
9 – 11	Beginning blends, first sound	H1
12 – 14	Beginning blends, second sound	K1
15 – 17	Ending blends, last sound	I1
18 – 20	Ending blends, next-to-last sound	M1

Planning lesson activities: The case of Ava. Ava is reading well below benchmark in Grade 2. If she earned a score of 2 on items 3 – 8 then no instruction would be required for syllable, first sound, and last sounds (see Table 3). Scoring a 0 on item #9, #10, or #11, would indicate that her instructional goal for PA is deleting the first sound in words with beginning consonant clusters. As seen in the Checklist, initial instruction would focus on segmenting and blending words with beginning clusters. For example, she could move blank tokens to "build" then segment four sound words (/mash/ to /smash/), using words from EFRS level H1. After the blending and segmenting practice, Ava could write the words to practice spelling by sound.

When Ava can segment and blend four-sound words with beginning blends without prompting or scaffolds at 95% accuracy, then she is ready to practice deleting the first sound in these words. Scaffolds like blank tokens can support guided practice with deleting the first sound in beginning blends. This instruction would continue until she reached 90% accuracy without scaffolding. Once she reached that goal, then Ava would practice independently until she attains at least 95% accuracy. Once she reached that goal, then the next instructional goal would be to delete the second sound in words with beginning blends. To reach this goal, her teacher would plan guided practice using words from EFRS level K1.

Guidelines for delivering PA instruction

- Focus on one PA concept at a time.
- Daily lessons should be 3-5 minutes in duration.
- Group students by PA skill. Students with 0's will be in a different group than students with 1's.
- Small group instruction should only proceed as fast as the slowest student.
- Pronounce the word as it is normally spoken.
- The student should echo the word before beginning each item.
- Do not correct errors due to dialect variation.
- Correct errors by repeating the word first.
- Cue students to "Feel what your mouth is doing when you repeat the word."
- Teach each concept/task to mastery.
- Remove scaffolds like Elkonin boxes and tokens later in guided practice.
- Provide independent practice.
- Immediately after PA practice, Kindergarten teachers can model how to spell the CVC items.

PADDI – Foundations

Directions for Administration

Prompt (as needed to gain attention at the start of each item)**: "**Listen carefully…"

Feedback: Provide corrective feedback on the modeling and practice items only. If the responses for practice items are incorrect, provide feedback to make sure the student understands the task and repeat the practice item, then continue with the rest of the items. If the student responses are not correct at the initial sound level, do not administer the phoneme level.

Stopping Rule: Attempt all items within each task. If a student is not successful in completing the syllable level tasks, attempt the first sound level tasks. When a student is not successful completing any of the initial sound level tasks, discontinue the assessment and do not administer the CVC level tasks.

Scoring: Award 1 point for each correctly blended or segmented word. If the response is incorrect, mark a 0 and note the child's response.

Blending

Step 1: Directions for Blending Tasks at the Syllable Level

Note to the Teacher: Say a silent "1-2" count between each part of the word (denoted by —). Silently counting 1-2 between each part helps to keep your delivery clear and standard. The following examples are from Form A. Follow the same directions with the words for Form B and Form C.

Practice items: Say to the student, ***Let's play a guessing game. I will say a word slowly in parts. Listen carefully and guess my word: ba — by.*** The student should say "baby."

- Correct response: Say, ***Yes, you put the parts together and said "baby." Let's try another one.*** Guess this word: pu – ppy. The student should say "puppy." Continue with the other items in this level.
- Incorrect response: Say, ***Let's try that again. Listen to me put the parts together, ba — by is "baby." Now you try: ba — by.*** If the response is still inaccurate, try the second practice item cookie. If response is still inaccurate, skip the remaining blending items and move to the segmenting tasks.

Step 2: Directions for Blending Tasks at the First Sound Level

Practice items: Say to the student, ***Now I will say a word in smaller parts. Listen carefully and guess my word: s — oap.*** The student should say "soap."

- Correct response: Say, ***Yes, you put the parts together and said 'soap'. Let's do some more.*** Continue with the second practice item *cake* followed by the other items in this level.
- Incorrect response: Say: ***Listen to me put the parts together. s — oap is "soap." Now you try: s — oap.*** The student should say "soap." If the response is correct, continue with the second practice item *cake* following the same procedure. If the response is still inaccurate, skip the remaining blending items and move to the segmenting tasks.

Step 3: Directions for Blending Tasks at the Phoneme Level

Practice items: Say to the student, ***Now I will say a word in ALL the small parts. Listen carefully and guess my word: s — o -- ck.*** The student should say "sock."

- Correct response: Say, ***Yes, you put all the parts together and said 'sock'. Let's try another one.*** Continue with the second practice item *soup* followed by the rest of the items at this level.
- Incorrect response: Say: ***Listen to me put the parts together. s —o —ck is "sock." Now you try: s — o — ck.*** The student should say "sock." If the response is correct, continue with the second practice item *cat* followed by the remaining items. If the response is still inaccurate, skip the remaining blending items and move to the segmenting tasks.

Segmenting

Step 1: Directions for Segmenting Tasks at the Syllable Level

Practice items: Say to the student, ***Let's play another sound game. This time I will say the word and I want you to say it. Then, I want you to say AND clap the parts. Listen to me try one: my word is "happy". I will say it and clap each part: "happy ha*** *(clap)* ***— ppy*** *(clap)."* ***Now do it with me: " ha*** *(clap)* ***— ppy*** *(clap)."* The student should repeat the word and then segment it while clapping for each syllable.

Scoring Notes
Shorter pauses are acceptable as long as the student claps the appropriate parts.
Syllable boundaries in English are unclear. For the word "happy", the student who says ***hap*** *(clap)* ***—py*** *(clap) is also correct. Listen for one clap for each syllable as designated with a vowel sound.*

- Correct response: Say, ***That's right, you said the parts of "happy." Let's try some more.*** Continue with the second practice item *cookie* following the same procedure and continue with the remaining items at this level.
- Incorrect response: Say, ***Listen carefully. I will say it and then say and clap each part: "happy" ha*** *(clap)* ***— ppy*** *(clap).* ***Now you do it.*** If the response is correct, continue with the second practice item and the remaining test items in this level. If the response is still incorrect, discontinue the test.

Step 2: Directions for Segmenting Tasks at the First Sound Level

Practice items: Say to the student, ***Now let's clap smaller parts of the words. Listen to me try one: my word is "dot". I will say it and then say and clap the first sound: "dot" /d/*** *(clap)* ***and the rest of the word: /ot/*** *(clap)****. That makes /d/*** *(clap)* ***— /ot/*** *(clap)****. Now do it with me: "dot" /d/*** *(clap)* ***— /ot/*** *(clap)****.*** The student should repeat the word, then segment it while clapping the first sound and the rest of the word.

Practice item: Say to the student, ***Now it's your turn. Listen carefully: "dot".***

- Correct response: Say, ***That's right, you said the parts of "dot." Let's try some more.*** Continue with the second practice item following the same procedure and continue with the remaining items.
- Incorrect response: Say, ***Listen carefully: "dot" /d/*** *(clap)* ***— /ot/*** *(clap)****. Now you do it.*** If the response is correct, continue with the second practice item *side* followed by the remaining test items. If the response is still incorrect, discontinue the test.

Step 3: Directions for Segmenting Tasks at the Phoneme Level

Practice items: Say to the student: ***Now let's clap EVEN MORE parts of the words. Listen to me: my word is "moose". I will say it and then say and clap each sound: "moose" /m/*** *(clap)* ***— /oo/*** *(clap)* ***— /se/*** *(clap).* ***Now do it with me: "moose" /m/*** *(clap)* ***— /oo/*** *(clap)* ***— /se/*** *(clap)****.*** The student should repeat the word and then segment it while clapping each phoneme.

Scoring Notes
If a student asks to tap or chop the sounds instead of clapping them, encourage them to use the motions they know and provide full credit.

- Correct response: Say, ***That's right, you said the parts of "moose." Let's try some more.*** Present with the second practice *item boot* following the same procedure and continue with the test items
- Incorrect response: Say, ***Listen carefully: "moose" /m/*** *(clap)* ***— /oo/*** *(clap)* ***— /se/*** *(clap)****. Now you do it.*** If the response is correct, continue with the second practice item and remaining test items. If the response is still incorrect, discontinue the test.

The present, beta version of this informal diagnostic is not yet fully validated. Pilots of the PADDI forms affirm item selection choices, item gradients, and teacher perceptions of useability.

PADDI - F Scoring Form A

Student Name _____ Date _____ Grade_____

Provide feedback on the modeling and practice items only. These appear in the shaded rows. If the student responses are not correct at the initial sound level, do not administer the phoneme level. Score 1 point for each correct response. A response is correct if it has the correct placement of claps. If the response is incorrect, mark a 0 and note the child's response.

	Item	Correct	Score	Item Type
BLENDING				
	ba—by	baby		syllable
	coo—kie	cookie		syllable
1	pu—zzle	puzzle	1 0_____	syllable
2	mon—key	monkey	1 0_____	syllable
3	e—le—phant	elephant	1 0_____	syllable
	s—oap	soap		first sound
	c—ake	cake		first sound
4	s—eed	seed	1 0_____	first sound
5	b—ike	bike	1 0_____	first sound
6	c—up	cup	1 0_____	first sound
	s—o—ck	sock		phonemes
	c--a—t	cat		phonemes
7	f—ee—t	feet	1 0_____	phonemes
8	c—o—mb	comb	1 0_____	phonemes
9	p—i—g	pig	1 0_____	phonemes
SEGMENTING				
	happy	ha-ppy		syllable
	pocket	po-cket		syllable
10	pizza	pee-za	1 0_____	syllable
11	yellow	ye-llow	1 0_____	syllable
12	dinosaur	di-no-saur	1 0_____	syllable
	dot	d-ot		first sound
	side	s-ide		first sound
13	boot	b-oot	1 0_____	first sound
14	keep	k-eep	1 0_____	first sound
15	mess	m-ess	1 0_____	first sound
	moose	m-oo-se		phoneme
	sit	s-i-t		phoneme
16	food	f-oo-d	1 0_____	phonemes
17	hot	h-o-t	1 0_____	phonemes
18	bus	b-u-s	1 0_____	phonemes

TOTALS	Syllables	First Sound	Phonemes
Blending	/3	/3	/3
Segmenting	/3	/3	/3

PADDI - F Scoring Form B

Student Name _____ Date _____ Grade_____

Provide feedback on the modeling and practice items only. These appear in the shaded rows. If the student responses are not correct at the initial sound level, do not administer the phoneme level. Score 1 point for each correct response. A response is correct if it has the correct placement of claps. If the response is incorrect, mark a 0 and note the child's response.

	Item	Correct	Score	Item Type
BLENDING				
	ha—ppy	happy		syllable
	peo—ple	people		syllable
1	bu—bble	bubble	1 0_____	syllable
2	pur—ple	purple	1 0_____	syllable
3	kan—ga—roo	kangaroo	1 0_____	syllable
	n—ose	nose		first sound
	k—ite	kite		first sound
4	m—ake	make	1 0_____	first sound
5	d—og	dog	1 0_____	first sound
6	ch—eese	cheese	1 0_____	first sound
	m—ee—t	meet		phonemes
	b—oo—k	book		phonemes
7	kn—o—ck	knock	1 0_____	phonemes
8	g—oo—se	goose	1 0_____	phonemes
9	h—e—d	head	1 0_____	phonemes
SEGMENTING				
	candy	can-dy		syllable
	paper	pa-per		syllable
10	table	ta-ble	1 0_____	syllable
11	money	mo-ney	1 0_____	syllable
12	blueberry	blue-be-rry	1 0_____	syllable
	bed	b-ed		first sound
	sun	s-un		first sound
13	coat	c-oat	1 0_____	first sound
14	sign	s-ign	1 0_____	first sound
15	peek	p-eek	1 0_____	first sound
	boat	b-oa-t		phoneme
	fan	f-a-n		phoneme
16	game	g-a-me	1 0_____	phonemes
17	bug	b-u-g	1 0_____	phonemes
18	cheek	ch-ee-k	1 0_____	phonemes

TOTALS	Syllables	First Sound	Phonemes
Blending	/3	/3	/3
Segmenting	/3	/3	/3

PADDI - F Scoring Form C

Student Name _____ Date _____ Grade_____

Provide feedback on the modeling and practice items only. These appear in the shaded rows. If the student responses are not correct at the initial sound level, do not administer the phoneme level. Score 1 point for each correct response. A response is correct if it has the correct placement of claps. If the response is incorrect, mark a 0 and note the child's response.

	Item	Correct	Score	Item Type
BLENDING				
	cir—cle	circle		syllable
	bu—tton	button		syllable
1	noo—dle	noodle	1 0_____	syllable
2	fin—ger	finger	1 0_____	syllable
3	oc—to—pus	octopus	1 0_____	syllable
	f—ace	face		first sound
	b—eat	beat		first sound
4	s—oup	soup	1 0_____	first sound
5	t—ub	tub	1 0_____	first sound
6	b—one	bone	1 0_____	first sound
	g—ue—ss	guess		phonemes
	c-–oa—t	coat		phonemes
7	d—o—g	dog	1 0_____	phonemes
8	m—a—t	mat	1 0_____	phonemes
9	b—ea—d	bead	1 0_____	phonemes
SEGMENTING				
	muffin	mu-ffin		syllable
	teacher	tea-cher		syllable
10	pumpkin	pum-kin	1 0_____	syllable
11	kitchen	ki-tchen	1 0_____	syllable
12	tomato	to-ma-to	1 0_____	syllable
	duck	d-uck		first sound
	seat	s-eat		first sound
13	hop	h-op	1 0_____	first sound
14	chin	ch-in	1 0_____	first sound
15	phone	ph-one	1 0_____	first sound
	boss	b-o-ss		phoneme
	cat	c-a-t		phoneme
16	feed	f-ee-d	1 0_____	phonemes
17	neck	n-e-ck	1 0_____	phonemes
18	pot	p-o-t	1 0_____	phonemes

TOTALS	Syllables	First Sound	Phonemes
Blending	/3	/3	/3
Segmenting	/3	/3	/3

Interpreting Results and Planning Instruction for PADDI – Foundations

The PADDI-F identifies early phonological and phoneme awareness skill development for children in preschool and early kindergarten. The results of this assessment help to guide instruction. Ensure that the results are as reliable as possible by maintaining the student's attention and engagement when giving the PADDI-F. If the child was distracted, uncooperative, or did not seem to understand the instructions, readminister an alternative form to acquire results with their best participation.

General Recommendations

Phonological awareness instruction at the early preschool level should focus on exposure to word play. More intentional and direct instruction is recommended for ages 4 though 6 to teach the PA skills that support learning to decode and spell words.

Here are some tips:

- The lesson length should be short, lasting between 5 and 10 minutes.
- Make PA instruction fun and playful.
- Begin by modeling the task. Then do several new items together with the group. Then students can try individually.
- Use gestures when segmenting word parts. Movement increases engagement and adds a layer of sensory learning and connection. Clap or tap your arm for syllables and use out-stretched fingers to show phonemes in words.
- For younger students, familiar words are typically easier to play with than unfamiliar words because they are less taxing on phonological memory.
- Many activities can include both blending and segmenting skills.
- Make sure to pronounce phonemes in their purest form without including a schwa sound. For example, when segmenting the sounds in the word pot, say "/p/ /o/ /t/" and not puh – ah – tuh.
- When students have learned some letters, oral PA practice should be immediately followed by teachers modeling how to write the simple 2 and 3 letter words.

Developmental Sequence and Age/Grade Expectations

A substantial, long-standing body of research has identified general age/grade expectations for the sequence of phonological awareness skill development. Young children typically follow this sequence as they learn to play with the structures of words, however the order is not absolute. For example, some children may learn to identify first sounds in words and not have a strong understanding of how to segment syllables in words. The sequence is a guide for instruction knowing that awareness of phonemes is critical for learning to read and spell words. Table 5 outlines this progression and expectations (adapted from O'Connor, 2014; Anthony et al., 2002).

Table 5. *Phonological Awareness Skill Development Progression in Young Children*

Phonological Awareness Skills	Age/Grade Expectations
Blending Syllables	3-4 years of age
Segmenting Syllables	3-4 years of age
Blending first sounds-rest of the word	4 years of age
Blending sounds in single syllable words	4-5 years of age
Segmenting first sounds in words	December of Kindergarten*
Segmenting sounds in CVC words	April of Kindergarten **
Segmenting sounds in CCVC or CVCC words	Grade 1

* Identifying first sounds at the pre-K to K transition predicts literacy achievement in grade 2.
** CVC word segmenting is a foundation skill for decoding and spelling simple words.

Planning Instruction

After determining and recording the number of correct responses on the scoring protocol, use Table 6 below to decide where to begin targeted instruction.

Here are some overall guidelines to plan instruction.

- Students responding correctly to all items on a skill level have demonstrated proficiency of that skill. Instruction should focus on the next skill along the phonological awareness skill progression and continued review and practice of age and grade level skills.
- Students who respond correctly to 2 of 3 items within a task are developing that skill. Instruction should focus on providing more guided practice with that skill to reach mastery and then on the next skill in the phonological awareness developmental sequence for the student's age and grade level.
- Students who respond correctly to only one item within a task are still learning that skill. Instruction should focus on the earliest phonological awareness skill in the progression that has not yet been mastered and then move to the next skill.
- Students who are not meeting expectations may need a more intensive level of intervention to help them build the foundations necessary for the next steps in their literacy learning.

Table 6. *Score Interpretation and Lesson Planning*

PADDI-F Items	Score	Word Choice Suggestions	Activities
Syllable Blending 1, 2, 3	0 on any of these items	Help students develop a better understanding that words have structures which can be blended together to create meaningful words. Select familiar 2-syllable words followed by 3-syllable words.	In a guessing game format, segment words into syllables with one-second pauses for students to blend together by saying the word as a whole (e.g. they hear ca – mel and say "camel"; they hear ba – na – na and say "banana"). Display the object or picture after they blend to verify the word.
Syllable Segmenting 10, 11, 12	0 on any of these items	Help students develop a better understanding that words have structures which can be segmented into syllable parts. Select familiar 2-syllable words followed by 3-syllable words.	Using objects or pictures, have students select an item and segment words into syllables while clapping, tapping, or stomping each word part (e.g. they select camel and say "ca – mel; they select banana and say "ba – na – na"). Then have students blend the word together again.
First Sound Blending 4, 5, 6	0 on any of these items	Help students blend the initial sound and the rest of the word together to identify words. Select familiar single-syllable words that begin with continuant sounds (/s/, /f/, /m/) followed by words that begin with a variety of sounds.	In a guessing game format, segment the first sound from the rest of the word with a one-second pause and have students blend the parts by saying the word as a whole (e.g., they hear /s/ – ad and say "sad"; they hear /ch/ – ick and say "chick"). Display the object or picture after they blend to verify the word.
First Sound Segmenting 13, 14, 15	0 on any of these items	Help students identify and segment the first sound in words. Select familiar CVC words that begin with continuant sounds (/s/, /f/, /sh/) followed by words that begin with a variety of sounds.	Using objects or pictures, have students select an item, say its name, and identify the first sound. Then have students progress to saying the first sound and the rest of the word (e.g. they select and say "sad /s/" followed by "/s/ - ad"; they select and say "chick /ch/" followed by "/ch/ - ick "). Then have students blend the word together again.
Phoneme Blending 7, 8, 9	0 on any of these items	Help students blend sounds together to identify words. Select familiar, single syllable CVC words that begin with continuant sounds (/s/, /f/, /sh/) followed by words that begin with a variety of sounds.	In a guessing game format, segment the sounds of CVC words with one-second pauses and have students blend the sounds together by saying the word as a whole (e.g., they hear /s/ /a/ /d/ and say "sad"; they hear /ch/ /i/ /k/ and say "chick"). Display the object or picture after they blend to verify the word.
Phoneme Segmenting 16, 17, 18	0 on any of these items	Help students identify and segment sounds in one-syllable words. Select familiar CVC words that begin with continuant sounds (/s/, /f/, /sh/) followed by words that begin with a variety of sounds.	Using objects or pictures, have students select an item and say its name. Then have them identify each sound in the word (e.g. they select and say "sad," then say "/s/ /a/ /d/"; they select and say "chick," then say "/ch/ /i/ /k/"). Then have students blend the word together again.

Additional Information about the Development of the PADDI

The PADDI – KA was developed by a team of educators who bring expertise in reading development, reading disorders, assessment, school psychology, speech and language, structured literacy, and professional learning. We are indebted to the previous phoneme awareness work that supported the creation of this diagnostic for instruction. The PADDI – KA was influenced by the Test of Auditory Analysis Skills (TAAS; Rosner, 1975) and the Phonemic Awareness Screening Test (PAST; Kilpatrick, 2016; 2024).

Dr. Lucy Hart Paulson designed the PADDI – F to measure basic phonological awareness skills that typically develop during the preschool and beginning kindergarten years. Tasks include blending and segmenting words at the syllable level, first sounds in words, and simple CVC words. This tool may be used for students in preschool and for older students who respond inaccurately on the practice items of the PADDI – KA.

New Features of the PADDI Tool for Teachers

The PADDI – KA departs from previous phonological awareness assessments in several ways.

First, the item sequence now includes the deletion of external and internal sounds in final consonant clusters, bringing the total item count to 20. We credit Martin (2024) for being the first to implement a more complete sequence and inspiring this addition. Adding a few more complex items makes the PADDI more sensitive to additional PA limitations that may impede reading and spelling development. Second, the scoring system is fairly intuitive. Students earn 2 points if a response is correct and fast (within 2 seconds), 1 point if a response is correct but slow, and 0 points if the response is incorrect. Third, the PADDI – KA does not contain any three-syllable words. Eliminating three syllable words from the PADDI – KA allows PA instruction to proceed to phoneme level deletion tasks expeditiously, so that students get instruction in the PA skills that are most relevant to reading acquisition sooner.

Most importantly, the PADDI – KA was developed to reduce linguistic bias in PA assessment by prioritizing items with phonological features that are common among language variations. Every effort was made to choose words sensitive to linguistic differences in Spanish, African American English (AAE), and General American English (GAE). This resulted in a “phonologically friendly” tool in which the sounds in many items are familiar to these speakers. In some cases, PADDI items contain consonant phonemes in positions that do not occur in Spanish. We aspired to phonological friendliness whenever possible to improve the accuracy of this diagnostic with diverse student populations.

Selecting some items composed of phonemes that are present in Spanish as well as English provides Spanish-speaking students with the opportunity to demonstrate their phonemic awareness skills with familiar speech sounds. In addition, including at least one item at each level that contains a phoneme that does not appear in the final position in Spanish provides an indication of how phonemic awareness skills specific to English are developing. The items at the most sophisticated levels of the PADDI – KA are not as “friendly”, given that Spanish words do not usually end in final consonant clusters (Honig et al., 2018) and AAE speakers often drop the end consonant in a final cluster (Stubbe, 2014).

We selected the items for the PADDI – KA from a variety of resources. After reviewing the phonological features of Spanish and AAE (Honig et al., 2018; Stubbe, 2014), Dr. Lang created a list of possible items that produced real words after specific deletion tasks by using Blockcolsky et al. (1987). From these, we selected words to parallel the TAAS structure (Rosner, 1975), which has been a trusted phonemic awareness diagnostic for over 50 years. In this way, we preserved the structure of a tried-and-true diagnostic while prioritizing the phonological friendliness of the individual items for Spanish and AAE speakers. For syllable tasks, 2-syllable words were chosen using English-Spanish cognates (Colorín Colorado, n.d.). Words with complex linguistic features, such as phonological features and morphological endings, were omitted. The final items list was confirmed using the *Translinguistic Tool for Teachers of English Learners (T^3EL)* (Antunez-Gámon & Florez, 2026).

The depth of effort to create a measure that is phonologically friendly to GAE, AAE, and Spanish speakers highlights the need for educators to understand the language features of English and how these may compare to other languages and language variations (Honig et al., 2018; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Stubbe, 2014). This knowledge is key to understanding why certain tasks may be more difficult for students with linguistically diverse backgrounds. We encourage educators to learn about the linguistic features of a student's primary language to better discriminate between errors and pronunciation differences that are based on linguistic variation (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.). Teachers may find the T^{3}EL transfer sheets useful for understanding the phonological overlap and differences between English and Spanish.

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