



# Viewer's Guide

This guide was produced in partnership with the **National Education Association**



## EPISODE 4

# Learning 'b' and 'd' and Reading Short Vowel Words with Aiko (Grade 2)

**Video length:** 13 minutes

**Watch the video here:** [ReadingRockets.org/interventions/letter-reversals-b-d-with-aiko-second-grade](https://ReadingRockets.org/interventions/letter-reversals-b-d-with-aiko-second-grade)

## Aiko's profile

Aiko is a second grader who guesses when reading one-syllable words with short vowels. She confuses the letters 'b' and 'd', but easily names other letters. Aiko sounds out unfamiliar words aloud before reading them. She also looks up from the words when she reads them.



## Video overview

Aiko learns a strategy to help her accurately name the letters 'b' and 'd' in practice until she is automatic. She will also practice thinking through the sounds in words, without saying them aloud, before she reads the word aloud. She will practice keeping her eyes on the words when she reads and keeping her eyes on the letters during "b"–"d" practice.

Aiko's teacher is Ms. Farrell. She is a reading specialist and educational consultant working with Aiko for the first time. The video clips of Aiko are taken from a 25-minute lesson.

Ms. Farrell's lesson is purposefully not from any program. She and Aiko demonstrate strategies that can work with any program.

### Ms. Farrell's lesson plan is to:

1. Teach the strategy for recognizing the letters 'b' and 'd' with automaticity.
2. Teach Aiko to practice using her 'b-hand' to accurately name the letters 'b' and 'd'.
3. Have Aiko practice reading one-syllable short vowel words accurately without sounding them out aloud.
4. Practice thinking through the sounds silently in an unfamiliar word rather than saying the individual sounds aloud to read the word.



## Things to notice while watching the video

As you watch the video, notice Ms. Farrell's style of instruction.

- Ms. Farrell never reads the words before she asks Aiko to read them.
- She always guides Aiko and never gives her the answer.
- She does **not teach** vocabulary.
- When Aiko makes a mistake, Ms. Farrell responds by telling Aiko what part of her response is correct, then guides her to the correct answer.
- She gives Aiko plenty of time to think without interrupting her.
- When Aiko misreads a word, Ms. Farrell ensures that Aiko always finishes by reading the word accurately one or more times.

## Questions to consider while viewing the video the first time

1. What is the 'b-hand'?
2. How does a student use the 'b-hand'?
3. Why does Ms. Farrell only teach the 'b-hand' and not both a 'b-hand' and a 'd-hand'?
4. What does Ms. Farrell do to help Aiko keep her eyes on the letters?
5. Why is the b–d practice done in isolation and not practiced only when Aiko misreads a word during reading instruction?
6. How does Ms. Farrell keep Aiko from sounding out words aloud when Aiko is reading?

**Answers:** see the next page for the answer key.

Watch the whole "Looking at Reading Interventions" series here:  
[ReadingRockets.org/interventions](https://www.readingrockets.org/interventions)



## Answer key

1. What is the 'b-hand'?

The student's left hand in a fist with the forefinger sticking up so the curled fingers look like the 'ball' and the forefinger looks like the 'stick' of a lower-case 'b'.

2. How does a student use the 'b-hand'?

The b-hand is a visual anchor for the letter 'b' that the student compares to written b's and d's to know which the letter is. If the letter looks like the b-hand it is a 'b', and if it **does not** look like the b-hand it is a 'd'.

3. Why does Ms. Farrell only teach the 'b-hand' and not both a 'b-hand' and a 'd-hand'?

A student who confuses the shapes of the letter may also confuse which hand is the b-hand and which hand is the d-hand.

Fixing b–d confusion is more effective and faster with just the one anchor to use for checking the letters.

4. What does Ms. Farrell do to help Aiko keep her eyes on the letters?

First, Ms. Farrell isolates the practice of looking down, so Aiko only has to think about keeping her eyes down. Next, Ms. Farrell immediately reminds Aiko to look down whenever Aiko forgets. Ms. Farrell also gives Aiko a cue (stomping her fist on the desk) for when she can look up. This helps Aiko keep her eyes down until she has finished naming all the letters.

5. Why is the b–d practice done in isolation and not practiced only when Aiko misreads a word during reading instruction?

The practice needs to happen in isolation so that it becomes automatic for the student to internally check every 'b' and 'd'. When Aiko guesses for 'b' and 'd', she has only a 50% chance of reading a word correctly. Practicing the two letters in isolation is the fastest way for Aiko to start recognizing those letters automatically, just as she recognizes all the other letters. It is too hard for Aiko to remember to check b's and d's when she is simultaneously using her mental 'desk space' to decode the words she is reading. Isolated practice will allow her to develop automaticity in recognizing b's and d's accurately.

6. How does Ms. Farrell keep Aiko from sounding out words aloud when Aiko is reading?

Ms. Farrell has Aiko keep her mouth closed and think through the sounds in her head before Aiko reads the word aloud, rather than saying each sound aloud.