KnoW Dyslexia

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WHY SCHWA MATTERS:
AN INTERACTIVE SOUND PRODUCTION ACTIVITY

Purpose: To help educators experience how adding schwa to stop sounds leads students to insert extra vowels in spelling, and to highlight the importance of accurate sound modeling.

STEP 1: SET THE HOOK

Write the word "tap" on the board.
⑦ *"Kids spell exactly what they hear. Today, you are going to spell like a student."*

STEP 2: MODEL CORRECT SOUND PRODUCTION

Say each sound cleanly with no added vowel: /t/ /ă/ /p/. Blend to say "*tap*".
⑦ *"How many sounds did you hear, and how many letters would you write?"*

STEP 3: ADD SCHWA ON PURPOSE

Now exaggerate schwa: "tə/ /ă/ /pə/. Blend it as *"tuh-a-puh."*
⑦ *"Write what you hear."* *(Expect extra vowels to appear.)*

STEP 4: COMPARE SPELLINGS

Write the correct spelling and the schwa-influenced spellings side by side.
⑦ *"Did the student make a phonics mistake, or did they spell exactly what they heard?"*

STEP 5: REPEAT WITH ADDITIONAL WORDS

Repeat the process with words such as 'map', 'dog', and 'cap'. Each time, compare clean sounds to schwa-added sounds and discuss likely spelling errors.

STEP 6: DISCUSS THE WHY

"This is not a spelling problem. This is a sound production problem."
⑦ Discuss how adult sound models directly impact student spelling.

STEP 7: TEACH THE STOP SOUND RULE

"Stop sounds are quick and quiet. No vowel. Just air and stop."
Model /p/, /t/, and /k/ with quick mouth movements.

STEP 8: REFLECT AND APPLY

⑦ *"Reflect on how you will monitor your own sound production during instruction, and how consistent modeling supports student success."*