phoneme manipulation more concrete (Campbell, Helf, & Cooke, 2008; Pullen & Lane, 2014).

Blending wheels can be used to provide practice with blending phonemes to make real words and pseudowords. The benefits of decoding practice with real words are clear, but using pseudowords for instruction is a bit more controversial. Pseudoword reading is widely recognized as a strong measure of decoding skills (Carver, 2003), and evidence indicates that it is also a valid practice for teaching decoding (Moats, 2000). Research has demonstrated that isolated practice with both real words and pseudowords improves decoding accuracy and automaticity (Pullen & Lane, 2014). Cardenas (2009) examined the use of pseudowords in kindergarten phonics instruction, comparing it with instruction that used only real words. Her results indicated that students who received phonics instruction with pseudowords demonstrated greater improvement in decoding than students who received phonics instruction using only real words. In addition, the pseudowords group demonstrated a higher rate of change than the real-words group even after

and read the new word (see Figure 4). For example, after aligning - - , the initial consonant wheel can be turned to change the word to - - and - - . Continue in this fashion until students understand how to make new words this way. Next, show them how to change the word by moving the large wheel with the final consonants, while keeping the remainder of the word intact. That is, - - can be changed to - - and - - . Finally, after students have mastered the process of changing both the initial and final consonant, demonstrate how to move the vowel to change the word. For example, change - - to - - and - - . After practice with these variations, directions for moving the wheels can be altered after each word: "

r   r-o-b   j.

t.

u.
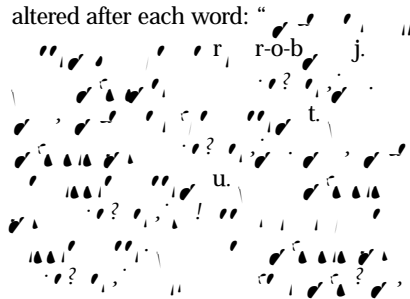
to introduce a new set of letters or letter combinations. By flipping one circle at a time, one wheel can be changed into multiple configurations. As students develop their basic decoding skills, introduce the more challenging letter combinations, such as blends (e.g., , , , , ,), -controlled vowels (e.g., , ,), consonant and vowel digraphs (e.g., , , , ,), diphthongs (e.g., ,), and other clusters (e.g., , ,).

their work with an adult. Students enjoy finding pseudowords with silly sounding pronunciations (e.g., ,). Because it is fun, students will practice and practice. Providing decoding practice such as this can help students become more fluent in their word reading and, therefore, in their reading of connected text. In fact, recent research has linked phonemic awareness skills to improved oral reading fluency (Ashby, Dix, Bontrager, Dey, & Archer, 2013).

Initially, blending wheels should be used with teacher guidance to ensure that students are using them correctly. Once students understand blending wheel basics, the wheels can be used as a paired or individual practice activity. Students can listen to one another and check their decoding attempts, or they can practice independently and check

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