



HOLISTIC  
LEARNING  
INNOVATIONS

## **THE SOUND LAB GAME**

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Country: Uganda

Target Age: 5 Years

Learning Areas: Literacy | Communication |

Creativity | Relationship Building

## THE CONTEXT

Makerere C.O.U ECD is an early childhood centre located along Sir Apollo Kagwa Road in Kawempe Division. The school serves 94 learners, with 35 children in Top Class. The community surrounding the school includes a nearby primary school and church and sits on a hilly, tree-surrounded area.

The centre faces several resource-related challenges, including limited furniture, a shortage of storybooks, and low digital literacy exposure. Despite this, the school prioritises improving learners' academic performance and ensuring a safe, engaging learning environment.



## THE CHALLENGE

### How might we strengthen early reading through play-based phonics using low-cost materials?

Assessment, classroom observations, and discussions with learners revealed that many children could not sound out letters or blend sounds to form words. Learners struggled with:

- identifying single-letter sounds
- segmenting and blending words
- recognising pictures linked to word families
- maintaining interest during traditional literacy lessons

The lack of interactive materials further hindered engagement and limited opportunities for hands-on literacy exploration.

## THE INNOVATION

# THE SOUND LAB GAME

The Sound Lab Game is a playful, group-based literacy practice designed to help young learners sound letters, blend them, and recognise word families. It uses locally made materials such as letter cards, syllable cards, picture cards, and reading boards.

How it works:

Step 1: Learners sing a sound-based song and practise segmenting and blending using letter cards.

Step 2: The teacher demonstrates blending using handmade reading boards.

Step 3: Learners sort syllable and single-letter cards belonging to their assigned word family.

Step 4: They match picture cards to relevant word families.

Step 5: Learners match words with correct pictures as they continue singing.

Steps 6–8: They explore more word families (e.g., *an*, *at*, *ad*, *it*, *us*), recognise rhyming words, and eventually begin simple sentence formation.

The design emphasises group work, shared idea generation, and repeated playful practice, building both literacy and social-emotional skills.





## THE IMPACT

# Boosted sound recognition and blending skills in early years

After two years of implementation, the Sound Lab Game has resulted in increased concentration and literacy engagement:

- improved ability to recognise sounds, syllables, and blends
- better spelling and early sentence formation
- improved classroom behaviour and learner enthusiasm
- stronger communication between teachers and parents
- adoption of game elements by teachers in upper classes

Three additional schools have tested the innovation, showing similar gains, and learners now form words more easily, identify picture-word relationships, and blend sounds confidently.



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