

Dear Family:

Unit 5 introduces your child to the **schwa**. This is defined as a vowel with an unexpected sound. When a word contains a schwa, the vowel most often sounds like a short **u** or a short **i**, but not necessarily equal to it. An example is the word **salad**. The second **a** sounds similar to a short **i**, but not exactly like it. Schwa is marked as follows:

**s** <sup>ə</sup>**ă** **l** **a** **d**  
c c

Often, the second syllable of a two-syllable word is **unaccented** (or not emphasized) and contains a vowel that is not easily heard correctly. In these cases the schwa sound is “swallowed up.” If this **unaccented second syllable** ends with the consonant **n**, the vowel sound may be “lost” (as in the word **mitten** = /mit n/.) And when the letter **e** is followed by **t** in an unaccented second syllable, the **e** sounds like /ĭ/, as in **velvet**.

Schwa often does not pose a problem for students when reading. I will teach them to try the /ū/ sound if a word does not sound right. However, schwa may be troublesome when spelling. I will teach students to listen carefully for a **schwa** and let them know that spelling for this vowel sound can be treated like a sound option. They will learn to identify the **schwa** by indicating which vowel has the unexpected sound. Once we work with schwa, they will realize it is not so bad!

Lastly, I will be working on additional dictionary skills to help students look up words with spelling options.

Sincerely,

