

PARENT EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

Workshop Topic:

The Sounds of Language

CCRS Reading Foundational Skills Anchor 2: Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes). (Phonological Awareness)

NELP Predictors of Later Success

- **Phonological awareness (PA):** the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), independent of meaning

Objective: At the end of this session, participants will be able to

- Define phonological awareness
- Explain why phonological awareness is important for reading success
- Define phonemic awareness
- Give at least two ways to support a child in increasing phonological awareness

Materials:

- Children's books that use rhyme or nursery rhymes available to use in the classroom
- Copies of *Phonemic Awareness* parent handout
- Chart paper and markers

Welcome/Ice Breaker:

Greet parents as they come in. Build rapport and break the ice.

Ask parents to recall a favorite song, rhyme, poem, or chant from their childhood to share with the large group. Add an example of your own. Write down the titles on chart paper. Ask if one or two parents would like to share their songs or rhymes.

Why do you think we remembered all those songs or rhymes? Some responses might be that it was fun, had a catchy rhythm, we sang it a lot, we sang it in the car every vacation, it was a family favorite, it brings happy memories, it taught me something.


Ask parents to think about the different kinds of word games they learned as children. Who taught them to you? Often family members passed these games down. There is an oral tradition with songs and word games in many families. Recall some types of word games: pig Latin, tongue twisters, jump rope chants, name games. Have we passed these kinds of oral traditions on to our children? Many of these word games require masterful manipulation of the sounds of language.

Do these kinds of games help children learn to read? The research says yes. Songs, rhymes, rhythm, repetition, poems, and silly word games all contribute to children's language and literacy development. Teachers and parents play an important role in helping children achieve these skills.

Topic Review:

Learning how to read involves playing with words and sounds and learning the connections between the sounds and the letters of the alphabet.

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Opening Activity:

You might begin this session by reading a children's book that uses rhymes. Examples to check out are *Sheep in a Jeep* by Nancy Shaw, *Jamberry* by Bruce Degen, *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae, or *Llama Llama Red Pajama* by Anna Dewdney. There are plenty of fun books to choose from. These are only suggestions! You may want to choose a favorite nursery rhyme instead!

Central Ideas and Practice (Content and Strategies):

Phonological awareness...what is it? Phonological awareness (PA) refers to understanding that spoken words are made up of sounds! PA refers to oral language and has nothing to do with the letters of the alphabet. PA has to do with the sounds in spoken words. Those without phonological awareness do not understand what it means for words to rhyme. They do not appreciate alliteration, words that begin with the same sound; and they do not understand that the spoken form of some words is longer than the spoken form of other words.

Phonological awareness involves skills that develop over time and that are important for reading and spelling success. These skills are a key to learning to decode [sound out] and spell printed words. PA is especially important at the earliest stages of learning to read. If you have a preschooler, a kindergartener, or a first grader, you can have fun with language and help your child with these important skills! Researchers have shown that PA in kindergarten is a strong predictor of later reading success and that this relationship persists throughout school.

Before a child can build PA skills, he has to have basic listening skills. The child will have a basic vocabulary and will use language to express his needs and react to others. The child will be able to understand what others intend and imitate and produce basic sentences. All of these things you are helping build by talking with your child each day—and you have been talking to your child from the time he was born!

What are the skills that help build PA? The simplest skill to consider is enjoying and reciting rhyme. There are many storybooks written with rhyme and many nursery rhymes to share with children. Starting at a very young age (at birth!) with rhyming words and nursery rhymes will ensure your child is starting to prepare for reading! Reading and rereading books with clear, simple rhymes can offer you and your child fun opportunities to build skills that will help him later with reading.

Another fun way to engage in word play with young children is through alliteration. Alliteration occurs when a series of words have the same first sound. Tongue twisters, poems, song lyrics, and even store or brand names use alliteration. Make up or recite alliterative sentences or phrases like these: Seven sisters sang a silly song! Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers! By the age of 5, children should be able to recognize rhyme; they should be able to tell you which words rhyme when given three words and by the time they are 6 they should be able to produce a rhyme. "Tell me a word that rhymes with spoon." [moon] Recognizing a rhyme is much easier than producing a rhyme!

The next skill that would indicate phonological awareness is sentence segmentation which is a bit more complex than rhyming. Does your child recognize that speech can be broken down into individual words? Start with short, simple sentences and ask him how many words he heard. "How many words did I say in this sentence?" "[Billy rode his bike.] You can increase the number of words over time to challenge your child. Make this fun...not a drill!

Five year-olds can begin to clap and count syllables in words. Again, make this fun! Do only a few words at a time. It is easy to do this while giving your child a bath, when riding the bus or waiting for an appointment. "How many syllables are in the word airplane?" [2] "How many syllables are in the word truck?" [1]

A young child's awareness of the initial consonant of a word or syllable (the onset) and then everything after the initial consonant (the rime) is related to success in beginning reading. Children in kindergarten are introduced to common word families. Children can have a lot of fun playing with word families. For instance, one word family is the -an family. The words pan, man, tan, ban, can, Dan, fan, Nan, ran, van, bran, plan, span, scan, flan, clan, and than are all members of that family. Not all of these are "easy" words; word families can be used with older children, too!

After segmenting words into syllables, children around the age of 6 will start blending and segmenting (breaking apart) two and three sounds into words. "Say the word slowly while you tap the sounds." [c-l-ou-d; ch-ee-se]

Phonemic awareness is the most advanced level of phonological awareness. It refers to a child's awareness of the individual phonemes—the smallest units of sound—in spoken words and the ability to manipulate those sounds. Phoneme awareness refers to the specific understanding that spoken words are made up of individual phonemes—not just sounds in general, which would include syllables. To make words, we put together phonemes. Can you believe that there are only about 45 phonemes in the English language? To make new words we delete or rearrange the phonemes. Children with phoneme awareness would know that the spoken word “hand” contains four phonemes and that the words “pack” and “map” both contain the phoneme /p/.

By the age of seven, children can also be changing individual sounds with words to create new words. [Change the /k/ in candy to /s/.] Remember that this all is about the sounds of language. This is not about seeing words written down or spelling them! Have fun!

Application:

Parents might practice one or more of the following activities alone or in pairs. After each activity, ask parents the question, “How can I do this activity at home with my child?”

- Each parent writes his name and listens to the sounds of the letters as he writes. Then parents write the names of their children and listen to the sounds. How might they focus on the sounds of children's names with their children?
- Parents might like to practice with an age-appropriate book. Focus on listening to the sounds in each story. Provide some books with repeating letter sounds and alliteration. What other sounds can parents focus on in the story?
- Provide the words to songs or audio-taped songs that have repeated sounds. How might they use this with children?

Today we have been learning about awareness of sounds in language. We are going to identify and construct some simple riddles and rhymes. Ask participants to answer the following riddles with rhyming words. For example, a dear deer could be the answer to the question “What do you call a sweet doe?” “What would you call an enjoyable piece of cake or pie?” It would be a nice slice!

- What is a brown vehicle? A tan van.
- What do you call a big country? A grand land.
- What is another name for a dark bag? A black sack.
- What do you call an empty storage container? A blank tank.
- What do you call a rainy plane? A wet jet.
- What is a fixed or established wager? A set bet.
- What is it called when you elevate a present? You lift a gift.
- What is a fat candle string or fiber? A thick wick.
- What do you call a fast prank? A quick trick.
- Where is warm place to go? A hot spot.
- Describe a book with a popular storyline? It has a hot plot.
- What do you call a cup carpet? A mug rug.
- What do you call a very satisfied insect? A smug bug.
- What do you call an old, unwanted suitcase? A junk trunk.
- What do you call the competition to the area beyond Earth? The space race.

Encourage the participants to make up a riddle of their own to share with the group

Parents who speak languages other than English may have a more difficult time with the sounds of the English alphabet. You might want to have English language learners work with rhymes, books, and songs in their native language. Parents with low literacy levels or disabilities and English language learners might benefit from wordless picture books and oral storytelling, or books with very few words.

Connection to Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®:

- *Infant/Toddler Connections*

Spend time with your child, and talk to him all the time. Sing! Whisper. Make different sounds. Play singing and clapping games. Teach your child ideas like up-down and in-out. When you swing your child in play, say “Up we go!” “Down we go!” Look at picture books with your child. Be sure some of these have rhyme. Read or recite nursery rhymes. Point to things in the book. When your child starts to talk, ask him to find things in the book. For example, “Where are the sheep?”

- *Preschool Connections*

Sing songs, say little poems or nursery rhymes, and play rhyming word games with your child. Rhyming will become important as your child learns to read. Look for stories that rhyme or ones that repeat sentences and words. Read poems! Help your child think of words that start with a particular sound—using his name or another family member’s name. Have a sound scavenger hunt. As you walk around the neighborhood, find things that begin with a particular sound.

- *Elementary Connections*

Play word games, such as thinking of different words to describe the same thing, “20 Questions,” or “I Spy.” Make up silly sentences with words that begin with the same sound such as “Many men made a mess of my marshmallow!” Play simple rhyming or blending games with your child such as taking turns coming up with words that rhyme—go, no, blow, slow, pro, Joe, doe or giving sounds for your child to blend—/c/ /a/ /t/ = cat. Play “I Say” which goes like this: “I say cat. You say ____.” “I say bell. You say ____.” As you look for books to share with your child, continue to look for poetry and books with rhyme. Play “Change the Word” in which you ask your child to change the beginning sound to make a new word. “My word is sell. Change the /s/ to /b/. What is your word?”

- *Middle School Connections*

Middle schoolers will enjoy silly poetry and rhyming. Are there song lyrics that can be used to attend to the sounds in language to manipulate and have fun with the spoken word? This should be playful and not drill. Have fun with the word riddles that we used at the beginning of the lesson today. Encourage your child to make up a riddle and try to stump you!

Wrap up/Closure:

Remember that children generally begin to show initial phonological awareness when they show an appreciation of rhyme and alliteration. Four-year olds should be involved in rhyming activities, kindergarteners and first-graders should be blending and segmenting two syllable words and then advancing to blending, segmenting, and deleting individual sounds (phonemes). A child’s phonemic awareness, his understanding that spoken words can be divided into separate sounds, is one of the best predictors of their success in learning to read.

Ask parents:

How do you plan to use the parent-child interaction strategies we learned more about today with your children this week?

Provide the handout *Phonemic Awareness—Things I Can do at Home with my Child* for the parents to take with them.

References:

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Parent Handout

Phonemic Awareness — Things I Can do at Home with my Child



Have my child:

- Write about a story we've read together.
- Clap the syllables in her name, in new words, and in names of family members.
- Play with words and rhyme.
- Make up nonsense words like—tulip, shulip, mulip, dulip...
- Sing songs and say chants that play with letters. “Kim Kim Bo Bim, Banana Fana, Fo Fim...”

I can:

- Read rhyming stories and poems often. Let my child choose the story.
- Praise my child's attempts to read and try out new words.
- Point out letters in words. Ask him to make the sounds.
- Talk about sounds in words. “Peter Piper picked a peck...” Those words all start with the /p/ sound.
- Play / *Spy* games and have my child locate a word that starts with a certain sound.