# Phonemic Awareness & Phonics



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION



## BIG IDEAS in Beginning Reading

### **Phonemic Awareness: Concepts and Research**

#### Phonemic Awareness (PA) is:

- 1) the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds (Yopp, 1992).
- 2) essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system, because letters represent sounds or phonemes. Without phonemic awareness, phonics makes little sense.
- 3) fundamental to mapping speech to print. If a child cannot hear that "man" and "moon" begin with the same sound or cannot blend the sounds /rrrrrruuuuuunnnnn/ into the word "run", he or she may have great difficulty connecting sounds with their written symbols or blending sounds to make a word.
- 4) essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system
- 5) a strong predictor of children who experience early reading success.

#### An Important Distinction:

- \* Phonemic awareness is not phonics.
- \* Phonemic awareness is *auditory* and does not involve words in print.

#### Phonemic Awareness is Important...

- PA teaches students to attend to sounds. It primes the connection of sound to print.
- PA gives students a way to approach reading new words.
- PA helps students understand the alphabetic principle, that letters in words are systematically represented by sounds.

#### ...But Difficult:

- There are 26 letters in the English language.
- Though the number of phonemes vary across sources, there are approximately 40 phonemes.
- Sounds are represented in 250 different spellings (e.g., /f/ as in ph, f, gh, ff).
- Phonemes are coarticulated, thus logical "sound units" are not readily apparent and must be taught.
- There are no "white spaces" between letters, syllables, or words.

#### **Definitions:**

- <u>Phoneme</u>: A phoneme is a speech sound. It is the smallest unit of spoken language and has no inherent meaning (National Reading Panel, 2000).
- <u>Phonemic Awareness</u>: The ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words, and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds (Yopp, 1992). Phonemic awareness involves hearing language at the phoneme level.
- Phonics: use of the code (sound-symbol relationships to recognize words.
- <u>Phonological Awareness</u>: The ability to hear and manipulate the sound structure of language.
  This is an encompassing term that involves working with the sounds of language at the word,
  syllable, and phoneme level.
- <u>Continuous Sound</u>: A sound that can be prolonged (stretched out) without distortion (e.g., r, s, a, m).
- Onset-Rime: The onset is the part of the word before the vowel; not all words have onsets. The rime is the part of the word including the vowel and what follows it.
- · Segmentation: The separation of words into phonemes.





#### **Examples of Phonemes:**

The word "sun" has 3 phonemes: /s//u//n/.

The table below shows different linguistic units from largest (sentence) to smallest (phoneme).

Sentence:	The sun shone brightly.
Word	sun
Syllables	sun, sun-shine, sun-ny
Onset-rime	s-un, s-unshine, s-unny
Phoneme	s-u-n

The word "shut" also has three phonemes: /sh/ /u/ /t/ .

#### **Examples of Phonemic Awareness Skills:**

- Blending: What word am I trying to say? Mmmm...oooooo...p.
- Segmentation (first sound isolation): What is the first sound in mop?
- Segmentation (last sound isolation): What is the last sound in mop?
- Segmentation (complete): What are all the sounds you hear in mop?

#### What Teachers Should Know:

- Definition of phonemic awareness (PA).
- The relation of phonemic awareness to early reading skills.
- The developmental continuum of phonemic awareness skills.
- Which phonemic awareness skills are more important and when they should be taught.
- · Features of phonemes and tasks that influence task difficulty.
- Terminology (phoneme, PA, continuous sound, onset-rime, segmentation).

(modified from Moats, 1999)

#### What Teachers Should Be Able to Do:

- Assess PA and diagnose difficulties.
- Produce speech sounds accurately.
- Use a developmental continuum to select/design PA instruction.
- Select examples according to complexity of skills, phonemes, word types, and learner experience.
- Model and deliver PA lessons.
- Link PA to reading and spelling.
- Evaluate the design of instructional materials.

(modified from Moats, 1999)

#### What Does the Lack of Phonemic Awareness Look Like?

Children lacking phonemic awareness skills cannot:

- group words with similar and dissimilar sounds (mat, mug, sun)
- blend and split syllables (f oot)
- blend sounds into words (m\_a\_n)
- segment a word as a sequence of sounds (e.g., fish is made up of three phonemes, /f/, /i/, /sh/)
- detect and manipulate sounds within words (change "r" in "run" to "s" to make "sun").

(Kame'enui, et. al., 1997)



## BIG IDEAS in Beginning Reading

#### Phonemic Awareness (PA) Research Says:

"The best early predictor of reading difficulty in kindergarten or first grade is the inability to segment words and syllables into constituent sound units (phonemic awareness)" (Lyon, 1995).

- Phonological awareness is necessary but not sufficient for reading acquisition.
- Phonological awareness is teachable and promoted by attention to instructional variables. (Smith, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1998)
- "Reading and phonemic awareness are mutually reinforcing: Phonemic awareness is necessary for reading, and reading, in turn, improves phonemic awareness still further." (Shaywitz, 2003, pg. 55)
- The ability to hear and manipulate phonemes plays a causal role in the acquisition of beginning reading skills (Smith, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1998).
- There is considerable evidence that the primary difference between good and poor readers lies in the good reader's phonological processing ability.
- The effects of training phonological awareness and learning to read are mutually supportive.

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#### **Phonemes**

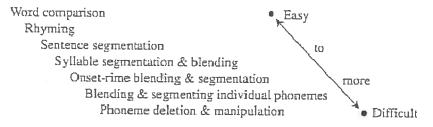
A phoneme is a speech sound. It is the smallest unit of language and has no inherent meaning. The word "sun" has three phonemes: /s//u//n/.

- Although there are 26 letters in the English language, there are approximately 40 phonemes, or sound units, in the English language. (NOTE: the number of phonemes varies across sources.)
- Sounds are represented in 250 different spellings. For example, the phoneme, or sound, /f/ can be spelled in several ways: ph, f, gh, ff.
- The sound units (phonemes) are not inherently obvious and must be taught. The sounds that make up words are "coarticulated;" that is, they are not distinctly separate from each other.

## Phonemic Awareness (PA) is:

- 1. the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds (Yopp, 1992; see References).
- 2. essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system, because letters represent sounds or phonemes. Without phonemic awareness, phonics makes little sense.
- 3. fundamental to mapping speech to print. If a child cannot hear that "man" and "moon" begin with the same sound or cannot blend the sounds /rrrrrruuuuuunnnnn/ into the word "run", he or she may have great difficulty connecting sounds with their written symbols or blending sounds to make a word.
- 4. essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system.
- 5. a strong predictor of children who experience early reading success.

## Phonemic Awareness Development Continuum



## **Examples of Phonemic Awareness Skills**

- Sound and Word discrimination: What word doesn't belong with the others: "cat", "mat", "bat", "ran"? "ran"
- · Rhyming: What word rhymes with "cat"? bat
- Syllable splitting: The onset of "cat" is /k/, the rime is /at/
- Blending: What word is made up of the sounds /k/ /a/ /t/? "cat"
- Phonemic segmentation: What are the sounds in "cat"? /k/ /a/ /t/
- Phoneme deletion: What is "cat" without the /k/? "at"
- Phoneme manipulation: What word would you have if you changed the /t/ in cat to an /n/? "can"

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## Teaching Tips: Blending

1. When children are first learning to blend, use examples with continuous sounds, because the sounds can be stretched and held.

2. Example: "Listen, my lion puppet likes to talk in a broken way. When he says /mmm/ - /ooo/ - /mmm/ he means mom."

Non-example: "Listen, my lion puppet likes to talk in a broken way. When he says /b/ - /e/ - /d/ he means bed."

- 1. When children are first learning the task, use short words in teaching and practice examples. Use pictures when possible.
- 4. Example: Put down 3 pictures of CVC words and say: "My lion puppet wants one of these pictures. Listen to hear which picture he wants, /sss/ /uuu/ /nnn/. Which picture?"

Non-example: ".../p/ - /e/ - /n/ - /c/ - /i/ - /l/. Which picture?" (This is a more advanced model that should be used later.)

- 1. When children are first learning the task, use materials that reduce memory load and to represent sounds.
- 6. <u>Example</u>: Use pictures to help children remember the words and to focus their attention. Use a 3-square strip or blocks to represent sounds in a word.

Non-example: Provide only verbal activities.

- As children become successful during initial learning, remove scaffolds by using progressively
  more difficult examples. As children become successful with more difficult examples, use fewer
  scaffolds, such as pictures.
- 8. <u>Example</u>: Move from syllable or onset-rime blending to blending with all sounds in a word (phoneme blending). Remove scaffolds, such as pictures.

"Listen, /s/ - /t/ - /o/ - /p/. Which picture?"

"Listen, /s/ - /t/ - /o/ - /p/. What word?"

Non-example: Provide instruction and practice at only the easiest levels with all the scaffolds.

## Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

## Onsets and Rime

Use books and charts with rhyme and repetition during shared language or guided reading to encourage the use of rhythm and rhyme. Through the text the students enjoy the meaning of the story and can use the text to see the patterns in the words. Learning how to read one word helps them to read a similar one. The words can be placed on index cards and used in pocket charts to model how to change the initial consonant to make a new word. This can easily be moved into a center/station for additional practice.

<u>Variation</u>: Say the word and ask the students to say the word with just the beginning sound or with just the final sounds. -Can - /c/ or /an/.

Variation: Teach for transfer - If you know can you can read/spell: Dan, fan, man, pan, ran, tan

## Tongue Twisters or Silly Sentences

Tongue twisters are fun and reinforce beginning sounds. You can use the traditional ones or create your own. Ex. Julie jumped jubilantly over the jello.

## Letter Recognition

- Letters in the children's names
  - o Sort names by number of letters in the name
  - Sort names by first letter
- Alphabet books
- Morning message pay attention to attention to letters as you write the morning message
- Letter detective investigate letters by searching for them in all kinds of print
- · Emphasizing letters as the children write
- Alphabet blocks, magnetic letters, alphabet and word tiles, letter stamps
- Word wall
  - o Environmental print wall items that surround them daily
  - o Alphabet wall
  - o Categories arrange words by concepts
  - o Word families
  - High frequency words star words (words starring in the text)
  - o Personal word wall
  - Content words

		Picture Card	
Co	Sounds		

## I spy

"I spy something that begins with a /m/ like monkey." The children can guess of you can provide more clues. This can easily be played while waiting in line.

## Alphabet Cans/Boxes

Have cans or boxes with a letter of the alphabet on the can/box. Students can write words, draw pictures or sort objects and place them in the matching can/box. This works well at a center/station.

### **Pointers**

Use of a variety of pointers for students to point out different things on a chart or in a big book. Examples:

- Beginning sounds/letters
- Words
- Left to right directionality

- Punctuation
- Phrases
- Rhyming words

## Rubber Band Stretch - Slinky Stretch

Use a rubber band or a slinky to illustrate stretching out the sounds of a words and then putting it back together again. Show students how this can help them check a word when reading or write a word.

## Shower Curtain - Letter Mat

Divide a shower curtain into 26 boxes and write one letter in each box in ABC order. This can be used in a variety of ways:

- point to letters based on letter asked
- point to letter based on sound beginning, middle, end
- spell words by pointing to each letter

## Transforming Words - Word ladders

Have fun with words by changing letters in the words to transform them into a new word. Example: dog to cat

- dog, dig, big, but, cut, cat
- dog, dot, cot, cat

Encourage students to change the words in the least number of transformations. The words can be written vertically within the rungs of ladders to show the transformations. There are many published books with word ladders in them.