

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

At a Glance

What is phonemic awareness?

Phonemic awareness is the ability to distinguish, produce, remember and manipulate spoken words' individual sounds (phonemes). Research indicates phonemic awareness and knowledge of letters as being the best predictors for how easily students will learn to read during their first two years of school. Phonemic awareness is NOT the same as phonics instruction; however, it leads to better phonetic understanding and mastery of phonics. Strong phonemic awareness supports accurate decoding and spelling of words. Future reading comprehension is also magnified by early phonemic awareness instruction in kindergarten and grade one. Therefore, early identification of phonemic awareness deficits are critical to future reading success. Phonemic awareness instruction in later grades may be necessary for students who are still experiencing gaps in this area.

Recommendations for the Classroom

- Monitor the position of your mouth when saying sounds within words.
- Allow students to look in a mirror, or at a partner, to notice mouth position in sounds.
- Identify the sound at the beginning, middle and end of a word when spoken.
- Segment, or break apart, each sound in a single syllable word. For example: What are the sounds you hear in the word hat? /h/ /a/ /t/
- When given the individual sounds, blend or bring together individual sounds to form a single syllable word. For example: What word do these sounds make? /m/ /a/ /t/ (mat)
- Manipulate sounds within a word to create a new word. For example: Say "cat." Now change the /c/ to /b/. (bat)
- Use oral language games and play to encourage students to listen for individual sounds.
- Avoid adding an extra "uh" sound (known as the schwa) to the end of individual phonemes. Often, the "uh" sound is incorrectly added to the end of the /m/, /n/ and /p/ sounds. Rather than saying /muh/, /nuh/ and /puh/, clip the /uh/ at the end so that dog is pronounced /d/ /o/ /g/ instead of /duh/ /o/ /g/.

Evidence of these instructional practices should be present in High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs). When gaps are identified in HQIRs, supplement practices to ensure all recommendations are carried out.

Alignment to the Kentucky Academic Standards for Reading and Writing

While phonological awareness standards are found in kindergarten and grade 1, the K-5 academic standards for reading and writing are grounded in a sounds-first approach to reading. Students often begin developing their phonological awareness before entering kindergarten; thus, the standards align with and build upon the early childhood standards, providing a developmentally appropriate progression as students transition to kindergarten. The standards articulate rigorous grade level expectations essential to developing a strong infrastructure of essential early literacy skills, including phonological and phonemic awareness. The ultimate goal is to build a foundation that will equip students with skills and knowledge that is critical to being successful in later years.

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