

Teacher's Resource Manual: Understanding and Assessing Foundational Literacy Skills

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A. Phonics and Word Recognition (K to 2)

2. Phonological Awareness

Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds.

2a. Research and Theory

What is Phonological Awareness?

Phonological Awareness is the ability to hear, recognize and play with the sounds in our oral language. It is a hearing/listening skill. Phonological Awareness is an umbrella term that involves the ability to work with the sounds of language at the word, syllable and phoneme level. It includes rhyming, alliteration, sentence and syllable blending and segmenting.

What is Phonemic Awareness?

Phonemic Awareness is the most complex phonological awareness skill. It is the understanding that spoken words consist of a sequence of speech sounds and an awareness of the individual sounds or phonemes. It is the ability to attend to the sounds of language as being separate from the meaning of language.

Phonemic Awareness is the ability to segment words into sounds, blend them back together and manipulate the sounds to make new words.

What is Phonics?

Phonics is the ability to apply letter-sound knowledge when translating print into speech. Phonics provides readers with a tool to unlock or decode the pronunciation of written words. Phonemic Awareness skills precede phonics skills because children must first develop an understanding of how spoken language maps to written language. Phonemic Awareness bridges the spoken word (oral) to the written word (print).

Why are Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics so important to the developing literacy learner?

- Approximately 20% of children will have difficulty with phonological awareness upon entering school and will eventually struggle with figuring out how sounds work in print (phonics, decoding, spelling).
- Without phonemic awareness, a child may be able to learn letter-sound relationships by rote, but will not be able to use and coordinate letter-sound knowledge to read or spell new words.
- Phonemic awareness plays a critical role in the development of skills required in the manipulation of phonemes and the application of phonics to reading and spelling.
- Current research suggests that the greatest impact on phonemic awareness development is achieved when there is a combination of interaction with print and explicit attention to the sound structure in spoken words. Teachers making the underlying sound structure explicit when at the same time referring to the print. (Cunningham et al., 1998)

What are the key components of a Phonological Awareness Intervention?

Teach Phonological Awareness with Joyful Interventions

The new science of neural understanding can be translated into exciting and practical classroom strategies and many promising implications for vulnerable children. Vulnerable children do not need “skill and drill.” They need joyful interventions, plenty of laughter, friendship, and promise: the promise of a joyful and literate future – forever. Struggling children need to believe they can “do it.” Intriguing play centers embedded with skills in a game environment work for all children.

Games work! Tim Rasinski, renowned literacy researcher, emphasizes the importance of using a game approach to skill development.

I have found that word identification instruction seems to be most engaging, authentic and effective when it feels like a game for students and teachers. Think of all the games we play as teachers in one form or another – Scrabble, Boggle, Scrabble Slam, Crossword Puzzles, Wheel of Fortune, Taboo [and so on]. If adults love games that involve words, why wouldn't students? Indeed, that is what we have found. Making words, word ladders, word sorts, word bingo, word walls all have the feel of a game that makes the students want to engage. (Vacca & Vacca, 2012)

For maximum impact, Phonological Awareness skills are introduced and taught in whole-class sessions. Games and playful activities such as word sorts are introduced there, then placed in practice centers where children can explore ways to apply the skills in meaningful literacy contexts while teachers work with small groups of children who have been assessed as requiring additional instruction.

Joyful Literacy Interventions (Mort, 2014) describes how many teachers have used assessment procedures in joyful early learning classrooms that integrate skill assessment and tracking. The following quote is from a teacher describing how she uses the Circle Charts to implement skill development interventions:

In my classroom, everyone knows where our Circle Charts are, what the colored circles represent, and why we use them.

- They hang behind my desk on a clipboard where I can access them quickly for daily use. It is my goal to review them every day so that I can group students more effectively and choose literacy centers based on areas of need.
- During our ABC Tub times I can informally assess my students while they play literacy games in a relaxed atmosphere with their peers.
- As well, I can hold quick conferences with students during free-play centers to discuss their learning on the charts and set goals for the future.
- Sharing the data has been a rewarding process for everyone involved. Students love seeing their line of circles being filled in and they understand what the data means.
- I make an effort to involve families in the learning process and often share the Circle Charts with them before or after school. In a matter of moments, a parent and I can share their child's growth and note which alphabet letters or essential (foundational) literacy skills could be practiced at school and home. In this way, families are receiving more consistent and descriptive feedback on their child's progress rather than receiving three formal report cards in the year. (Mort, 2014)



Smiling students enjoying “Hop and Pop” games.

2. Phonological Awareness

2b. Assessment Instructions

Purposes:

- To determine if a student can both discriminate and produce rhymes.
- To determine if a student can identify initial sounds in common words.
- To determine if a student can blend together syllables to form a word.
- To determine if a student can segment a sentence of one-syllable words, segment words into syllables and segment words into phonemes.
- To determine if a student can delete one word from a compound word.

Achievement Indicators:

- Use rhyming to identify whether words rhyme and produce a word that rhymes with another.
- Use sound discrimination to tell the difference between single speech sounds.
- Use blending to orally blend syllables into a whole word.
- Use segmentation to clap the words in a 3 to 6 word single-syllable word sentence.
- Identify 2 words in a compound word.
- Identify the first sound and ending sound in a one-syllable word.

Procedure:

1. Before using the phonological awareness section with individual students, demonstrate the process with the whole class first.
2. Practice rhyming, isolating, blending, segmenting and deleting together.
3. Demonstrate isolating phonemes using 3 *unifix* or wooden cubes.
(2 of the same color, 1 different - □ ■ ■) This will help make an abstract concept more concrete.
4. Expose students to the process and language of the phonological awareness section prior to screening. This will save time and may even be enough to solidify the concept for some students.
5. Screen students individually in a quiet setting because these are auditory tasks. Prepare an area free of noise and have the *unifix* blocks available.
6. Rescreen students at a later date for only the sections where a student has received 3 or less. (A score of 4/5 is considered mastery and would warrant a full circle. A score of 2/5 or 3/5 score would warrant a half circle and a need for further review or practice. Less than 2/5 would indicate a need for re-teaching.)
7. Fill in the result on the Circle Charts.

Kindergarten Skills Assessment Instructions***Discriminate between rhyming and non-rhyming words***

Directions: "I'm going to say two words and ask you if they rhyme. Listen carefully."

Demonstration item: "Fan rhymes with man. Do fan and boy rhyme?"

Additional demonstration items: *mitt/fit, mitt/bit, mitt/ben*

Stimulus	Response	
1. look/took		
2. fun/sun		
3. farm/car		
4. hop/sand		
5. dad/sad		
Total		/5

Note: nonsense words are acceptable.

Produce words that rhyme

Directions: “I’m going to say a word and I want you to tell me a word that rhymes with it. Listen carefully.”

Demonstration item: “Tell me a word that rhymes with bat.”

Stimulus	Response	
1. rap		
2. win		
3. same		
4. trouble		
5. flower		
Total		/5

Isolate initial letters

Materials: 3 blocks – 2 of the same color.

Place the blocks in a row with different colored block at the beginning of the row:



Directions: “I’m going to say a word and ask you to tell me the beginning or first sound of the word. Listen carefully.”

Demonstration item: Say “cat.” Then ask, “What’s the beginning sound in the word cat?” or “What sound does the word cat start with?” Point to the first block.



Popcorn wands for word practice.

Stimulus	Response	
1. bug		
2. sick		
3. pan		
4. duck		
5. fudge		
Total		/5

Blend syllables

Directions: "I will say the parts of a word and you are to tell me what the word is."

ta-ble, ba-na-na

Stimulus	Response	
1. ba – by		
2. win – dow		
3. tel – e – phone		
4. pop – si – cle		
5. lem – on – ade		
Total		/5

Segment (words in sentences)

Directions: "I will say a sentence and I want you to tap one time for each word that I say. My house is big."

Tester should demonstrate by tapping on table once for each word in the sentence.

Stimulus	Response	
1. Tom can jump.	3 taps/	
2. My dog is black.	4 taps/	
3. Some boys can skip.	4 taps/	
4. I have six blue books.	5 taps/	
5. The kite is up high.	5 taps/	
Total		/5

Delete Parts of Compound Words

Directions: "Listen – I will say a word to you and say it again without one of its parts. "Cowboy" – Now I'll say it again but I won't say "boy." The answer is "cow." Now I want you to try. Say "football." Now say it again but don't say "foot." (Answer: "ball.")

Stimulus	Response	Correct Response	
1. Say mailbag	Say it again, but don't say bag.	mail	
2. Say sunlight	Say it again, but don't say sun.	light	
3. Say backpack	Say it again, but don't say pack	back	
4. Say shoelace	Say it again, but don't say lace	shoe	
5. Say driveway	Say it again, but don't say drive.	way	
Total			/5

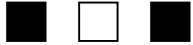
K to 2 Skills Assessment Instructions

(Continue to teach and practice K skills as necessary. By grade 2 most skills should be mastered; if not re-teaching will be required).

Isolate medial letters

Materials: 3 blocks – 2 of the same color.

Place blocks in a row with different colored block in the middle of the row:



Directions: “I’m going to say a word and ask you to tell me the middle sound in the word. Listen carefully.”

Demonstration item: Say “cat.” Then ask, “*What’s the middle sound in the word cat?*” Point to the middle block.

Additional demonstration items: *dog, mouse*

Stimulus	Response	
1. bug		
2. sick		
3. pan		
4. duck		
5. fudge		
Total		/5

Isolate final letters

Materials: 3 blocks – 2 of the same color.

Place blocks in a row with a different colored block at the end of the row:



Directions: “I’m going to say a word and ask you to tell me the end or last sound of the word. Listen carefully.”

Demonstration item: Say “cat.” Then ask, “What’s the end sound in the word cat?” or “What sound does the word cat end with?” Point to the last block. (Additional demonstration items: *dog, mouse*.)

Stimulus	Response	
1. bug		
2. sick		
3. pan		
4. duck		
5. fudge		
Total		/5

Blend phonemes/letters

Directions: "I will say parts of a word and you tell me the word."

"c-a-t / d-o-g / b-l-ue"

Stimulus	Response	
1. b-oy		
2. m-a-n		
3. c-l-ea-n		
4. w-i-n-d-ow		
5. b-a-b-y		
Total		/5

Segment phonemes

Directions: "I will say a word and I want you to clap for each sound in the word."

"*Cat.*" Tester will demonstrate by clapping for each phoneme. (c-a-t - 3 claps)

Stimulus	Response	
1. on	2 claps/ o - n	
2. clap	4 claps/ c - l - a - p	
3. seashell	5 claps/ s - ea - sh - e - ll	
4. plant	5 claps/ p - l - a - n - t	
5. slip	4 claps/ s - l - i - p	
Total		/5

Segment syllables/compound words

Directions: "I will say a word and I want you to tap one time for each part of the word."

"*Ba-na-na.*" Tester should demonstrate by tapping on an arm for each part of the word.

Stimulus	Response	
1. cowboy	2 taps/ cow - boy	
2. baseball	2 taps/ base - ball	
3. computer	3 taps/ com - pu - ter	
4. watermelon	4 taps/ wa - ter - me - lon	
5. refrigerator	5 taps/ re - frig - er - a - tor	
Total		/5