

What is Phonemic Awareness?

Phonemic awareness may be defined as the understanding that speech is made up of separate sounds or phonemes. To demonstrate phonemic awareness, children may be required to perform certain tasks that manipulate language:

rhyming
blending phonemes to create a word
counting the number of phonemes they hear in a word
segmenting phonemes of a spoken word
phoneme substitution
phoneme addition
phoneme deletion

Examples of each of these tasks may be found in most reading/phonics/phonemic awareness books for teachers.

Research says . . .

Stanovich's (1986) research indicates that phonemic awareness is the most potent predictor of success in learning to read . . . and it is more highly related to reading than tests of general intelligence, reading readiness and comprehension. Marilyn Adams (1990) goes on to say that phonemic awareness is the most important core and causal factor separating normal and disabled readers. She further reports that the lack of phonemic awareness has been identified as the most powerful determinant of the likelihood of failure. Ehri (1984) states that phonemic awareness is central in learning to read and spell.

Dr. Hallie Yopp reported the following research findings in a lecture at SDSU:

- ◆ Performance on phonemic awareness tasks and reading and spelling achievement are highly related.
- ◆ Some illiterate adults lack phonemic awareness.
- ◆ The correlation between phonemic awareness and reading and spelling achievement remains significant even when intelligence and socio-economic status are controlled.
- ◆ Experimental studies reveal a causal relationship: phonemic awareness facilitates reading and spelling acquisition.
- ◆ The importance of phonemic awareness in reading achievement cuts across instructional approaches.

How do We Develop Phonemic Awareness?

This section will take some time! As a former kindergarten teacher (back in the dark ages!), I am a firm believer in developing phonemic awareness and playing with the sounds of language before focusing on print symbols. There are many commercial and teacher suggested programs out there, and I will list

Read-Aloud Books for Phonemic Awareness Task Development

Chapman, Cheryl. (1993). *Pass the Fritters, Critters*. New York: Scholastic, Inc.: rhyming.

Jordano, Kimberly and Callella-Jones, Trisha, *Fall Phonemic Awareness Songs & Rhymes*. Cypress, CA: Creative Teaching Press.

Most, Bernard. (1996) *Cock-A-Doodle-Moo!* Harcourt Brace: phoneme addition and substitution.

Salisbury, Kent. (1998). *There's a Dragon in my Wagon!* New York: McClanahan Book Company, Inc.: phoneme substitution.

_____. *There's a Bug in my Mug!*

_____. *A Bear Ate my Pear!*

_____. *My Nose is a Hose!*

Slepian, Jan and Seidler, A. (1967) *The Hungry Thing*. Scholastic: phoneme substitution.

Altoona Baboona: phoneme substitution

The Disappearing Alphabet: phoneme deletion