

Guidelines for Teaching Phonological Awareness

Guidelines for teaching phonological awareness include the following:

- Use the critical features of effective instruction.
 - Explicit instruction is critical because struggling readers, including students with reading disabilities, tend to have poor phonological awareness. Explicit phonological awareness instruction is recommended before and during reading instruction for struggling readers.

Model each activity when it is first introduced by demonstrating how to say different sounds as students watch the formation of your mouth. Students can use small mirrors to watch their own mouths as they practice. Segment simple words into phonemes by saying and clapping your hands at each sound while children observe. Use a puppet to "help" you segment or blend individual phonemes of words as a fun way to model the sounds.

Provide guided practice and review to help struggling readers learn skills.

Provide pacing adjustments (e.g., repeating key ideas or directions, allowing extra time to complete an activity).

Provide error correction systematically; do not allow students to practice errors or to be unresponsive. When errors occur, simply say, "Stop, watch me," model, and have students repeat.

(See Introduction section for other critical features of effective instruction.)
- Assess each student individually. Because phonological awareness is a predictor of early reading achievement, assessment of phonological awareness enables early identification of students who are at risk for difficulty in learning to read.
 - Assessment information, which is collected before instruction, helps to identify students who do not need intensive instruction in phonological awareness (e.g., students who can consistently segment and blend four or five phonemes, including consonant blends in complex words, such as **strap** and **brake**).
 - Assessment also helps determine which students do need explicit instruction in onset-rime and phonemic awareness.

Effective Instruction for Struggling Readers: Research-Based Practices

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

© 2003 UT System/TEA

- The Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), Tejas Lee, or other reading inventories can help determine students' knowledge of phonological awareness. (There is a list of State-Approved Early Reading Instruments in the Introduction Teacher Resources section.)

For example, assessment might include the following:

Saying sounds in words (e.g., /j/ /a/ /m/) and asking the student to say the word correctly (**jam**),

Saying words (e.g., **nap**) and asking the student to provide each sound he or she hears in the word (/n/ /a/ /p/),

Saying words, deleting the initial or final sound, and asking students to identify what is left of the word (e.g., **tape** without /t/ says **ape**), and

Saying words and asking students to change either the beginning, middle, or ending sound to create new words.

- Assessment after instruction can be used to monitor student progress and to make instructional decisions (e.g., effectiveness of instruction, need for adaptations).

(The Phonemic Awareness Progress Check is included in the Phonological Awareness Teacher Resources section.)

- Consider the characteristics of the activities.
 - The number of sounds in a word is one characteristic (e.g., **me**, **cat**, **car**, **ship**, and **shoe** are easier to blend and segment than **sand**, **bread**, and **flat**).
 - The phoneme's position in a word is another characteristic (e.g., initial sounds in words are easier to manipulate than final or medial sounds; so changing **mop** to **top** is easier than changing **mop** to **map** or to **mom**).
 - The phonological properties of words are another characteristic (e.g., continuous sounds, such as /mmm/, /fff/, and /sss/, are easier to produce and blend than stop sounds, such as /t/, /g/, and /b/).

(Examples of Continuous and Stop Sounds can be found in the Phonological Awareness Teacher Resources section.)
- Include a range of different types of activities when teaching your students.
 - Start with easier activities. Activities with one to three phonemes are less complex than activities with longer strings of phonemes.

- Extend activities to address the skill level of your students. For example, using an identification task (e.g., What is the first sound in **moon**?) is easier than a production task (e.g., Tell me a word that begins with /m/).
- Use concrete objects during instruction until students demonstrate an understanding of phonemes. Then you can begin to fade some of these prompts.
 - Use concrete objects (e.g., blocks, counters, puppets, picture cue cards, and blank tiles for the sounds of words; later on, add letters to the tiles to represent sound-symbol correspondence) during instruction until students demonstrate an understanding of phonemes.
 - Use students' "built-in" concrete objects—their fingers—to demonstrate individual phonemes. Use of students' fingers for blending provides visual and kinesthetic support for the task.
- Add letter-sound correspondence instruction to help students understand the alphabetic principle.
 - A combination of phonological awareness and letter-sound correspondence is necessary to understand the alphabetic principle (i.e., understanding that the sequence of letters in written words represents the sequence of sounds or phonemes in spoken words).
 - Most phonological awareness activities can be taken to a print level (e.g., blank tiles or counters can be replaced with letter tiles for blending phonemes; letter cards and word family cards can be used for onset-rime instruction).
 - Research shows that letter-sound instruction combined with phonological awareness instruction enhances reading and spelling performance.

(Modeling Phonemic Awareness and Letter-Sound Knowledge can be found in the Phonological Awareness Teacher Resources section.)

(ITRA, 2000; Chard & Dickson, 1999; Chard & Osborn, 1999; Clark & Uhry, 1995; National Reading Panel, 2000; Smith et al., 1998; Snow et al., 1998; Texas Education Agency, 1998; Torgeson & Mathes, 2000; Uhry, 1999)