

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds that comprise spoken words. It is understanding that language is composed of small units of sounds-phonemes.

The level of phonemic awareness is a strong predictor of success in learning to read and write.

Competent readers and writers can:

- identify and generate rhymes
- scan through words and sequence the sounds made by letters or chunks of letters (cat=c/a/t or spot=sp-ot))
- hear sounds in sequence in words and reproduce them in print



Competent readers and writers know how to:

- generate new words from a known word
- connect sounds or spelling patterns in words they do not know
- decode printed words when reading
- encode spoken words when spelling

Teaching phonemic awareness enables a child to hear sounds in words and gives the child the ability to alter and rearrange sounds to create new words.

In an effective balanced literacy program, teachers

- ✓ children clap syllables.
- ✓ use sound/symbol boxes (Elkonin boxes) to demonstrate the sounds contained in a word.
- ✓ engage students in daily literature and writing activities.
- ✓ read rhyming text aloud.
- ✓ play with the sounds of language (alliteration, i.e., “The big boy bounced” and rhyme, i.e., “the cat sat on the mat”).
- ✓ do shared writing frequently.
- ✓ encourage children to listen to, sing, and create rhyming songs.
- ✓ have students practice segmenting onset and rhymes (c-at).
- ✓ provide a center equipped with letter tiles/magnetic letters so children can develop letters/sound relationships.

Intervention activities must be reinforced daily: whole group, small group, and individually. By using a variety of manipulatives and teacher-generated materials, the teacher can focus the children’s attention to various aspects of sound and print.