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Literacyhow
Empower teaching excellence.

November Newsletter



At Literacy How we believe that literacy is the key to opportunity and that every child has the right to read. We also believe that teachers, not programs or products, teach students to read, write and spell, and we are committed to helping teachers find the best ways to teach.

Our monthly newsletters provide an opportunity to share some of the research

and tools we believe will be helpful to teachers in their classrooms throughout the school year. This month we focus on **Phonemic Awareness** – the understanding of, and the ability to manipulate the individual sounds (called phonemes) in spoken words. Phonemic awareness is essential to the development of word recognition and ultimately automatic word reading.

Why is Phonemic Awareness Important?

- It provides the basis for understanding that sounds, called phonemes, are spelled with letters. This ability is one of the strongest predictors of reading success both for English speaking children and English Language Learners.
- Despite the fact that there are decades of research on phonemic awareness, an ongoing debate continues about the sequence of instruction, the assessments that should be used to guide instruction, and how that instruction should be delivered. One important finding from research is that phonemic awareness and knowledge of how English as an alphabetic system works enables novice readers to recognize words by sight – the ultimate goal of phonics instruction.

The take home message for teachers is that **phonemic awareness** and **phonics**, though distinctly different, are inextricably linked. Stay tuned for our next newsletter where we explain more about this connection and share resources that you can take into your classrooms.

Videos

* Body Say It and Move is a fun, kinesthetic activity that develops students' ability to segment and blend one-syllable words--up to five phonemes. Teachers pronounce a

word and use it in a sentence and then instruct students to 'Say it and Move it.' They then ask students to touch their head, shoulders, waist, knees, and feet, depending on the number of sounds/phonemes. Students are reminded to touch their waist for the vowel sound. If a word has an initial blend (e.g., stop), they will touch their head and shoulders for each sound in the blend. If a word has a final blend (e.g., last), they will touch their knees for the first sound in the blend and their toes for the final sound in the blend. This phoneme awareness activity is appropriate for K-2 .



* A Literacy How Mentor models gestures for the short vowel sounds-- /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/ --while students follow along.





Tips and ideas

Teacher Tip: Pronounce phonemes properly

Listen to the correct way to pronounce each of the 44 phonemes in this [video](#) and on The University of Iowa's [Sounds of Speech](#). For example, say /b/, not /buh/.

Principals' Tips: Enlist SLP support

Provide teachers with support so they can accurately assess students' phonemic awareness (PA). Some teachers may have difficulty with PA themselves. In which case, they'll benefit from instruction and practice assessing this all-important metalinguistic skill. Enlist the expertise of your speech and language pathologist (SLP)!

Also, see these [tools](#) for progress monitoring and assessment for phonemic awareness.

Teacher Tip: Teach PA throughout the day

Incorporate PA instruction for Pre-K and K into regular daily transitions, outside play, and

throughout the day. For example, get your coat on if your name begins with /s/.

Something to read

Read more to learn more!

Adams, M.J., et al. (1998). The elusive phoneme: Why phonemic awareness is so important and how to help children develop it.
American Educator Spring/Summer, 18-29.

Activities



MAKE FUN PHONICS PHONES

These [easy-to-make](#), inexpensive [phonics phones](#) help students focus in on the sounds of their own voices.

Resources

For further research and activities, you can purchase our **Phonemic Awareness**

& Phonics professional series book. Phonemic awareness and phonics—the two domains of literacy development essential for automatic word reading—are covered in *Phonemic Awareness and Phonics: Knowledge to Practice*. Related, but different, both domains are required for children to successfully learn to decode. Phonemic awareness, the realization that spoken words are made up of individual speech sounds (phonemes), provides the foundation for students to learn phonics. Phonics, the knowledge that these speech sounds are represented by letters (graphemes), provides the content and skill to access 85% of the words they need to read and spell. Empowered with this content and skills, beginning readers can acquire the code-breaking ability they need to unlock the printed word to become skilled readers.

[Purchase the Phonemic Awareness Book on Amazon](#)

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