

Some Ideas for Phonological Awareness Activities

Rhyme Awareness Activities are an easy and natural way for children to begin to focus on speech sound patterns. Always exaggerate the portion of the word that rhymes so children will hear the speech sound pattern's "likeness" or "difference". Following are two activities:

1. **Bean Bag Rhyme Game:** The teacher begins the game by holding the bean bag and saying a word (e.g., "pat"), explaining that whoever she gives the bean bag to must say another word that rhymes. The bean bag is passed around the circle of children as they produce rhyming words.
2. **End-of-the-Line Rhyme:** The teacher recites a familiar nursery rhyme to ensure that children know the rhyme. Next, the teacher recites the nursery rhyme omitting the final rhyming word and asks the children to provide it. (E.g., Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow. Everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to _____ (go). Then, the teacher asks the children to provide other words that rhyme with "snow" and "go".

Sentence and Word Awareness: This may require explicit and direct instruction in language units, specifically units of the sentence and word. The following activities are designed to demonstrate language units to children.

1. **Leggo Word Blocks:** This activity provides the students with an opportunity to manipulate leggo blocks that represent words. The teacher writes a word on a leggo block. Beginning with a short two-word sentence, the teacher builds sentences using two blocks (e.g., "Linda reads."). As the teacher builds the sentence, he or she emphasizes the terms "word" and "sentence" (e.g., These two words join together to make a sentence. They walk hand-in-hand."). As students have success with two-word sentences, they make longer sentences.
2. **Morning Message Cut-Ups:** The sentences from the morning message can be written on a large piece of paper and then cut up so that each sentence is on its own strip. These simple sentences can be cut apart into separate words (this will show word boundaries). Students may then re-create the morning message sentences.

Syllable Awareness: This level of phonological awareness is a bit more challenging. Once children understand sentences and words, it is important that they grasp that words are made up of smaller "chunks" – that is, syllables. Syllable awareness brings the child to a better understanding of the speech-sound patterns. The following activities may be used to develop syllable awareness:

1. **Counting Syllables:** Ask each child to clap or count the number of syllables in their name. Repeat this activity with other classroom words (e.g., chalkboard, eraser, pencil, etc.).
2. **Counting Syllables with Tokens:** Move tokens to represent the number of syllables in words.
3. **The King's Successor** (Lundbergh, et al., 1988): Children stand in a circle while the king issues an order, pausing between syllables. Children are to do the action in time to the spoken syllables (e.g., "march-ing", "walk-ing", etc.) It is important that the children experience moving in time together.

Phonemic Awareness: Dividing words into phonemes is often a difficult and abstract task for students. Many phonemes are difficult to hear, and students may require repeated practice hearing speech sounds and producing these speech sounds with their mouths. Phoneme-level training should take place throughout the Kindergarten and Grade One years. Beginning sounds mark the boundaries in print and help children learn how to mark boundaries in spoken words. Beginning sound awareness helps children become aware of spoken word boundaries. This supports children as they learn to

Some Ideas for Phonological Awareness Activities

separate the speech stream into separate words. Awareness of end and middle sounds of words come after good beginning sound awareness.

1. **Go Fish:** Select pictures that represent words with either initial, final or medial speech sounds (targets). Do not use words with blends. Put a small piece of magnetic tape on the back of each card and give children fishing poles with paper clips for hooks. As the child “fishes” a picture from the pond, he or she must give the required answer (i.e., “What was the first/middle/end sound in that word?”). If the child is correct, he or she may keep the picture. This game can be played as a card game where the children ask for a picture card from another player that has the same beginning, middle or end sound.
2. **Segmentation and Blending with a Puppet:** Tell the children that the puppet does not know how to talk very well and that they need to help teach the puppet to talk. Then say words separating the beginning sound from the rest of the word. Have the children imitate and then have them say the words the “right” way so the puppet can hear it. Example: The puppet says, “rein ... deer”, child would respond with “rein ... deer” and then tell the puppet how to say it correctly, “reindeer”. With shorter words (CVC), “f ... ish” could be repeated then said as “fish”.
3. **I’m Thinking of Something:** The teacher gives hints about an object by first giving a phonemic cue and then describing the object (e.g., “I’m thinking of something that begins with [s-s-s-s], it is skinny and slithers in the grass and hisses.”).

Note: *All of the above activities are “pre-phonics”. Once the written symbol is introduced with the speech sound it represents, then phonics instruction has begun. Phonics and higher level phonemic awareness go hand in hand.*

4. **Sorting by Sound:** Children can learn to “sort” pictures by their initial, final and medial sounds. Select a set of cards that represent 5 different sounds (5 cards each). Have the children name the pictures and sort them into piles that are represented by the written symbol. Talk about how the written symbol represents each sound. Example: written symbols, “b”, “m”, “g”, “s” and “t” may be used to begin this game. Have the children name the pictures and sort them into piles that are represented by the written symbol. Talk about how the written symbol represents each speech sound.

Sound-Symbol Association: The following games can increase a child’s automaticity of sound-symbol association:

1. **Sound Bingo:** This game is played using a bingo card with the written symbols in squares on the card. The teacher gives the children tokens to place on the squares as the teacher produces speech sounds (NOT letter names).
2. **Sound Flash Cards:** Children are shown a written symbol and asked to produce the speech sound it represents. Charts may be kept for children to show their decreasing time and increasing accuracy. This is highly motivating for children to see “how fast” they can “say” their speech sounds. The same can be done for letter names.
3. **Spelling:** Give children letter cards or letter tiles and have them spell simple CVC words. Using these cards, the teacher can reinforce blending, segmenting and deletion activities. As children learn to print the letters, move to pencil and paper activities.