

Phonological Awareness Interventions

Phonological awareness is the knowledge of sounds, or phonemes, in our language and how those sounds blend together to form words, phrases, and sentences. Phonological *processing* refers to the use of phonological information to process oral and written language. Signs of weakness in phonological processing may include difficulty with the following:

- Recognizing and producing rhyming words or patterns of alliteration
- Orally breaking words into syllables or sounds
- Identifying whether a specific sound occurs in the beginning, end, or middle of a word
- Blending syllables and sounds to make a word with rapid naming tasks (all of the above was taken from The Phonological Awareness Book from LinguSystems, Inc. by Carolyn Robertson and Wanda Salter).

Strategies for each skill area:

Rhyming: Explain that two words rhyme when they sound *almost* the same on the last half of the word. Give several examples such as hat/bat, dog/hog, cheese/squeeze, make/break, etc. Also point out the part of each word that is the same..... for example, you can use a jingle such as “hat, bat, they both say at”; “cheese, squeeze, they both say eeze.” Use written as well as verbal cues to aid in understanding. Write the words on a piece of paper, underline the rhyming parts, and as the student thinks of additional rhyming words, write them down and underline the corresponding part.

Segmenting words into syllables: For multisyllabic words, demonstrate to the student the number of “beats” each word has by clapping once for each syllable. You could also use manipulatives such as math cubes, blocks, or even pieces of wrapped candy such as starburst. You would slide one piece forward as you said each syllable.

Segmenting words in phonemes: Demonstrate to the student how to segment words with two phonemes. For example, “I am going to say a word, and then I will take it apart. At. /a/.../t/... At. That word has two sounds in it – ‘a’ and ‘t’. When I put them together, it makes the word ‘at’.” It may be helpful to use manipulatives to represent individual sounds for this activity as well, especially math cubes that can be snapped together at the beginning and taken apart as the child segments each word. Be careful not to add sounds to phonemes. For example, do not say “puh” with voicing on the “uh”. Be sure to ONLY say the individual phoneme. Keep in mind that the numbers of letters in a words may not necessarily be the same as the number of sounds. For example, the word *box* has three letters, but has four sounds: /b/.../o/.../k/.../s/. One other thing to keep in mind is that although diphthongs are made with two letters, they make one sound such as *ow* in the word *cow*.

Identifying beginning, middle, or ending sounds: Use manipulatives, one for each sound in the word. Say the word at a normal rate, sliding all manipulatives together to represent blending the phonemes. Then say each sound as you point to each manipulative. If you are wanting the student to identify the beginning phoneme, point to the first manipulative as you ask, “What is the first sound?” If you are wanting the student to identify the ending phoneme, point to the last manipulative as you ask “What is the last sound?” If you are wanting the student to identify the middle phoneme, point to the middle manipulative as you ask, “What sound is in the middle?”

Blending syllables to make a word: Using manipulatives, slide one for each syllable as you say it. Demonstrate the blending of the syllables as you slide all manipulatives together to form the word. Have the student imitate this process after each word. As they become better at this, present the syllables one at a time with the manipulatives and have the student blend them together on their own.

Blending sounds to make a word: Using manipulatives, slide one for each phoneme as you say it. Demonstrate the blending of the phonemes as you slide all manipulatives together to form the word. Have the student imitate this process after each word. As they become better at this, present the phonemes one at a time with the manipulatives and have the student blend them together on their own.