Phonemic Awareness
Terms to know

• **Phonological Awareness**: awareness of and access to the sound structure of oral language
  – Children demonstrate awareness for increasingly smaller phonological units of speech as they develop

• **Phonological Memory**: Temporary working or short-term memory storage for phonological information (e.g., temporarily remembering a phone number)
  – Necessary for holding phonological information in memory for blending sounds in words
  – More important for words not in an individual’s lexicon

• **Rapid Naming**: Retrieval of phonological information from long-term or permanent memory
  – Often assessed with objects, letters, colors, or digits
Phonemic Awareness & Phonics

• Phonics presumes a working knowledge of the phonemic composition of words
• Prior to 2000, most reading programs took PA for granted
• If children lack PA they cannot generalize their phonics instruction
  – Difficulty blending, sounding out new words, as well as, retaining words already learned
• When PA is integrated into programs, reading and spelling growth of typically developing and at-risk students is accelerated
Reciprocal Relationship between Phonemic Awareness and Reading

• Learning to read in an alphabetic system requires PA, but as a person reads in an alphabetic system, his or her PA increases
Assessing Phonemic Awareness

• Isolation or segmentation of one or more phonemes in a word
• Blending or combining a sequence of separate phonemes into a word
• Manipulation (add, subtract, or rearrange) of phonemes to make a different word
• CTOPP; TOPA; CELF-4
Teaching Phonemic Awareness  
(Adams et al., 1998)

• Listening games  
  – Teach children to listen attentively, actively, and analytically  
  – Replace a few words in a story with nonsense words

• Rhyming  
  – Rhyme play directs a child’s attention to similarities and differences in the sounds of words  
  – Objective is to develop the children’s attention to the sounds in language not spellings in words  
  – Sensitivity to rhyme is very basic form of phonological awareness  
  – Being able to rhyme does not guarantee phonemic awareness

• Words and Sentences  
  – Appreciation of syntax and cohesion of sentences can only be developed over time through experience  
  – Start by teaching the basics  
    • Sentences are parts of language that convey separate thoughts or ideas  
    • Sentences are composed of separate meaningful words  
  – The meaning of a sentence depends on the words in it and their order
Teaching Phonemic Awareness, cont.  
(Adams et al., 1998)

- **Awareness of Syllables**  
  - Unlike words, syllables are meaningless  
  - Syllables can be heard and felt  
  - Clap out syllables

- **Initial and Final Sounds**

- **Discover that words contain phonemes**  
  - Recognize and distinguish individual phonemes  
  - Sometimes easier to feel by the position of the mouth than to hear  
  - Explore, compare, and contrast the way phonemes are articulated  
  - Note that this is difficult to do when speakers do not enunciate well  
  - It is important to give all children the opportunity to think of the response on their own before you allow anyone to answer  
  - Switch between group and individual response to assess and give extra practice

- **Phonemes**  
  - Understanding how the alphabetic principle works depends on understanding that all words are composed of phonemes  
  - Difficult because words are co-articulated and acoustically variable from one speaker to the next  
  - Provide activities that use objects to represent phonemes  
  - Children often lose the vowels when analyzing words  
    - Note: When they move to spelling its important to teach them that every syllable has a vowel  
  - NEXT STEP – Teaching letters and spellings (beginning of phonics instruction)


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