SCOTTVILLE STATE SCHOOL SIGNIFICANT READING DIFFICULTY POLICY

A SCOTTVILLE STATE SCHOOL SIGNATURE STRATEGY

At Scottville State School, teaching and teacher aide staff participate in professional development to refresh, update or learn about how to identify significant reading difficulties in reading and options for intervention to implement when significant difficulty in reading is identified.

This policy compliments the school’s current use of Jolly Phonics in the Early Phase of learning.

This policy is based on evidence from research papers about phonemic awareness used in the Inclusion Online course called ‘Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading’, specifically, ‘Big Ideas in Beginning Reading’, published by the University of Oregon Centre on Teaching and Learning (University of Oregon, ‘Big Ideas in Beginning Reading’, http://reading.uoregon.edu/big_ideas/pa/index.php, Centre on Teaching and Learning, Accessed 2013).

"One of the most compelling and well-established findings in the research on beginning reading is the important relationship between phonemic awareness and reading acquisition." (Kame'enui, E. J., Simmons, D. C., Baker, S., Chard, D. J., Dickson, S. V., Gunn, B., Smith, S. B., Sprick, M., & Lin, S. J. (1997). Effective strategies for teaching beginning reading. In E. J. Kame'enui, & D. W. Carnine (Eds.), Effective Teaching Strategies That Accommodate Diverse Learners. Columbus, OH: Merrill.)

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EXPECTATIONS OF SCOTTVILLE STATE SCHOOL TEACHERS

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**What Teachers Should Be Able to Do**

- Assess phonemic awareness and diagnose difficulties.
- Produce speech sounds accurately.
- Use a developmental continuum to select/design phonemic awareness instruction.
- Select examples according to complexity of skills, phonemes, word types, and learner experience.
- Model and deliver phonemic awareness lessons.
- Link phonemic awareness to reading and spelling.
- Evaluate the design of instructional materials.

Centre on Teaching and Learning, Accessed 2013).

**Definitions of key Phonemic Awareness terminology:**

- **Phoneme:** A phoneme is a speech sound. It is the smallest unit of language and has no inherent meaning.
- **Phonemic Awareness:** The ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words, and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds (Yopp, 1992). Phonemic awareness involves hearing language at the phoneme level.
- **Phonics:** use of the code (sound-symbol relationships to recognize words.
- **Phonological Awareness:** The ability to hear and manipulate the sound structure of language. This is an encompassing term that involves working with the sounds of language at the word, syllable, and phoneme level.
- **Continuous Sound:** A sound that can be prolonged (stretched out) without distortion (e.g., r, s, a, m).
- **Onset-Rime:** The onset is the part of the word before the vowel; not all words have onsets. The rime is the part of the word including the vowel and what follows it.
- **Segmentation:** The separation of words into phonemes.


**What Does the Lack of Phonemic Awareness Look Like?**

Children lacking phonemic awareness skills cannot:

- group words with similar and dissimilar sounds (mat, mug, sun)
- blend and split syllables (foot)
- blend sounds into words (m_a_n)
- segment a word as a sequence of sounds (e.g., fish is made up of three phonemes, /f/, /i/, /sh/)
- detect and manipulate sounds within words (change r in run to s).


**Phonemic Awareness Research Says:**

“The best predictor of reading difficulty in kindergarten [Prep] or first grade [Year 1] is the inability to segment words and syllables into constituent sound units (phonemic awareness)” (Lyon, 1995).
The ability to hear and manipulate phonemes plays a causal role in the acquisition of beginning reading skills (Smith, Simmons, & Kame’enui, 1998).

There is considerable evidence that the primary difference between good and poor readers lies in the good reader's phonological processing ability.

The effects of training phonological awareness and learning to read are mutually supportive. “Reading and phonemic awareness are mutually reinforcing: Phonemic awareness is necessary for reading, and reading, in turn, improves phonemic awareness still further.” (Shaywitz, 2003).

Phonological awareness is teachable and promoted by attention to instructional variables (Smith, Simmons, & Kame’enui, 1998).


**Phonemic Awareness (PA) is:**

1. the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds (Yopp, 1992).
2. essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system, because letters represent sounds or phonemes. Without phonemic awareness, phonics makes little sense.
3. fundamental to mapping speech to print. If a child cannot hear that ‘man’ and ‘moon’ begin with the same sound or cannot blend the sounds /rrrruuuuunnnnn/ into the word ‘run’, he or she may have great difficulty connecting sounds with their written symbols or blending sounds to make a word.
4. essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system.
5. a strong predictor of children who experience early reading success.


**An important distinction:**

- Phonemic awareness is NOT phonics.
- Phonemic awareness is AUDITORY and does not involve words in print.

- Phonemic Awareness is important ... It requires readers to notice how letters represent sounds. It primes readers for print.
- It gives readers a way to approach sounding out and reading new words.
- It helps readers understand the alphabetic principle (that the letters in words are systematically represented by sounds).

...but difficult:

- Although there are 26 letters in the English language, there are approximately 40 phonemes, or sound units, in the English language. (NOTE: the number of phonemes varies across sources.)
- Sounds are represented in 250 different spellings (e.g., /f/ as in ph, f, gh, ff).
- The sound units (phonemes) are not inherently obvious and must be taught. The sounds that make up words are ‘co-articulated’; that is, they are not distinctly separate from each other.

**Examples of Phonemes**

The word ‘sun’ has three phonemes: /s/ /u/ /n/. The table below shows different linguistic units from largest (sentence) to smallest (phoneme).
The word 'shut' also has three phonemes: /sh/ /u/ /t/.

**Examples of Phonemic Awareness Skills**

- Blending: What word am I trying to say? Mmmmm...ooww...p.
- Segmentation (first sound isolation): What is the first sound in mop? /m/
- Segmentation (last sound isolation): What is the last sound in mop? /p/
- Segmentation (complete): What are all the sounds you hear in mop? /m/ /o/ /p/

### Instruction

**Teaching Strategies and Examples**

**Sound Isolation**

**Example:** The first sound in **sun** is /s-s-s/.

**Blending**

**Example:** /s-s-s/ - /u-u-u/ - /n-n-n/ is **sun**.

**Segmenting**

**Example:** The sounds in **sun** are /s-s-s/ - /u-u-u/ - /n-n-n/.

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**Teaching Strategies and Examples: Sound Isolation**

**Use Conspicuous Strategies**

1. Show children how to do all the steps in the task before asking children to do the task.

   **Example:** (Put down two pictures that begin with different sounds and say the names of the pictures.) "My turn to say the first sound in **man**, /m-m-m/. **Mmman** begins with /m-m-m/. Everyone, say the first sound in **man**, /m-m-m/.

   **Non-example:** "Who can tell me the first sounds in these pictures?"

2. Use consistent and brief wording.

   **Example:** "The first sound in **Mmman** is /m-m-m/. Everyone say the first sound in **man**, /m-m-m/.

   **Non-example:** "**Man** starts with the same sound as the first sounds in **mountain**, **mop**, and **Miranda**. Does anyone know other words that begin with the same sound as **man**?"

3. Correct errors by telling the answer and having children repeat the correct answer.

   **Example:** "The first sound in **Man** is /m-m-m/. Say the first sound in **mmman** with me, /m-m-m/. /Mmman/.

   **Non-example:** Asking the question again or asking more questions. "Look at the picture again. What is the first sound?"
Teaching Strategies and Examples: Blending

Scaffold Task Difficulty

1. When children are first learning to blend, use examples with continuous sounds, because the sounds can be stretched and held.

   **Example:** "Listen, my lion puppet likes to talk in a broken way. When he says /mmm/ - /uuu/ - /mmm/ he means **mum**."

   **Non-example:** "Listen, my lion puppet likes to talk in a broken way. When he says /b/ - /e/ - /d/ he means **bed**."

2. When children are first learning the task, use short words in teaching and practice examples. Use pictures when possible.

   **Example:** Put down three pictures of CVC words and say: "My lion puppet wants one of these pictures. Listen to which picture he wants, /sss/ - /uuu/ - /nnn/. Which picture?"

   **Non-example:** ".../p/ - /e/ - /n/ - /c/ - /i/ - /l/. Which picture?" (This is a more advanced model that should be used later.)

3. When children are first learning the task, use materials that reduce memory load and to represent sounds.

   **Example:** Use pictures to help children remember the words and to focus their attention. Use a three-square strip or blocks to represent sounds in a word.

   **Non-example:** Provide only verbal activities.

4. As children become successful during initial learning, remove scaffolds by using progressively more difficult examples. As children become successful with more difficult examples, use fewer scaffolds, such as pictures.

   **Example:** Move from syllable or onset-rime blending to blending with all sounds in a word (phoneme blending). Remove scaffolds, such as pictures.

   "Listen, /s/ - /t/ - /o/ - /p/. Which picture?"

   "Listen, /s/ - /t/ - /o/ - /p/. What word?"

   **Non-example:** Provide instruction and practice at only the easiest levels with all the scaffolds.


Teaching Strategies and Examples: Phoneme Segmentation

Strategically Integrate Familiar and New Information

1. Recycle instructional and practice examples used for blending. Blending and segmenting are sides of the same coin. The only difference is whether children hear or produce a segmented word. Note: A segmenting response is more difficult for children to reproduce than a blending response.

   **Example:** "Listen, my lion puppet likes to say the sounds in words. The sounds in **mum** are /mmm/ - /uuu/ - /mmm/. Say the sounds in **mum** with us."

2. Concurrently teach letter-sound correspondences for the sounds children will be segmenting in words.

   **Example:** Letter sound /s/ and words **sun** and **sit**. Put down letter cards for familiar letter-sounds. Then, have children place pictures by the letter that begins with the same sound as the picture.
Non-example: Use letter-sounds that have not been taught when teaching first sound in pictures for phoneme isolation activities.

3. Make the connections between sounds in words and sounds of letters.

   Example: After children can segment the first sound, have them use letter tiles to represent the sounds.

Non-example: Letters in mastered phonologic activities are not used. Explicit connections between alphabetic and phonologic activities are not made.

4. Use phonologic skills to teach more advanced reading skills, such as blending letter-sounds to read words.

   Example: (Give children a 3-square strip and the letter tiles for s, u, n.) Have children do familiar tasks and blending to teach stretched blending with letters.


Assessment
Assessing Phonemic Awareness

- Phonemic awareness should be assessed from the beginning of [Prep through the first semester of Year 1] (Australianised version of American kindergarten to the spring of first grade).

- **All students** should be assessed a minimum of three times per year to be sure adequate progress toward end of year goals is made.

- **Students who are identified as at risk** of reading difficulty should be monitored one or two times per month to ensure effectiveness of intervention and to allow timely instructional changes.


Possible Assessment Instrument: Assessing Phonemic Awareness Using DIBELS measures

Phonemic Awareness skills can be assessed using standardized measures. The **Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)** assessment system provides two measures that can be used to assess phonemic segmentation skills, Initial Sounds Fluency (ISF) and Phonemic Segmentation Fluency (PSF).

References


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Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (1998). *Professional Development Guide*. Austin, TX: Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, University of Texas at Austin.


