

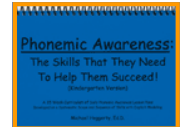
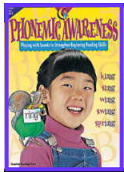
The Kindergarten Chronicles

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Why Phonemic Awareness?

Phonemic awareness performance is a strong predictor of long-term reading and spelling success and can predict literacy performance more accurately than variables such as intelligence, vocabulary knowledge, and socio-economic status (Gillon, 2004). Phonemic awareness is the understanding that spoken words are made up of individual sounds, which are called phonemes. Phonemic awareness is an ability that takes time and practice to develop. Individual progress will vary. Students benefit from a variety of experiences. What are some resources for teaching Nevada Academic Content Standard (NVACS) RF.K.2? One resource I use is *Phonemic Awareness: The Skills That They Need To Help Them Succeed!* by Dr. Michael Heggerty. This text teaches all parts of phonemic awareness in a very systematic, explicit manner. Another resource that is hands-on and engaging for young students is *Phonemic Awareness: Playing With Sounds to Strengthen Beginning Reading Skills* by Jo Fitzpatrick. This text contains activities for rhyming, segmenting, isolating, manipulating, and blending.



Halloween or Walloween?

A great Halloween inspired book is *Trick or Treat?* by Bill Martin. This book supports phonemic awareness perfectly. A boy goes trick or treating and when he knocks on Magic Merlin's door, a spell is cast upon him and everyone starts saying things "wackwards" in the story. The book leads into a great lesson on phoneme substitution to create new words.



Parent Engagement

How do I involve my students' families with reinforcing phonemic awareness skills? In October, I make a template for apples and pumpkins. The apple is for rhyme and the pumpkin is for initial phoneme identification. The template is made from a piece of construction paper, folded in half, so it opens like a book (visual). I send home the templates, with a parent letter, describing the assignment. Students open their paper and draw a picture on each side. For example, if we are practicing rhyme, a student draws a picture of a rug on the left side and then draws a bug on the right side. Here is a video of two students sharing their product with the class and with partners. Here is the parent letter that can be easily edited for different phonemic awareness skills. If you have students who are able to identify beginning, middle, and final sounds in words, encourage them to label each picture they draw.

Keep Them Involved All Year

Parents can do activities at home to help their child become more proficient with the skills being learned at school. Click on the RPD web address, www.rpd.net, to discover activities for teachers and parents to use.

In addition, parents can reinforce phonemic awareness at home by teaching their children nursery rhymes, tongue twisters, and jump rope chants. "Short rhymes and poems are particularly well suited for home use" (Rasinski & Padak, 2008). Encourage parents to read a favorite poem every evening. Parents can also use the poems for word play activities. Poems for young children can be found on the Internet quickly and easily. Reading aloud Dr. Seuss books is yet another fun way to play with the sounds of language!



Bill Hanlon, Director

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Say It Out Loud!

When asking students to identify beginning, medial, or final sounds in words, they are working at the phoneme level. The high impact skills at the phoneme level are blending and segmenting sounds in words. Students who can blend sounds into words can more easily blend sounds when attached to print (phonics). Phoneme segmentation is essential in developing writing skills. In order to write words, students must break the word down into its component sounds and select the letters that represent these sounds.

Here are some fun examples of blending and segmenting activities that can be used in October.



- ◆ **Talking Ghost** (Blending Activity): Have each child cut out a picture of a ghost. Say a segmented word, then have the children "hold onto the sounds" as they blend them together aloud. Tell them to speak like ghosts, extending the sounds of words into a slow, drawn-out wail. For example, you say /h/ /ou/ /s/, and they say hhhoooouussee. Have the children move their ghosts as they say the sounds. Repeat with other words.
- ◆ **Sweep Up the Sounds** (Segmenting Activity): Have each child cut out a picture of a witch's broom. Explain that a broom is used to quickly sweep up a mess. Demonstrate for students. Students will sweep up different phonemes of a word, pausing between each sound. For example, children sweep the table three times as they say the segmented word: /s/ /a/ /t/.
- ◆ **Video** demonstration of Talking Ghost and Sweep Up

RPD is offering several literacy classes this fall. The course flyer is posted in the RPD Kindergarten Conference in InterAct.

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