



DCDSB Understanding & Supporting All Learners

What is Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and say the various parts (syllables and sounds) in spoken words. Phonological awareness is strongly linked to early reading and spelling success. You can support your child's literacy development by engaging in phonological awareness games throughout the day.

Phonological Awareness is not phonics

Phonological Awareness involves hearing sounds and connecting those sounds to words, whereas phonics involves seeing a letter and knowing the sound(s) associated with that letter. Since all phonological awareness skills are oral-based skills, always remove print when engaging in these activities. Remember to say the sound that the letter makes and NOT the letter name.

Stages of Phonological Awareness

Beginning skills include hearing and saying rhyming words and counting words in spoken sentences. Later developing skills include blending and segmenting (breaking down) syllables in words. Finally, children learn to identify, blend, and segment sounds in words.

Ways to Practice Phonological Awareness at Home

Sentence/Word Awareness

- Hot Potato – pass an item around one time for each word in the sentence.
- Jump on the spot for every word in the sentence.

Rhyming

- Recite nursery rhymes or sing songs with rhyming words, leave out the rhyming word and let your child fill in the blank (e.g., "Jack and Jill went up the _____").
- Make up your own rhyming booklets or draw pictures of a rhyming scene (e.g., "A cat with a hat sitting on a mat").

Syllable Awareness

- Guess the Word – say a word that is broken down into syllables and have your child guess the word (e.g., "Let's play di – no – saurs").
- Using small items (e.g., fish crackers, blocks, etc.), have your child say the syllables in a given word while pointing to one item for each sound (e.g., "computer = com – pu – ter").

Tips for Phonological Awareness Success

- The number of sounds in a word can be different than the number of letters (e.g., shoe has four letters but only two sounds). Make sure you are saying the sounds.
- Letters make different sounds depending on their position in a word (e.g., the "a" in cat makes a different sound than the "a" in cake). Again, make sure you are saying the sounds not the letters.
- Read with your child daily. Select a specific time each day that is free of interruptions.
- If your child has difficulty reading a word, break the word into syllables or sounds then have them blend the parts together.

Sound Identification

- Have a “Scavenger Hunt” to find items around the house that start with a specific sound (e.g. /b/).
- Play “I Spy” to find items around the house that start with a specific sound (e.g., “I Spy something that starts with /d/”).

Sound Blending

- Play “Simon Says” and provide a segmented word as the action to complete/body part to touch (e.g., “Simon Says touch your h – i – p”).

Sound Segmentation

- Have students take one big step or jump for every sound they hear in a word (e.g., 3 jumps for bike = b – i – ke).

Helpful resources for better understanding & supporting students with challenges in Phonological Awareness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVqywZ85zxA>

<http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/phonologicalphonemic>

<http://www.starfall.com/>

This information contained in this resource is not intended for diagnostic purposes. It is to be used a reference for your own understanding and to provide you with some information about the different kinds of difficulties you may encounter with your child, and about different ways you may be able to support your child at home.

