Increasing Phonemic Awareness in the Pre-School Aged Child: A Parent-Centered, Play Based Approach

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INCREASING PHONEMIC AWARENESS IN THE PRE-SCHOOL AGED CHILD:

A PARENT CENTERED, PLAY BASED APPROACH

by

Emma B. Hanzl

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors
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Abstract

Written as a reference for parents and both present and future early childhood educators, this compilation of studies and accompanying resources is intended to clarify misconceptions and build individual understandings of phonological and phonemic awareness. The relationship between phonemic awareness instruction and stronger reading and spelling abilities has been well established; however, most previous studies of phonemic awareness have utilized educators or trained researchers as the primary instructors and have focused mainly on school aged children ranging from preschool to grade three. The purpose of this review was to extrapolate the potential effects of placing parents in the role of lead instructor of phonemic awareness for children ranging from birth to age 5, as well as to create a set of parent resources informed by this research. The main source of evidence was the National Reading Panel’s meta-analysis of phonemic awareness studies published in 2001. This review and subsequent generalization indicates that through joint participation in phonemically focused phonological awareness activities, in addition to reading aloud regularly, parents have the potential to positively influence their child’s later ability to read and spell.
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Important Terms

Parent

Whenever a “parent” is referenced it can be assumed that the author is referring to the primary care giver, be he/she parent, guardian, grandparent, or other caring adult.

Phoneme

A phoneme is the smallest part of spoken language that has the ability to change the meaning of words. English has about 44 phonemes (note: this number varies across sources due to dialectical variations). Most words have more than one phoneme. The number of phonemes does not equal the number of syllables. Phonemes are denoted by virgules (/ /). When you see a grapheme in virgules the author is referring to the sound the phoneme represents not the grapheme. Some phonemes are represented by more than one letter.

Ex. **table** has 5 phonemes, /tebəl/ or t-ay-b-uh-l **cake** has 3 phonemes, /kek/ or k-ay-k

Grapheme

A grapheme is the smallest part of written language that represents a phoneme in the spelling of a word. A grapheme may be just one letter, such as k, f, s, h, or several letters, such as ch, th, sh, igh.
Phonics

Phonics is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes and graphemes. This is also called the sound-letter relationship.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological Awareness is a broad term that includes phonemic awareness. In addition to phonemes, phonological awareness activities can involve work with rhymes, words, syllables, and onsets and rimes.

Onset

The initial consonant(s) sound of a syllable. Ex. the onset of tree is tr-, the onset of bee is b-. Not all words have onsets.

Rime

A rime is the part of a syllable that contains the vowel and all that follows it. The rime of boat is -oat, the rime of snow is -ow.

(Armbruster et al., 2001)
Introduction

Oral language consists of combining sounds to create something meaningful to the listener. A single unit of sound is called a phoneme. The awareness that language is composed of these small individual sounds is labeled phonemic awareness. Written language is the assignment of graphic symbols to each phoneme in order to transcribe the speech sounds. Therefore, before a child can be expected to understand this alphabetic principle they must first understand the connection between the letters on a page and the sounds of speech. This concept is difficult for most young children to grasp, and although most will develop phonemic awareness naturally, about 25% of middle class first-graders require direct instructional support. These children also exhibit serious difficulty in learning to read and write (Adams, 1990). Direct instruction in the five areas that combine to comprise full phonological awareness has been proven to be effective in learning to read and write.

No Child Left Behind mandates that phonemic awareness be included in a kindergarten curriculum; however, the results of this research project suggest that direct instruction prior to the child entering kindergarten can positively impact the child’s later language abilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Parents are therefore instrumental in early language development. It is the purpose of this research project to provide primary care givers with a resource of accessible, research-based activities designed to promote early phonemic awareness and ultimately influence later language development. Potential additional benefits of the implementation of this information are the strengthening of the bond between the two participants and building family literacy.
How do we learn to read? Unlike oral speech, reading is not something that one can simply ‘pick-up’ through social exposure. Reading is a complicated process that involves decoding, processing, retrieving, blending, and ultimately, the derivation of meaning. The effectiveness of differing methods of reading instruction are still debated. This difference of opinion among decision makers has resulted in a variety of programs in school systems worldwide. Whole language, phonics, whole word, linguistics, literature-based, the list of methodologies goes on. The unifying aspect of each of these approaches, however different in their processes, is that they share the same end goal of producing proficient readers. Although the motives may have been pure, many of these programs and approaches were widely distributed before being backed by adequate research. On January 8th, 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was signed into law by President George W. Bush after receiving bipartisan support. NCLB was a revised version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which was enacted in 1965. The revisions outlined in NCLB were based on the following reform principles: “stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work” (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). This call for evidence-based decision making and scientifically based reading research caused many school systems to review the effectiveness of their literacy instruction.

The Reading First and Early Reading First programs were the academic cornerstones of NCLB and sought to improve student achievement through the
implementation of teaching methods proven to be effective. Reading First drew on five essential components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). On July 19, 2013 the No Child Left Behind Act was reformed through the passing of the Student Success Act which received no Democratic support. This new bill largely reduced the government’s role in education and consolidated or eliminated more than 70 federal education programs, including both Reading First and Early Reading First. Although these programs no longer receive federal monetary support, the general principles they outlined are still valid and continue to maintain a presence in schools. The five essential components of reading instruction are a prime example of this continued presence.

The component that will be focused on in this review is phonemic awareness which has long been an indicator of success in early reading and spelling (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Bradley & Bryant 1983, 1985; Calfee, Lindamood, & Lindamood, 1973; Castle, Riach, & Nicholson, 1994; Jorm and Share, 1983; Juel, Griffith, & Gough, 1986; Lundberg, Frost, & Petersen, 1988; Lundberg, Olofsson, & Wall, 1980). The importance of the relationship between phonemic awareness and reading and spelling becomes clear once one considers the factors that are critical to reading and writing in an alphabetic writing system. The reader must be able to use the alphabetic code and thus, have an understanding of written words as combinations of phonemes represented by graphemes. In order for a child to read, he must have an understanding of the different sounds of speech and which visual symbols (graphemes) correspond to each unit of sound (phoneme) (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Shankweiler & Liberman, 1972; Rozin &
Gleitman, 1977). Many studies have been conducted to determine if phonemic awareness can be instructed. Although each study utilized different instructional methods and focused on different components of phonemic awareness, their results showed an improvement in their subjects’ ability to identify and manipulate the phonemes of spoken words (Ball & Blachman, 1988, 1991; Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Cunningham, 1990; Lundberg, Frost, & Peterson, 1988; Oloffson & Lundberg, 1983, 1985).

**Phonological Awareness**

A large body of evidence indicates that phonological awareness is a critical skill needed to read (Ehri, 1979; Liberman, 1982; Lundberg, Frost, Petersen, 1988; Lundberg, Olofsson, & Wall, 1980; Stanovich, 1986). Thus, early training in the awareness of various sound aspects independent of meaning should lead to improvement in reading. For example, if one were to ask a child, ‘Which word is longer, *butterfly* or *boat*?’ and the child answers ‘*boat*’, they are demonstrating their inability to separate the word from its meaning. To the child, a boat is obviously longer than a butterfly (Yopp & Yopp, 2009). Phonological awareness can be divided into smaller components such as the abilities to hear alliteration, rhyming words, word boundaries, and parts of words (ie. syllables, phonemes, onsets and rimes) (Chapman, 2003). In their influential 1988 study on influencing phonological awareness in preschool children, Lundberg, Frost, and Petersen presented evidence that suggests that “phonological awareness can be developed before reading ability and independently of it and that this phonological awareness facilitates
subsequent reading acquisition” (1988). This evidence further supports claims of a causal link between phonological awareness and the development of reading ability.

The positive relationship between phonological awareness and reading ability has been documented in many studies but some researchers claim that its smaller components play differing roles in the development of alphabetic skills. Children are aware of onsets and rimes from a young age and often do not require explicit instruction. Unfortunately, most children do not naturally use these skills to assist with spelling and reading in authentic situations (Treiman, 1985). In a study conducted in 1997 by Nation and Hulme, the interrelationships between spelling, reading, and phonological skills were studied in children ranging in age from 5 1/2 to 9 1/2 years. Nation and Hulme compared the children’s “ability to segment words into phonemes or onset-rime units and relate the development of these skills to the development of reading and spelling skills” (Nation & Hulme, 1997). The interpretation of their findings showed that the children’s ability to perform onset-rime segmentation was not significantly related to their overall literacy. In contrast, the researchers found a strong relationship between the participant’s ability to segment phonemes and their overall literacy (Nation & Humle, 1997). This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies (Hoien et al., 1995; Liberman et al., 1985; Muter et al., 1998; Perin, 1983; Rohl & Tunmer, 1988) and is further indication of the importance of phonological awareness development and an understanding of how sounds work.
Phonemic Awareness

A phoneme is the smallest part of spoken language that makes a difference in the meaning of a word. For example, changing the first phoneme in the word bat from /b/ to /p/ changes the word from bat to pat. Phonemes are indicated by a letter or symbol between two slash marks called virgules. These marks indicate that the phoneme, or sound, is being referenced rather than the name of the letter. English has about 45 phonemes, 21 vowels and 24 consonants, with some fluctuation due to dialectical variations (Owens, 2012). Phonemic awareness is therefore, the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual phonemes of spoken words. Before children learn to read print, they must first understand how the sounds in words work (Armbruster et al., 2001). Children who are not aware of the different sounds of speech will find it more difficult to relate those sounds to graphemes (the letters that represent the sounds in written language) and vice versa.

While many children develop phonemic awareness naturally, studies suggest that a natural approach may be slower and less effective than explicit instruction in phoneme segmentation and blending activities (Yeh & Connell, 2008). The teachable nature of phonemic awareness is well documented and supported by scientific research (U.S. Department of Education, 2002; Ball & Blachman, 1988; Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Cunningham, 1990). Recipients of direct instruction in phonemic awareness have exhibited significant improvements in their reading and spelling abilities (Armbruster et al., 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2002; Ehri et al., 2001). Phonemic tasks used in the instruction of phonemic awareness and overall phonological awareness are
phoneme: isolation, identity, categorization, blending, segmentation, deletion, addition, and substitution. Phoneme segmentation in particular assists children in learning to spell by helping to break the target word into smaller pieces. The child then uses their knowledge of phonemes to derive the graphemes used to spell it.

Newborns are able to discriminate individual phonemes but are unable to discern individual words or sounds. By 5 months most infants respond to their name and, soon after, either mommy or daddy (Mandel, Jusczyk, & Pisoni, 1995; Tincoff & Jusczyk, 1999). Young infants are sensitive to the stress and intonational patterns of speech. They use this information to identify the prosodic patterns of their native language and distinguish it from the prosodic patterns of other languages (Mehler et al., 1988; Nazzi, Bertoncini, & Mehler, 1998). Although children are able to perceive individual phonemes from a very early age, they are not yet able to produce those same sounds.

As the child’s ability to produce phonemes increases, she is able to participate in phonemic tasks. These tasks isolate specific skills related to phonemic awareness and are used in formal testing situations and studies to assess the child’s level of said awareness. Phoneme isolation requires the ability to identify discrete sounds in words; for example, “Tell me the first sound in ball.” (/b/) Phoneme identity requires the awareness of a common sound in different words; for example, “Which sound is the same in park, play, and picture?” (/p/) Phoneme categorization requires the ability to pick out the word with the odd sound from a sequence of three or four words; for example, “Which word does not belong? hop, stop, cop, not.” (not) Phoneme blending requires the ability combine a sequence of separately spoken sounds to form a recognizable word; for example, “What
word is /d/ /ɪ/ /ɛ/ /s/?” (dress) Phoneme segmentation requires the subject to break a word into its sounds and determine the number of phonemes; for example, “How many phonemes in apple?” (3- /æ/ /p/ /l/) Phoneme deletion, addition, and substitution requires the subject to identify what word results when a specified phoneme is removed, added, or substituted; for example, “What is feet without the /f/?” (eat) “Add /s/ before mile,” (smile) “Change the /d/ in deer to /f/,” (fear) (Ehri et al., 2001).

Phonemic awareness has been shown to be both a reliable predictor of reading ability as well as an indicator of students at risk for reading failure (Adams, 1990; Rozin, Proitsky, & Sotsky, 1971; Stanovich, 1986, 1988). Deficits in phonemic awareness skills often lead to difficulties in making connections between spoken and written language. These deficits also contribute to the development of reading disabilities which require remedial reading programs (Ackerman & Dykman, 1993; Pulakanaho et al., 2008; Shaywitz et al., 2002; Torppa, et al., 2006). It is important to note, however, that not all literacy difficulties can be traced back to a lack of phonemic awareness and therefore avoided through phonemic training. Many factors contribute to the development of reading problems besides a lack of phonological and phonemic awareness: social and cultural factors, poverty, learning English as a second language, lack of literacy experiences, inadequate reading instruction, and hearing deficits all have an effect. If a child is not exposed to books or language then they will have a harder time developing overall phonological awareness. Disparities in home literacy experiences often translate to the child’s performance in school and widen the gap between the child and an appropriate level of school readiness. Reading aloud has been shown to help bridge that
gap (Coley, 2002). It is the author’s hypothesis that the addition of phonemically focused activities will further reduce these disparities.

**Phonics**

The term ‘phonics’ is often used interchangeably with phonemic awareness and phonological awareness, but, it is important to note that, although all are related to and essential components of early literacy instruction, they are not synonymous (Armbruster et al., 2001). It has been established that phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate the individual sounds of spoken language and is an essential component to overall phonological awareness, the knowledge of the components of language independent of meaning. Phonics is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes and graphemes, also called the letter-sound relationship. The addition of the letter-sound relationship is what distinguishes phonics from phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is consequently a necessary precursor to meaningful phonics instruction (Torgesen, 2002). Without first establishing that a word is made up of a series of discrete sounds and the modification of those sounds changes the word’s meaning, phonics instruction will make little sense to the student.

Phonics alone does not constitute an entire reading program for beginning readers (U.S. Department of Education, 2002; Armbruster et al., 2001; Ehri et al., 2001). Phonemic awareness training, although essential to understanding the alphabetic principle, is also not a sufficient method of reading instruction without the connection of letters to phonemes, or phonics (Adams, 1990; Blachman, 1997; National Reading Panel,
A complete reading program, as defined by NCLB and supported by a meta-analysis of scientifically based research, includes phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension strategies (U.S. Department of Education, 2002; Armbruster et al., 2001; Ehri et al., 2001).

Following the signing of NCLB into law and the implementation of the Reading First program, a study was conducted to assess first-year teacher knowledge of the five essential components of beginning reading instruction as outlined in the revised legislation (Cheesman et al., 2009). The study’s results indicated that the majority of first year teachers are unfamiliar with phonemic awareness and how to incorporate it into their instruction. Only 18% of the 223 teachers in the sample were able to correctly answer at least 12 of the 15 (80%) multiple choice questions about phonemic awareness, phonics, and tasks related to both. About a third of the teachers were only able to correctly answer up to six items on the questionnaire, suggesting a limited understanding of the concepts involved (Cheesman et al., 2009). Professionals working with young learners must be aware of the differences between these concepts so that they are able to provide adequate scaffolding and instruction for the early readers. For example, children who regularly miss phonemes in words (they spell *soon* for *spoon* or *su* for *shoe*) need instruction in phoneme awareness; those who spell phonetically (they spell *spon* for *spoon* or *shu* for *shoe*) need instruction in phonics.
Language Development

Since its connection to early literacy development was established in 1963 by Russian psychologists L.Y. Zhurova (1963) and D.B. Elkonin (1963, 1973), phonemic awareness has been a buzz word in the literacy field. Although all researchers agreed that phonemic awareness instruction benefited early literacy development, there was disagreement over the nature of the relationship and the impact of phonemic awareness training separate from a traditional literacy education program. Perfetti, Beck, Bell, and Hughes made the claim that the results of their study indicated that the development of phonemic awareness further facilitated the process of learning to read rather than being a necessary precursor (1987). One of the more influential opposing arguments was made by Goswami and Bryant (1990). They argued that phonemic awareness is a skill distinct from awareness of rhyme. They further argued that each skill had separate effects on the development of reading and spelling. This implies that awareness to rhyme is a precursor of learning to read, whereas awareness of phonemes emerges as a result of learning to read (Goswami & Bryant, 1990).

This evidence presents phonemic awareness as reciprocal to early reading and spelling and onset-rime awareness as causal. These findings suggest that primary focus should be on building onset-rime awareness before emphasizing the different sounds of language. Later studies did not support this finding. In 1997, Nation and Hulme investigated Goswami and Bryant’s claim and produced different results. Nation and Hulme discovered evidence of a causal link between phoneme segmentation and blending ability, and later reading and spelling ability. They also found that skill at phoneme
segmentation is a much better predictor of early literacy progress than rhyming. (Nation & Hulme, 1997). These results continue to be supported by later studies (Duncan et al., 1997; Hatcher & Hulme, 1999; Hatcher et al., 2004; Hulme, 2002; Hulme et al., 2002, 1998; Muter & Diethelm, 2001; Muter et al., 1998; Muter at al., 2004; Snider, 1997; Stanovich et al., 1984; Yopp, 1988).

In 1999 Gary A. Troia conducted a meta-analysis to assess previous studies of phonological awareness for validity and their overall generalizability. Troia identified several design flaws and and then used this criteria to evaluate the studies for their methodological vigor. The results of this study suggested that some of the phonological awareness studies were seriously flawed and their results should not be generalized (Troia, 1999). The National Reading Panel (2000) meta-analysis used much of the raw data from the 39 studies included in Troia’s review and expanded his original method of analysis for application to the additional 13 studies included in the final meta-analysis (Ehri et al., 2001). After breaking the 52 total studies into 96 cases comparing individual treatment and control groups, the National Reading Panel concluded that, “although Troia (1999) found fault with Phonemic Awareness studies, his findings do not undermine claims about the effectiveness of Phonemic Awareness instruction for helping children learn to read.” (Ehri et al., 2001) The lesson that should be learned from Troia’s (1999) study is to maintain higher standards when designing studies (Ehri et al., 2001).
Parents as Instructors

The National Reading Panel’s (2001) meta-analysis of phonemic awareness studies included some thoughts for further study in the description of the 52 peer reviewed studies. The panel noted that none of the studies included the parents of the children as instructors. The members of the panel suggested that further research be conducted to identify informal activities that parents might use to draw their pre-school aged child’s attention to the sounds in words, letter identity, and the connection of sounds to letters (Ehri et al., 2001). Although there has not yet been a formal, peer-reviewed, study of the effectiveness of parents as phonemic awareness instructors, evidence can be found in other studies that support the potential effectiveness of this untapped resource.

Parental instruction would almost guarantee one-on-one instruction which has been found to be the most effective because it allows the instructor to tailor the lessons to the student’s needs (Bloom, 1984; Cohen et al., 1982; Glass et al., 1982; Pinnell et al., 1994; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). Phonemic awareness instruction has been found to be more effective when delivered for small increments of time. The primary purpose of phonemic awareness instruction is to help children achieve alphabetic insight, studies which continued explicit instruction into the further nuances and complexities yielded smaller effects perhaps due to the confusion or boredom of the student. The most effective programs had total instructional times ranging from 5 to 18 hours broken up into sessions lasting less than 30 minutes (Ehri et al., 2001). As the instructors, parents would be able to continue instruction for as long or short a time as they see fit for their particular child. Phonemic awareness tasks are primarily oral in nature and do not take long to
complete which adds to the flexible nature of instruction. Also, because they do not require worksheets or manipulates, these tasks can be done practically anywhere.

In my research, I did not come across any studies that placed the child’s parent or primary caregiver in the role of instructor. Each study had specially trained teachers or the teachers themselves as the primary instructors and facilitators of phonological awareness tasks. I found this interesting due to the unique positioning of a parent in the child’s life. Parents spend the most time with the child (especially in the early years), they have a deep knowledge of the child’s likes and dislikes, they can understand their child’s body language, and (in most cases) they have already established a bond of trust with the child. In order to effectively educate an individual you must first know that individual and how to motivate them to want to succeed. Education without motivation on the part of the learner will not be effective. I found no formal reason for not including parents, perhaps the researchers viewed the parents as incapable of maintaining a systematic and regimented literacy program, however, phonemic awareness instruction does not require such a program. There is an order as to how the different skills should be introduced for instruction to be more effective, but it is not part of a formal regiment. As long as the parent and child are engaged in meaningful activities and interacting with language, the child’s phonemic awareness development will be benefited (Au, 1998; Purcell-Gates, 1995).

Prior to entering kindergarten, where a formal instructional model will be introduced, children can build their phonemic awareness skills through informal methods guided by their parent. It is in this context that the parent as the instructor is
hypothesized to be more effective. Through a set of informal activities the parent can manipulate sounds with the child and call the child’s attention to the phonemes of words without expressly instructing as one would with an older child. The parent need not take on the duty of instructing each task that comprises phonemic awareness. Instruction has been shown to be more effective when focused on only one or two skills (Ehri et al., 2001). Ordered from easy to difficult, the phonemic tasks are: initial sound comparison, blending onset-rime units into real words, blending phonemes into real words, deleting a phoneme and saying the word that remains, segmenting words into phonemes, and blending phonemes into non words (Schatschneider et al., 1999).

For children younger than 5 years of age the tasks begin with global concepts and move to more specific ones. The parent guides the child through these experiences and the child learns from their joint participation. The beginning stage focuses on immersive experiences with oral and written language to develop a base understanding. Rhyme and alliteration stories and play help in the development of vocabulary knowledge, build an awareness of print, and jump start overall phonological awareness (Chapman, 2003; Bryant et al., 1990). Segmenting words into syllables helps the child to build the phonological skill of hearing parts of words which he can later break into phonemes (Moustafa, 1998; Snow et al., 1998). These early experiences pave the way for specific phonemic awareness tasks such as segmentation, blending, and letter-sound correspondences (Ehri & Nunes, 2002; Ericson & Juliebo, 1998; Yopp & Yopp, 2000). This progression from global literacy to specific phonemic awareness tasks is corroborated by evidence from the National Reading Panel that phonemic awareness
instruction is more effective when used in conjunction with letters (Ehri et al., 2001). The addition of letters shifts the technical method of instruction from purely phonemic to a combination of phonemic and phonetic. This method is more representative of the instructional program that was recommended by Early Reading First, Reading First and NCLB.

**Development of Resources**

Most parents do not possess training in early childhood development or education. Therefore, there is a need for some instruction prior to placing the parent in the role of educator. Parents are busy and do not have the time to take a course or read a textbook on phonemic development. It was my goal to create a method of sharing knowledge with parents and primary caregivers that would not add to their workload or cost them anything. This resource needed to be attractive to the parent, easy to understand, and provide examples of activities that were developmentally appropriate. The resulting 12 documents (Appendix B) are tailored to specific age ranges, not bogged down with technical jargon, and are informed by the preceding literature review. The accompanying letter (Appendix A) explains the purpose of the pamphlets and the reasoning behind their creation in parent-friendly language. These resources are intended for parents of varying backgrounds and education levels. They are written in a conversational tone and were designed to scaffold natural interactions with a child rather than dictate. The activities and developmental markers provided in each are short lists and are not comprehensive. These products are meant to help parents give their child a solid set of literacy
experiences to build upon; it is not an entire curriculum. While the methods they contain have been researched and proven, the brochures themselves are just prototypes and have yet to be tested with families.
Bibliography


Appendix A

Dear Parents and Primary Care Givers,

You are about to embark on a journey with your young learner and watch as she discovers much of the world for the first time! This is a period of rapid development and growth and many of the experiences your child has now, prior to entering school, will help to shape their future accomplishments and achievements. This may seem like a lot to manage in your child’s first few years of life, but luckily, much of what you do naturally is beneficial to your child’s development!

In the pamphlets you receive at each well-child visit you will find:

- Descriptions of vocal, visual, auditory, motor, language, cognitive, and social development.

- Developmentally appropriate activities that focus on building your child’s literacy skills at no financial cost to you.

- Online resources for building upon the activities and developmental indicators.

- Ideas to help build family literacy.

You might notice that the activities presented do not discuss letters or teaching the alphabet. This is because the primary focus of this program is to develop a sense of sound. This is called phonemic awareness. The development of phonemic awareness can begin much earlier than the development of the written word, as children are able to perceive sound long before they are able to write and derive meaning from symbols on a page. If you help your child to develop phonemic awareness at this early age, he will be better able to relate sounds to letters once he enters school.

These activities are just suggestions, so please do not limit yourself or your child to the few ideas listed in each resource. Explore the websites on the back for more information and a wider range of activities. Enjoy this time and the many literary moments to follow!

Emma Hanzl
B.Ed. Elementary Education
The University of Maine - Honors College
Activities

Voices

Developmental Markers
Building Phonemic Awareness

A Parents Guide With Your Young Learner

2 - 4 Months

For More Ideas and Information:

Read aloud together. With your local library's help, read aloud to your child. Libraries often have story hours and programs to promote reading. Make reading a part of your family's lifestyle.

References:

www.brookespublishing.com
www.readingresearchers.org
www.readingresearchers.org
Conversational:
- In the first few months, infants spend most of their time in the purposed state.
- They do not have the ability to express themselves through speech.
- Instead, they communicate through sounds, gurgles, and coos.

Activities:
- Play with a soft, plush toy
- Sing simple songs
- Talk about daily activities
- Use gestures to express feelings

Developmental Milestones:
- Around 2 months, infants begin to show interest in their own sounds.
- By 4 months, they can make cooing sounds.
- By 6 months, they can produce vowel sounds (a, e, i, o, u).

Supportive Activities:
- Play games with your infant to encourage language development.
- Read books to your infant to stimulate their interest in language.
- Engage in interactive play to develop communication skills.

Auditory:
- Introduce music and sound stories to your infant.
- Play simple instrument sounds to stimulate their auditory sense.
- Use vocalizations to encourage language development.

Visual:
- Provide colorful images and books for your infant to explore.
- Show your infant pictures of objects they have seen before.
- Encourage them to look at objects and name them.

Motor:
- Encourage movement through tummy time.
- Use toys that stimulate movement.
- Provide opportunities for your infant to explore their environment.

Nurture:
- Provide a safe and stimulating environment for your infant.
- Be responsive to your infant's needs.
- Use a calm, gentle voice to communicate with your infant.

Language:
- Introduce simple words and phrases to your infant.
- Use short sentences to communicate with your infant.
- Encourage your infant to imitate sounds and words.

Sensory Play:
- Provide a variety of textures and materials for your infant to explore.
- Use different materials to stimulate their senses.
- Encourage your infant to explore new objects.

Sound Play:
- Use auditory stimulation to encourage language development.
- Play music and sound stories to stimulate your infant.
- Use vocalizations to encourage language development.

Developmental Milestones:
- Around 2 months, infants begin to show interest in their own sounds.
- By 4 months, they can make cooing sounds.
- By 6 months, they can produce vowel sounds (a, e, i, o, u).

Supportive Activities:
- Play games with your infant to encourage language development.
- Read books to your infant to stimulate their interest in language.
- Engage in interactive play to develop communication skills.

Auditory:
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- Use vocalizations to encourage language development.

Visual:
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Building Phonemic Awareness

A Parents Guide

With Your Young Learner

4 - 6 Months

The use periods presented in this program may not be consistent with the

Young children reading 18 (5) 18 (5) 18 (5)

Hoff, R. (1992). Developing phonemic awareness in

CA: Wadsworth Publishing


from http://www.causal-effects.com


from http://www.causal-effects.com

Children’s Books about Phonemic Awareness

For More Ideas and Information:

Library has too often

activities and are good ideas. Check out what your local

libraries offer many opportunities for their early learning family

read aloud together

Visit your local library

listen to books on tape or CD in the car

make reading part of your family’s lifestyle

For All Ages:

References:

www.complementary.org

www.complementary.net
Introduction of new sounds like /b/, /p/, /t/, etc.

By 6 months the common car plate to begin babbling.

Baby Talk

Infant Language

Continue to read high-quality texts and books with your child.

Experiment with high and diverse different

and many different ways to produce them.

music. Language and interest in exploring sounds

that make sounds (bells, rattles, etc.). They also enjoy

Rhyme

Read, show, talk, and sing

the pitch, volume, and speed of your voice. High, low,

and middle. More playing and free verse sounds into your songs.

Speech: Always encourage your child's development.

Free to draw the child's attention and engage in

listening and meaningful sound play.

Continue to make baby noises: laugh, coo, chuckle.

Activities

Developmental Milestones

Start to deliberately reach for things.

Child begins to nod his own head and refer to self.

The mirror of sound. The mirror will disappear.

6 months to 10 months. Also during this time

MOTOR

Around changes in the tone of the speaker's voice.

Around sounds (laughing, cooing, babbling) and

environmental and speech sounds and enjoy hearing.

The infant will begin to differentiate between

Auditory

should have normal 20/20 vision.

Three-dimensional view of the world. By 6 months he

only begins to do partial work together in terms of

The child is now able to see in full color and is able to

Visual

Music

Begin to engage in self-initiated sound play and coo to

The infant will discover volume and play with the增添了

Vocal
6 - 9 Months

A Parent’s Guide With Your Young Learner
Building Phonemic Awareness

References:

For More Ideas and Information:

Visit your local library to check out their many programs or ask your local librarian for ideas. Read books together. Make reading a part of your family’s lifestyle.
Activities

Naming

Encourage your child to pick out words and introduce new words to their不断扩大 their vocabulary. Pair new words with the objects themselves so your child can connect the word to the object. Place the object near your child and ask them to name it. Repeat this process with different objects and see how your child's vocabulary grows.

Read Aloud

Read stories and books aloud with your child. This will not only help your child develop their listening skills but also encourage them to associate words with objects. Choose books that are age-appropriate and have colorful illustrations to engage your child's attention.

Exceed

Use songs and rhymes to engage your child's attention. Sing familiar songs and introduce new ones. Your child will enjoy the rhythm and melody of the songs and learn new words as well.

Movement

Encourage your child to move and explore their environment. Start with simple actions like jumping, and then progress to more complex movements like running or dancing. This will help improve your child's coordination and motor skills.

Visual

Display visual aids like flashcards with pictures of objects and words. This will help your child associate the visual representation with the word. You can also use picture books to guide your child in learning new words.

Developmental Markers

As your child begins to crawl and walk around, you can introduce new words to them. Start with simple objects like a ball or a toy. As your child becomes more mobile, introduce more complex objects like a book or a puzzle. This will help your child develop their fine and gross motor skills.

Auditory

Encourage your child to listen to music and stories. You can also introduce new words by singing songs or telling stories. This will help your child associate words with sounds and improve their listening skills.

Object Play

Provide your child with a variety of objects to play with. This will help them develop their motor skills and hand-eye coordination. Encourage them to explore and experiment with different objects to see what they can do.

The object play is a great opportunity for your child to learn new words and improve their cognitive skills. Make sure to provide a safe environment for your child to play and learn.

Motor

The motor skills of your child will develop further as they become more mobile. Encourage them to explore their environment and try new things. This will help improve their coordination and muscle development.

These are just a few activities to help your child develop their language and motor skills. Remember to be patient and encouraging as your child explores their world.
A Parents Guide
With Your Young Learner
Phonemic Awareness
Building

9-12 Months

For More Ideas and Information:
- Read aloud together
- Visit your local library
- Listen to books on tape or CD
- Make reading a part of your family’s lifestyle

Reference:
www.bostonchildrens.org
www.healthychildren.org
For more information and activities, visit www.bostonchildrens.org.
Activities

Conversational

The teacher need to focus on the key words and phrases that are used in these situations. The child will learn new words through conversations with you. Encourage your child to use the key words and phrases. This will help them develop the ability to express their thoughts and ideas.

Vocabulary

The child will learn new words through conversations with you. Encourage your child to use the key words and phrases. This will help them develop the ability to express their thoughts and ideas.

Language Development

This stage involves learning new words and phrases. As the child becomes more confident in their language skills, they will start using longer sentences and more complex ideas.

Developmental Markers

- Increased use of gestures and body language
- Improved ability to follow instructions
- More advanced use of verbs and adjectives
- Development of new vocabulary
- Improved understanding of cause and effect
- Ability to make simple predictions
- Improved fine motor skills
- Development of new social skills
- Increased ability to understand and follow rules
- Improved ability to solve problems

Conversational

The child will continue to develop their conversational skills by asking and answering questions. They will also begin to use more complex language structures.

Vocabulary

The child will continue to expand their vocabulary by learning new words and phrases. They will also begin to use these words in different contexts.

Language Development

The child will continue to develop their language skills by using more complex sentences and ideas. They will also begin to use more sophisticated language structures.

Developmental Markers

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- Improved ability to solve problems
- Ability to use language to express emotions

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12 - 15 Months

A Parent's Guide

With Your Young Learner

Phonic Awareness

Building
Music

Start simple with familiar songs. Encourage the child to sit close by to observe and feel. Discuss the words with you before running them to your ear.

Vocabulary

Continue to introduce new words, new sounds, and build upon those sounds. Emphasize the words that are said in the child's ear. Choose songs that focus on words and encourage them to repeat back what they hear. Continue to name things so you pass them to your young.

Writing

Without written language, the child will be able to mimic the patterns of your words. Envision that you will not use traditional grammar rules while teaching. Encourage your child in writing the exposure of your handwriting. We're learned how to write.

Activities

Discriminate Words

Distinguish Words to children who have difficulties in discriminating words. Repeat the words again and again until you can be completely accurate. It's important to keep in mind that toddlers are not able to express these vocally.

Social

Her to grasp if she without whole rest. Use this important social skill to reinforce language. Use all actions. To use a model, she can later be released. Explain what's normal for a writing. Listen to your mother. What words mean. When you read a book, think about the words that are said in the child's ear. Also, listen to your mother. Children are able to feel these actions. Language: the read book. Think about the words. Repeat them in your head. Product by others.
Building Phonemic Awareness

A Parent's Guide With Your Young Learner

15 - 18 Months

References

For More Ideas and Information:

- Library has 18 other
  activities and is most other
  times open when your local
  libraries are not. Ask for
  assistance.

- Read aloud together
  often.

- Make reading a part of your family’s lifestyle.

For All Ages:
Activities

and build a love of language.

You will help your child develop his vocabulary
by asking open-ended questions and encouraging
him to express himself. This will also help
your child learn new words.

Rhythms

Dance or sing songs that your child
will enjoy. This will help
him develop a sense of
rhythm.

Vocabulary

Counting games are a
great way to help your
child develop his
vocabulary. Counting games
will also help him
develop his attention.

White:

ability to think is the
name of the game. This
ability will help your
child learn new
terms and concepts.

Letter Sounds

Developmental Markers

You will notice the beginning of
developmental milestones
beginning in the first year of
your child’s life. By age 2,
your child will have acquired
20-100 words. By age 3, your
child will have acquired
300 words.
18 Months - 2 Years

A Parents Guide

With Your Young Learner

Phonemic Awareness
Building

Young children (ages 2-5) develop phonemic awareness in one of two ways: through explicit instruction or through natural exposure to language in the home and community.

References:

www.commonsensemedia.org
www.readingresearchonline.org

For More Ideas and Information:

Visit your local library!
Visit your local library to find family-friendly activities and make open-free. Check out what your local library offers. Many opportunities for family-based family literacy.

Make reading a part of your family’s lifestyle!

For All Ages:

40
Activities

Developmental Milestones

Motor Skills

Children under the age of 2 continue to develop different motor skills. By this stage, most children have developed the ability to sit, crawl, and roll over. By the age of 3, children may begin to walk and stand independently. Fine motor skills include the ability to pick up small objects and use their hands to manipulate tools. Gross motor skills involve large muscle movements such as running, jumping, and climbing.

Social Skills

Children under the age of 2 often engage in parallel play, where they play alongside others but do not interact directly. By the age of 3, children may begin to participate in more cooperative play, sharing toys and taking turns. Social skills also include the ability to understand and respond to the emotions of others, which becomes more evident as children grow older.

Language Development

Children under the age of 2 continue to develop language skills, learning to understand and use basic words to express their needs. By the age of 3, children may begin to use more complex sentences and engage in two-way conversations. Language development is critical as it allows children to communicate their thoughts and feelings, which is essential for their cognitive and social development.

Emotional and Motor Development

Children under the age of 2 continue to develop their motor skills, learning to crawl, roll over, and eventually walk. They may also begin to learn about their own bodies and the importance of taking care of their physical health. Emotional development involves learning to recognize and express emotions, which is crucial for healthy relationships and social interactions.

Parental Influence

Parents play a vital role in their child's development, providing a safe and supportive environment that fosters growth and learning. By the age of 3, children may begin to develop a sense of self-esteem and independence, which is greatly influenced by their interactions with caregivers and family members. Encouraging a child's natural curiosity and providing opportunities for exploration and play are essential for their overall development.
2 Years

A Parent's Guide

With Your Young Learner

Building Phonemic Awareness

References:

For More Ideas and Information:

- Read aloud together
- Visit your local library
- Share books with your child
- Include their interests in your reading
Activities

Rhyme

List three words (two rhyme and one not) from your

Vocal

By 26 months 60% of your child's speech should be

Developmental Markers

Speech:

During this period of development your child will refer

Motor:

Vocabulary:

The child should have over 500 words in his expresss

Language:

Toward the end of this phase of development your

Rhymes:

List three words (two rhyme and one not) from your

Choice

Tell your toddler choices and encourage her to vocalize

Word:

Read minutes in each of the phases of phonetic

Initial Sounds

Learn which words do not sound the same. For example,

Sentence:

Be creative to help the child choose a word that does not

By 7 years old the child should have over 500 words in his expresss

Question

Ask open-ended questions that do not have a yes or no

Beginning:

For example, big, hand, ball.

Development:

How can you help your child learn to read and

Reading:

The average child is now able to pedal a tricycle and

Script:

This period will last an average of 7 or 8 years

Story Telling

Write down a story to tell your child and ask him to follow

Re-telling

Tell the story in response to your prompts.

Relating

Ask your child to retell a familiar story using the pictures

Re-reading

Page circles. You could take a turn describing each page.

Kidding:

The child has begun to associate words and objects with

First:

Think of words that are easy for your child to say.

Rhyming:

List three words (two rhyme and one not) from your

Vocal:

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3 Years

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With Your Young Learner

Phonemic Awareness

Building

For More Ideas and Information:

Library has to offer
Activities and more often free! Check out your local libraries offer many opportunities for literacy-based family
Read aloud together
Visit your local library regularly!
Libraries in books on tape of CD if the art
Make reading a part of your family's lifestyle

Reference:

www.bilinguallearning.org
www.readingchallenges.org
www.readingchallenges.org

44
Activities

Rhyme

One two, buckle my shoe
Humbly, Hungry will soon eat
Spread your word, make sure to eat
Reverse words, make sure to eat

Nursery Rhymes

Developmental Markers

Word

By year 3, your child will have mastered about 2/3 of

Social

Child’s growth and share without needing as many
worlds. Toward the end of this third year, the child will
and be able to distinguish between the real and pretended
stories. They continue to improve in many areas such as
improving with their articulation and social simple
By the end of this stage of development you child

Vocabulary

Disfigure as the child gets older
Sounds for those tips that difficult. This should
make sure to keep them simple.

Literacy

It’s normal for children to struggle to read.

Reminders

Use rhymes and share without needing as many
worlds. Toward the end of this third year, the child will
and be able to distinguish between the real and pretended
stories. They continue to improve in many areas such as
improving with their articulation and social simple
By the end of this stage of development you child
4 Years
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Building

References:
www.languageinc.org
www.readingresearch.org
www.readingresearchers.com

For More Ideas and Information:

Activities and more online free. Check out what your local library offers. Many opportunities for heritage-passed families.

Read aloud together.
Visit your local library frequently.
Listen to books on tape or CD in the car.
Make reading a part of your family’s nightly ritual.

For all ages:
Activities

Phoneme Detection
- Cheese - d-a-s - b-l-o-c-k - m-i-l-k
- Individual phonemes (sounds) identified. Have them attempt to blend.
- Once your child becomes consistently successful at blending, move to identifying.

Phoneme Blending
- Example words: white, while, while, spoon.
- The child will need to blend to make.

Concepts & Blending
- Children should learn to associate words into short word families.

Story Telling
- Pupper can run, not long.
A Parent's Guide
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Building

5 Years

For More Ideas and Information:
Activities and more options are Check out where your local
Libraries or other community programs for literacy-focused family
Read aloud together
Visit your local library regularly
Listen to books on tape or CDs in the car
Make reading a part of your family's lifestyle

For All Ages:

www.englishfamily.com
www.englishkids.com
www.englishparent.com

References

C.A. Wadsworth, Mathematics.


Amar, N. L. (1990). "Beginning to read: Building and

Activities

Rhyme

Text with the finger as you read. Compote questions and have them follow the theme in the telling of the story. Ask them to continue to read aloud to your child and encourage them.

Read Aloud

For example, “The dog is brown” (4 days)
Our time together and their ask it is do it in her own words.
Keep one line for each word. Cmp. through it, ask your child to track a sentence into individual sentences.

Sentence Segments

- p.1, p.4, p.8, p.13, p.18, p.23

Individual Phonemes (sounds) For example, b-op: b-dp:
Beginning consonants and rhymes when attempt to blend them.
Once your child becomes consistently successful at blending words into their sounds and rhymes. Ask them to continue to develop during this time.

Phoneme Blending

Example: book -> book cherk, can, can.

Other Rhyme Blending

Developental Markers

Language:

Play alone friends are very important to their development. They practice sharing and playing and explaining. They will now be able to distinguish between emotions and actions as well as understand consciousness.

Social:

Strengthen the arm muscles used while writing.

Important during this stages of development as it helps to develop during the process. Continue from memory. Encourage them to be the best place to hold the pencil like an artist would write more with the tips of fingers and thumbs. If now is able to hold the pencil and your child will soon be able to write the notes and understanding. The more skills will continue to develop during this time.

Motion:

She has mastered: p, b, m, h, w, b, f, k, g, n.

/ and 5) and as well as their sound.

Listening to familiar songs and continue to grow and as well as their sound and pitch. The concept of rhyme will continue to grow and catch up with the other sounds. They will understand whole songs and continue to grow and as well as their sound. When you hear your child’s words to your knowledge. As the child or other words.
Author’s Biography

Emma B. Hanzl was born in Waltham, MA on August 26, 1992. She was raised in Lebanon, ME and graduated from NOBLE High School in 2010. Majoring in Elementary Education, Emma has a minor in Communication Sciences and Disorders. She is a member of Pi Lambda Theta, The University of Maine Singers, and Mainely Voices. She is the recipient of the Horace and Isabelle Croxford Scholarship and the Harold R. Miller Presidential Scholarship.

Upon graduation, Emma plans to pursue a Master’s Degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Maine on a Trustee Tuition Scholarship.