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 (Elementary Education)

The Honors College
University of Maine
May 2014

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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.


**Literacy Legislation**

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/ /r/ /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 was 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 reachers 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!

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A Parent's Guide
With Your Young Learner

Building
Phonemic Awareness

References

For More Ideas and Information:

Enjoy this free guide!

Activities and more of these check out your local
Libraries offer many opportunities. (Never read again)
Read aloud together
Visit your local library frequent
Listen to books on tape or CD in the car
Make reading a part of your family's lifestyle

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Activities

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Motor

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Social

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Vocabulary

Math

Science

Art

Reading

Writing

Computers

Technology

Music

Dance

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Books

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Day

Night

Week

Month

Year

Activities

Developmental Stages

Visual

Auditory

Motor

Physical

Social

Emotional

Vocabulary

Math

Science

Art

Reading

Writing

Computers

Technology

Music

Dance

Sports

Games

Puzzles

Books

Stories

Poetry

Hobbies

Crafts

Building

Drawing

Painting

Sculpting

Cooking

Baking

Gardening

Housekeeping

Transportation

Construction

Nature

Weather

Seasons

Day

Night

Week

Month

Year
A Parent's Guide With Your Young Learner

Building Phonemic Awareness

2-4 Months

For More Ideas and Information:

Library has to offer
Activities and are most often free. Check out what your local libraries offer many opportunities for literacy based family

Read aloud together
With your local library, librarians have
Librarians in books or audio of CD in the car
Make reading a part of your family's lifestyle

References:

www.pronouncingwords.org
www.teacherspot.com
www.readingrocks.net
**Activities**

**Developmental Markers**

**Sound Play**

- Incorporate music and rhythmic sounds to stimulate the child's auditory senses.
- Use instruments like drums, shakers, and bells to engage the child.
- Introduce simple songs with repetitive phrases.
- Encourage the child to clap and move along with the music.

**Visuals**

- Display colorful pictures and illustrations.
- Use visual aids to help explain concepts.
- Incorporate educational videos that are suitable for the child's age.
- Create visual timelines or maps to show the child's progress.

**Auditory**

- Read bedtime stories that are age-appropriate.
- Incorporate stories that use descriptive language.
- Use storytelling apps that provide audio feedback.
- Encourage the child to repeat and imitate simple phrases.

**Physical**

- Incorporate exercises that involve movement and coordination.
- Use toys that require physical manipulation.
- Engage the child in games that promote physical development.
- Encourage the child to explore their environment.

**Conceptual**

- Introduce basic concepts like shapes and colors.
- Use everyday objects to demonstrate these concepts.
- Create activities that require the child to categorize and sort.
- Encourage the child to ask questions and explore their surroundings.

**Communication**

- Encourage the child to express themselves through gestures and words.
- Use simple conversations to encourage language development.
- Incorporate repetition to help the child remember new words.
- Encourage the child to ask questions and answer in simple sentences.

**Cognitive**

- Introduce simple puzzles and matching games.
- Use riddles and puzzles to engage the child's mind.
- Encourage the child to solve problems and make decisions.
- Use everyday situations to teach problem-solving skills.

**Emotional**

- Encourage the child to express their feelings.
- Use stories and books to help the child understand emotions.
- Encourage the child to share and take turns.
- Be patient and understanding with the child.

**Social**

- Encourage the child to interact with peers.
- Use games that promote social interaction.
- Encourage the child to share and take turns.
- Use stories and books that promote empathy.

**Language**

- Use simple sentences and gestures to help the child learn new words.
- Incorporate songs and rhymes that use simple language.
- Use everyday situations to teach new words.
- Encourage the child to ask questions and answer in simple sentences.

**Fine Motor**

- Use toys that require fine motor skills.
- Encourage the child to draw and paint.
- Use puzzles and building blocks to engage the child.
- Encourage the child to use scissors and crayons.

**Medical**

- Monitor the child's physical and emotional health.
- Use health-related stories to teach about hygiene.
- Encourage the child to wash hands and take care of their body.
- Use stories and books that promote healthy habits.

**Nutrition**

- Use healthy food and drinks.
- Incorporate healthy snacks and meals.
- Use stories and books that promote healthy eating habits.
- Encourage the child to drink water and eat fruits and vegetables.
A Parent's Guide

With Your Young Learner

Phonemic Awareness

Building

4 - 6 Months

Reference:

For More Ideas and Information:

www.omicseducation.org

www.omicseducation.org

Visit your local library!

Visit your local library!

www.omicseducation.org

For all ages:
Introduction:
New sounds like /b/ or /d/ may confuse those who have been hearing sounds with your child. Common sounds used in these include the /d/ and /b/.

Baby talk:

Physical Language:
Continue reading picture books and books with rhymes. Children are more likely to respond to them.

Expression of sound through different ways to produce them.

Diversity:

Make sounds (gibberish, sounds, etc.): This is also a way.

Play:

Children in this stage are typically engaged in toys:

的声音

Visual:

Focus your infant on the center of the room. By 6 months, he should have normal 20/20 vision. There is a decrease in the development of the eyes, which is normal. It is during this time that your infant is now able to see in full color and is able to focus on a single point near and far.

Music:

Focus on music and sound. There is an increase in the development of your infant's coordination, and you may notice an increase in the amount of vocal sounds your infant is able to make. Vocal Play:

Developmental Markers:

- Continue to make baby noises like "blub" or "cook.
- Develop the ability to make different sounds.
- Increase vocal sounds in your infant's play.
- Encourage your infant to explore the environment.
A Parent’s Guide

With Your Young Learner

Phonemic Awareness

Building

6 - 9 Months

References:

www.phonicsinformation.co.uk

www.englishaccent.co.uk

For more ideas and information:

Library has to offer

Libraries offer many opportunities for literacy-based family activities and are most often free. Check out what your local libraries offer together.

Visit your local library website!

Listen to books on tape or CDs in the car.

Make reading a part of your family’s lifestyle.

For all ages:
Activities

An important part of the child's development is the ability to express their emotions and introduce new words. Begin by introducing words that are easy to say and relate to the child's experiences. This will help the child to understand the world around them and express their thoughts and feelings.

Read Aloud

Reading aloud to your child is a wonderful way to help build their expression and vocabulary. Read stories that are age-appropriate and interesting to your child. The stories should be about familiar topics and relatable situations. This will help the child to understand the importance of reading and enjoy the process.

Exercises

Encourage your child to exercise by doing simple exercises together. For example, you can play games such as peek-a-boo or hide and seek. This will help the child to develop their motor skills and coordination.

Visuals

Introduce objects and pictures to your child. This will help them to associate words with objects and develop their understanding of the world. Make sure to use simple and clear pictures that will help the child to understand the concepts.

Developmental Markers

As the child begins to crawl around, they will start to explore their environment using their hands. This is an important stage in their development, as it helps them to develop their fine motor skills and learn about the world around them.

Auditory

Introduce songs and rhymes that are familiar to your child. This will help them to develop their listening skills and associate words with music.

Motor

Encourage your child to move around and explore their environment. This will help them to develop their gross motor skills and coordination.

Vocal

Introduce simple songs and rhymes that your child can sing along to. This will help them to develop their vocal skills and understand the importance of communication.
A Parent's Guide

With Your Young Learner

Phonemic Awareness

Building

Reference:

www.soundsgreat.org

www.readingexpressions.com

For more ideas and information:

- Library has ideas across disciplines and ages. Ask the librarian or check out your local library for many opportunities for literacy-based family read aloud together.

Visit your local library or check out:

- Listen to books on tape or in the car
- Make reading a part of your family's lifestyle

For all ages:
Develop your child's vocabulary: picture books can help develop vocabulary.

Activities

Conversational

Write and encourage your child to read in conversational pairs, as you can.

Language

Example: "Can you think of words that rhyme with...?"

Developmental Markers

Vocabulary

Conversational

Although your child may not know a few words, he should be able to join the conversation by repeating back what you say.

Peach-Poo.

For better understanding, the child needs to practice using new words in different contexts. This is called "embedding." It helps the child understand the meaning of the new words by using them in different situations.

Vocabulary

Children's books can help develop vocabulary. Picture books are particularly effective for this purpose.
12 - 15 Months

A Parent's Guide

Building Phonemic Awareness

With Your Young Learner

References:

For More Ideas and Information:

Library has to offer

Libraries offer many opportunities for literacy-based family

Read aloud together

Visit your local library

Listen to books on tape or CD in the car

Make reading a part of your family's lifestyle

For All Ages:
Activities

Understanding music helps the child to discover the world. Some children are more sensitive to the sounds and melodies of the world around them than others. Introduce this concept slowly and gently, allowing your child to experience the beauty of music. Music can provide comfort and relaxation, helping the child to feel secure and encouraged. It is important to keep music in mind throughout the toddler years.

Vocabulary

The words you use when talking to your child will have a significant impact on the child's ability to communicate. Introducing new words in a gentle and friendly manner can help the child to learn and understand new concepts. It is important to use simple, easy-to-understand words when talking to your child. This will help the child to develop their language skills and vocabulary.

Developing Markers

Explain how important it is to explain your toddler's behavior. If you notice your toddler is not yet able to communicate effectively, it is important to explain the reasons behind their behavior. This will help your toddler to understand that their actions have consequences. It is important to establish clear boundaries and expectations for behavior.

Language

Introducing new words to your toddler is important for their development. It is important to introduce new words in a consistent manner, using simple, easy-to-understand words. This will help your toddler to develop their language skills and vocabulary. It is important to use simple, easy-to-understand words when talking to your child. This will help the child to develop their language skills and vocabulary.
15 - 18 Months

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

References

For More Ideas and Information:

Library has 36 other activities and more open ideas. Check out what your local Library offers many opportunities for literary-based Family Read Aloud together.
Make reading a part of your family's lifestyle.

For All Ages:


http://www.bnomelearning.org
www.readingresearcher.org
and build a love of language.

You’re pointing to a certain book. “Do you like to read that with me?”

Hypnosis

Hypnosis is when your child is relaxed and open to suggestions.

You’re pointing to a certain book. “Do you like to read that with me?”

Activities

Activities are a great way to engage your child.

Let’s read a story together.

Developmental Markers

Developmental markers are important indicators of your child’s progress.

Language:

Your child will be able to express themselves more clearly.

Vocabulary:

Vocabulary is a crucial part of language development.

Writing:

Writing is an important skill that your child will develop.

Letter Sounds:

Letter sounds are important for reading and writing.

Whitney

Whitney is a great name for your child.

More:

More activities will help your child's development.

White

White is a great color for your child.

Matter

Matter is a great concept to teach your child.

Intrusive

Intrusive sounds can be difficult for your child.

Hyphens

Hyphens are used to separate phrases.

Hypnosis

Hypnosis is a great way to engage your child.

Hypnosis

Hypnosis is a great way to engage your child.
Building Phonemic Awareness
With Your Young Learner

18 Months - 2 Years

A Parents Guide

References:

www.readingresearch.org
www.readingconnections.org
www.languageexpressions.com

For More Ideas and Information:

Visit your library. Libraries and are more than just a place to check out books. Your local library offers many opportunities for literacy-based family activities and events. Here are a few ideas:

- Read aloud together
- Make reading a part of your family's lifestyle
- Visit your local library's website

Library hours and events vary, so check your local library's schedule for more information.
Activities

Sound Play

Your child will be developing new sounds towards the end of this period. Begin to introduce different sounds to your child's play. This can be done through simple sounds, such as clapping, tapping, and singing.

Language

Although the vocabulary is growing at a quick rate, caution is necessary. Continue to emphasize the correct pronunciation in your child's speech. Avoid using侉 or slurred words, as they may become habits.

Conversational and Family Settings

In this stage, your child is developing better conversation skills. They may start to ask more questions and express opinions. Encourage them to participate in family conversations and ask them to share their thoughts and feelings.

Sharing Reading

Start to introduce books that are appropriate for your child's age. Choose books that are rich in illustrations and have a rhythmic, engaging style.

Social

Children in this stage understand the concept of "we" but still have difficulty understanding the concept of "you." Encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings with others.

Developmental Milestones

Your child is starting to develop the ability to follow simple instructions. They may begin to show interest in writing and drawing. Encourage them to express themselves through art and writing.

Conversational

Encourage your child to participate in conversations and express their thoughts. This will help them develop better social skills.

Sound Play

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Language

Although the vocabulary is growing at a quick rate, caution is necessary. Continue to emphasize the correct pronunciation in your child's speech. Avoid using侉 or slurred words, as they may become habits.

Conversational and Family Settings

In this stage, your child is developing better conversation skills. They may start to ask more questions and express opinions. Encourage them to participate in family conversations and ask them to share their thoughts and feelings.
2 Years

Young children learn to read by age 5-6.

Building Phonemic Awareness

A Parent's Guide

With Your Young Learner

References:

www.prekinders.com
www.prekpages.com
www.edsource.org

For More Ideas and Information:

Library has many activities and resources available. Check out what your local library has to offer. Many opportunities for learning-based family activities are available.

Read aloud together.

Visit your local library frequently.

Listen to books or audio CDs in the car.

Make reading a part of your family's lifestyle.

For All Ages:
Activities

Rhyme

List three words (two rhyming and one not) from your child’s story.

Developmental Markers

Vocal

By 20 months 60% of your child’s speech should be intelligible. By 2 years most of what your child says should be understandable.

Language:

The child should have over 300 words in his or her vocabulary and begin to use them correctly. By 3 years your child will begin to show interest in “why” or “how” explanations. Your child will want to ask questions and will be able to sit and listen for more extended periods.

Listening:

Listen when your child does not want you to talk to him or her. Your child may be trying to express a feeling or need, or simply communicating with you.

Rhyme:

List three words (two rhyming and one not) from your child’s story.

Question:

Ask open-ended questions that do not have a yes or no answer. An example: How does the character feel in the story? What do you think will happen next? These questions encourage your child to think and to express their thoughts.

What if?

Explain the concept of “what if” by asking your child what if they were the character in the story. This activity is fun and helps your child learn to think about different possibilities.

Picture selection:

Point to different objects in the picture and ask your child to name them. This activity helps your child learn to associate words with objects.

Picture sequence:

Ask your child to tell a story in response to your prompts. Make up a story, or tell your child to tell you a story and ask them to tell it all in one breath. Encourage your child to use vocabulary they have learned.

When do you want it?

When you do not want your child to play with a toy, tell them what to do instead. For example, “You can’t play with the blocks right now, but you can play with the blocks later.”

Choice

Give your toddler choices and encourage them to voice their own preferences.

Narrator

Read the book to your child. What do you think will happen next? This activity helps your child learn to follow a story and develop their imagination.

Names

Ask your child to name the objects in the picture. This activity helps your child learn to associate words with objects.

Development:

During this period of development, your child will enjoy:

SOCIAL

Books feel like the same step before continuing forward.

MOTOR

Vocabulary

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Listening:

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A Parent's Guide to Phonemic Awareness

Building With Your Young Learner

References:

www.harpercollins.com
www.readingworks.org

For More Ideas and Information:

Library has this other activities and more good free. Check out what your local libraries offer many opportunities for literacy-focused family reading together.

Visit your local library regularly!
Library is books on tape or CDs in the car.
Make reading a part of your family's lifestyle.

For All Ages:
Activities

Rhyme

One, two, buckle my shoe,
Humphry Dumpert will no set
Shroub work over
Humphry Dumpert will no set
Seashore winds
Shroub work over
Humphry Dumpert will no set
Seashore winds

Rhyme Words

Express in verse

Example:

Two little ducks are swimming
One to the right, one to the left
The ducks keep swimming
Till they see a cat

When building familiarity with nursery rhymes, play

Initial Sounds

I Spy

Find something that begins

Play I Spy and ask the child to find objects that begin

With a particular sound, try something that begins

Which Does Not Belong?

With I Spy, try to help the child develop

Sociol:

child’s motor skills

with play-doh to help develop and strengthen your

Motor

of his hand and leg. Name

understanding by straining, the child is also now aware

Language:

disappear as child gets older

sounds for those who are deaf. This should

Word:

Developmental Markers

By year 3, your child will have mastered about 2/3 of
Building Phonemic Awareness With Your Young Learner

4 Years

A Parent's Guide

For More Ideas and Information:

- Activities and games that are fun and free. Check out what your local libraries offer for young, pre-readers.
- Read aloud together.
- Visit your local library frequently.
- Listen to books on tape or CDs in the car.
- Make reading a part of your family's lifestyle.

References:

- www.bilingualbooks.alphabet.com
- www.ttschool.com
- www.readingcodile.com

Credits:

Emma Harris - 2014

www.bilingualbooks.alphabet.com
Activities

Phoneme Detection

- Cheese. p-i-e-x block m-i-x milk
- Individual phoneme sounds (souns) for example. ch-e-e-se
- Blending nonsense words
- Once your child becomes consistently successful at
  Phoneme Blending
- Example. wi-sh, wi-sh-e whee, sp-e-e-ron
- The child would need help to combine to make for
  blend familiar words into their own words. Ask
  Concept Blending

Sound Detective

Grandma's house a museum the library
from real world environment for example, day care
describe especially if the speech in a sentence different
about the day events here to expand and add
your probably already ask your child to share stories

Story Taleer

Tell the past, can, run, one
word (consonant, vowel, consonant). For example,
ask your child what words sound like singer in short CVC

Developmental Markers

Enjoy pretend play and continue to exhibit a vivid
imagination. Play is now ready to begin doing so children of this age
are acquiring language and vocabulary faster than previously. As
concept development. Encouraging your child to express
your ideas and thoughts and cooperate with
You might start to notice fewer tantrums when you
independence in addition to physically independent.
Your child is slowly becoming emotionally

Social

write some capital letters
your body word dress and address without help and
age-appropriate sessions. Draw a person with two to
shape are age development and goals. By age two to
addition to these gross movements fine motor
backwards easily and bend over without falling. In
clip in, use a tripod for milk, comb and
start writing by using their feet (one foot per step)

Your young one should be able to walk up and down

Aims

Enhance

make some very interesting connections and story
works accurately clearly and tell stories. This will
child be able to speak in sentences of 5-6
This year is a very exciting time for both you and your

Language
Rhyme

Text with the rhythm as you read.

Example: "The dog is brown."

Continue to read aloud to your child and encourage them to take part in the telling of the story. Ask them to follow the repetition of words and rhymes.

Read Aloud

For example: "The dog is brown."

Continue to read aloud to your child and encourage them to follow the rhythm of words and rhymes. Ask them to follow the rhythm of words and rhymes.

Sentence Segmentation

3-p. Apple, p. 38: Chips

Promote phonemic awareness by having your child decode words and phrases. Ask your child to identify the sounds in words and to blend them together to form words.

Phonemic Blending

Example: p. Book, ch-e, ch-r, can.

The child will work on these skills through activities such as blending words and phrases. Ask your child to blend words into phonic sounds.

Activities

Move and move!

What shapes do you see?

Ask your child to create listening, paying, and family.

Social

Play alongside friends are very important to their development. Children need to develop their social skills and do not just to those who help them without getting them involved. Socialize and explain situations to them to help them understand

Sentence Segmentations

3-p. Apple, p. 38: Chips

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Phonemic Blending

Example: p. Book, ch-e, ch-r, can.

The child will work on these skills through activities such as blending words and phrases. Ask your child to blend words into phonic sounds.

Developmental Markers

Language:

As your young learner gets ready to enter kindergarten, continue to grow and as well as his/her sound continue to learn. The concept of science will expand and each child will express their knowledge will continue to grow and catch.
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.