Learning Progression: Phonological Awareness

Ways to Support Phonological Awareness: Read, sing and talk with children throughout each day. Encourage word play—make up silly songs, read nursery rhymes, and rhyming poems or stories (e.g., Dr. Seuss). Let children finish authors' rhymes and create their own real or silly rhymes. Share stories and poems with alliteration (Zebras zip around the zoo). Sing songs like Raffi’s Apples and Bananas. Make up games or chants that play with language. Use the dramatic play area to talk about sounds in words that are the same or different (e.g., the first sound in pot and pan). Create activities where children listen carefully.

Data-informed decision making directions:

1. **Gather** information by observing and interacting with the child, including one-to-one conversations. Use phonological awareness activities with individuals or small groups of children.
   - Gather information across at least three different sessions. A session can be a particular situation (e.g., interacting with a child one-to-one), location (e.g., dramatic play area), and/or activity (e.g., rhyming words activity during circle time).
   - Talk with family members and/or other caregivers about ways the child demonstrates phonological awareness skills (such as rhyming or playing with language) at home.
   - See sample Phonological Awareness Activities.
   - For additional information, see Key Terms and Additional Supports.

2. **Document** a child’s skills by writing anecdotal notes after completing phonological awareness activities and/or interacting with the child. Also consider including using digital devices (e.g., smartphone, camera) to capture a child’s skills.
   - For additional information, see Key Terms and Additional Supports.

3. **Summarize** your anecdotal notes.
   - Write a detailed summary statement that describes the specific skills the child demonstrated across the multiple sessions and settings (home and school/program). Include enough detail that others have a clear picture of how the child demonstrates phonological awareness skills.
   - For additional information, see Key Terms and Additional Supports.

4. **Analyze** your notes and any additional information you may have gathered from other sources such as interviews with families or caregivers, or other relevant assessments. Look for patterns and trends by asking questions such as:
   - Does the child demonstrate an awareness of words in sentences said aloud?
   - Does the child enjoy and notice rhyme or alliteration in familiar stories or poems read aloud or during word play? Can he or she tell which words rhyme and which ones don’t?
   - Does the child notice how words can be broken in to syllables (or parts)? Can they clap, tap, or count syllables?
   - Can the child produce rhyming words?
   - Does the child notice the individual speech sounds in words? If so, which sounds (first, last, middle)? Can he or she add, delete or manipulate individual phonemes in spoken words?
   - For additional information, see Key Terms and Additional Supports.

5. **Interpret** by drawing conclusions about the child’s phonological awareness skills.
   - Draw conclusions using the information you analyzed in the step above.
   - Use conclusions to rate the child’s performance on the Phonological Awareness Learning Progression.
Key Terms and Additional Supports

Key Terms

• **Onset and rime**: the initial phonological unit of a word (onset) and followed by the vowel and the string of letters (rime). For example, in the word cat, the c is the onset and –at is the rime. For the word that, th is the onset and –at is the rime. Teaching onset and rime helps children recognize common chunks in words.

• **Phonemic awareness**: the ability to notice and work with individual sounds in spoken words. For example, the phonemes in the word *cat* are /c/, /a/, and /t/. When you see speech sounds in print, they may have slashes //. These slashes help you to know that it refers to the sound not the letter.

• **Medial sounds**: the sounds in the middle of a spoken word. It's important to focus on the sounds, not the actual letters as some phonemes are made up of more than one letter. For example, the spoken word *fish* has three phonemes: /f/ /i/ /sh/, so the medial sound would be /i/.

Support for Gathering

• Encourage children to play with language.

• The Phonological Awareness Activities can be done with small groups of children or during large or whole group activities like circle time.

Support for Documenting

• Take notes during or shortly after the use of a phonological awareness activity. You can follow up your observations with short interactions with children that focus on the sounds of language.

Support for Summarizing (Alternatives)

• **Numerical summary idea**: Generate a numerical summary of the total number of times a child:
  1. notices rhymes or produces rhyming words
  2. claps, taps, or counts syllables
  3. identifies initial, medial, or final phonemes

• **Visual summary idea**: Make a graph that highlights the child’s phonological awareness strengths. Use the graph to communicate a child’s skills with family members, colleagues, and other caregivers along with ideas to continue to support the child’s phonological skill development across settings (home and school/program).

Support for Analyzing (Identifying Patterns and Trends)

• **Patterns** are behaviors that repeat in predictable ways. For example, does the child consistently demonstrate a variety of phonological skills?

• **Trends** are the general direction that something is headed (i.e., determine if the child’s skills are increasing, decreasing, or staying the same). For example, is the child increasing his or her awareness of the sound structure of language? Is the child noticing smaller and smaller units in spoken words?
Phonological Awareness Activities

Adding/Deleting/Substituting Sounds

Kindergarten

1. Model for children how you can add, delete or substitute an initial sound in a word to make a new word. After you’ve modeled and children understand what you’re asking them to do, have them add, delete or substitute initial sounds in words to make new words. Below are some examples:
   a. Add: Have children say ‘ox’, add /f/ to ‘ox’ to make ‘fox’
   b. Delete: Have children say ‘mice’, take away the /m/ to make ‘ice’
   c. Substitute: Have children say ‘cat’, change /c/ to /m/ to make ‘mat’

2. Once children are able to add, delete and substitute initial sounds, move on to adding and substituting final sounds. Below are some examples:
   a. Add: Have children say ‘cup’, add /s/ at the end of ‘cup’ to make ‘cups’
   b. Substitute: Have children say ‘plate’, change the /t/ to /n/ to make ‘plane’

3. Have children substitute medial sounds to make new words. Below is an example:
   a. Substitute: Have children say ‘dog’, change the /o/ to /i/ to make ‘dig’
Phonological Awareness Activities

Initial/Final/Medial Sounds

Preschool: Identifying Initial Sounds
1. Show children picture cards of familiar, easy-to-recognize images (e.g., mouse, sun). Verbally label the image (or have children say what the image is) and the first sound you hear in the word. Enunciate the initial sound. You might model this activity by saying, “Mouse. What’s the first sound you hear in ‘mouse’? Mouse, /m/, mouse.” Pick a new card. Say what the image is. Children say the word and the first sound they hear in the word.
2. Say a sound and have all of the children whose names start with that sound come forward. As you say the sound, try to stretch it out as you make it.

Preschool: Identifying Final Sounds
1. Use the first activity above, but this time focus on ending sounds. Be sure to enunciate the ending sounds as you say them.
2. Choose objects to show (or picture cards or pictures in a big book). Model by saying what the object (or picture) is and the last sound you hear in the word. For example, you might say, “Cat. The last sound I hear in Cat is /t/. Cat, /t/.” Using pictures or objects as supports if needed, have children take turns saying a word and the last sound they hear in that word.

Beginning Kindergarten: Identifying Sounds as Beginning or Ending Sounds
1. Have children listen to a sound and then the name of a child in their class. Have them tell you if the sound comes at the beginning of the child’s name or at the end of the child’s name. For a little extra fun, you can see what they say about a tricky name like David!
2. Play sound bingo with picture bingo cards. Children mark images if they have a picture that begins (or ends) with the sound said by the caller.

Kindergarten: Identifying Sounds
1. Say a word (e.g., pig) and ask a child to say all the sounds they hear in the word. For example, you might say, “What sounds do you hear in pig? Say each one.”
2. Say a word and say a sound in that word. Ask the child to tell you where in the word they heard the sound—at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end (e.g., “Pig. Where do you hear the /i/ in pig?”).
Phonological Awareness Activities

Rhyming Words

Preschool: Recognizing Rhyming Words
1. Have children listen to rhyming songs, familiar nursery rhymes, or a rhyming big book during circle time. Ask children to clap when they hear a rhyme.
2. Show and name a picture on a picture card (e.g., a picture of a cat). Show and name a picture on another picture card (e.g., a picture of a rat). Repeat both words, holding up the matching card as a visual cue. Ask the children if the words rhyme. Repeat the words again, noting whether or not the words rhyme (e.g., “Cat, rat. Yes, cat and rat rhyme.”) Continue to show rhyming and non-rhyming picture card pairs.

Preschool: Producing a Rhyming Word
1. Show and name a picture card (e.g., cat). Ask children to share a word that rhymes with the picture on the card (e.g., rat, sat, mat).Continue to show and name picture cards, asking for children to produce rhyming words.
2. Share the first line of a familiar nursery rhyme (e.g., Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall). Pause when you come to the end of a line with a rhyming word (e.g., Humpty Dumpty had a great [pause]). Allow children time to fill in the missing rhyming word. Share the rhyming word. Continue the activity by sharing the next line in the familiar nursery rhyme.

Kindergarten: Producing a Pair of Rhyming Words
1. Ask children to tell you two words that rhyme. Continue to ask for pairs of rhyming words. Probe various word families (e.g., -all, -at, -it, and so on).
2. Have children make up their own rhymes using familiar nursery rhymes (e.g., Twinkle, twinkle little fish how I wonder what you wish; Little Miss Mary sat on a berry)
Phonological Awareness Activities

Syllables/Onsets and Rimes/Phonemes

Preschool: Identifying Syllables and Words in Compound Words
1. Have children clap and count the syllables in their names. Include last names as well as first names. Have them say each syllable while clapping.
2. Show and name a picture of a compound word on a picture card (e.g., a picture of a baseball, butterfly, snowman). Ask children to tell you the two words they hear as you say each word (e.g., base, ball; butter, fly; snow, man).

Preschool: Blending and Segmenting Syllables and Words
1. Play Name the Words. Model saying a compound word and saying the words within that compound word (e.g., snowman, snow—man). Say a compound word. Ask children to repeat the word. Then have children say the words they hear within the word you said. For example, you might say, “Baseball. Say ‘baseball.’ What words do you hear in ‘baseball’?” Emphasize the compound word as you say it. Use picture cards if needed.
2. Play Guess the Word. Model saying the syllables in a word and putting the syllables together to say the mystery word (e.g., win-dow, window). Break a word into syllables. Say each syllable slowly. Have children put the word back together (e.g., ta-ble; table; el-e-phant, elephant). Repeat with multiple words. Use picture cards if needed.
3. Play Break the Word. Tell children they are going to break a word into syllables or parts. Give an example (e.g., under, un-der). Say a word and ask children to break it into syllables (e.g., basket, /bas/ /ket/; finger, fin-ger). Use picture cards if needed.

Beginning Kindergarten: Blending and Segmenting Onsets and Rimes
1. Show a picture card depicting a one-syllable word (e.g., a pig, a snake). Say the word followed by the onset/rime (e.g., snake, /sn/ /ake/). Show additional picture cards. Ask the child to break the word into parts following your model.
2. Repeat the above activity but this time blend the onset and rime to form the word.

Kindergarten: Blending and Segmenting Phonemes
1. Give each child plastic chips. Show a picture card that depicts a two-phoneme word. Name the image (e.g., bow, bee, shoe, zoo, toe). Slowly say the word (e.g., bow) and then clearly pause between each phoneme (e.g., /b/ ... /ō/). As you enunciate each sound, model how to move a chip to represent each phoneme, in this case move two chips. Have a child choose a new card. Say the word. Have children say the sounds they hear in the word, moving a chip each time they say each sound (phoneme). Start with two- and three-phoneme words.
2. Do this same activity as above, but this time start with the individual sounds (phonemes) and ask children to put the sounds together to make a word (e.g., /b/ ... /ō/, bow).