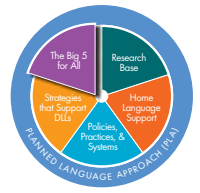


PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS



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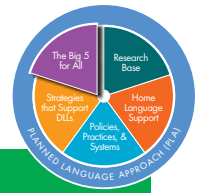
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INTRODUCTION TO PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Phonological awareness focuses on the sounds of words that children hear, versus the written symbols they see. Two other Big 5 skills, Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing and Book Knowledge and Print Concepts, focus on written symbols—letters and words. Phonological awareness centers on the sounds and sound patterns of alphabetic languages like English, Spanish, and Arabic, rather than the meanings of words. Phonological awareness skills include the ability to hear, identify, make, and work with the sounds and sound patterns of spoken language. Young children show they are developing phonological awareness when they

- notice and listen to the meaningful sounds of language - there is a connection between the sounds of words and the meaning of words;
- play with sound patterns, including repeating sounds, rhyming words, singing, or chanting;
- identify sounds of words that sound the same, for example, at the beginnings and ends of words, such as “airplane” and “airport”;
- play with the sounds in words, such as when they blend words—for example, blending “air and “plane” into “airplane”—or manipulate sounds, saying things like “pancake, wancake, mancake”; and
- break up sounds (or segmenting sounds), such as breaking “today” into “to” and “day.”

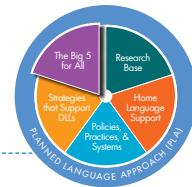
By playing with words and sounds in different ways, caregivers and teachers can support children’s phonological awareness—which, in turn, will one day help them read!

Just like the other Big 5 topics, phonological awareness should be part of the curriculum—supported every day, throughout the day. This key literacy skill is addressed in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, which is fully described in the next section. Education staff can plan experiences or capitalize on teachable moments to help children tune-in to the sounds of language. Staff work with families to help children learn how to build phonological awareness in their languages. Professional development opportunities should help staff build children’s knowledge and engage families. In other words, supporting phonological awareness is part of a coordinated approach across the whole program to help each child to write in all their languages.

A coordinated approach also ensures the full and effective participation of children who are dual language learners (DLLs) and their families. This document shares the role that languages and culture play in children’s phonological awareness. It also notes differences between English and other languages so that staff can better support diverse learners.

“Dual language learner means a child who is acquiring two or more languages at the same time, or a child who is learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language.” Head Start Program Performance Standards, Part 1305 - 1305.2 Terms





CONNECTING EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND THE HEAD START EARLY LEARNING OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK: AGES BIRTH TO FIVE

Head Start and Early Head Start programs are required to implement program and teaching practices that align with Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF) and the state’s early learning and development standards (ELDS). As a key language and literacy skill, phonological awareness is incorporated into state ELDS and the HSELOF. This resource will show where phonological knowledge is addressed in the HSELOF.

For infants and toddlers, phonological awareness goals appear in the Language and Communication domain and the Emergent Literacy sub-domain. The primary goal that addresses this skill is below.

- Goal IT-LC 9: Child attends to, repeats, and uses some rhymes, phrases, or refrains from stories or songs.

ELOF



Infant/Toddler Language and Communication Sub-Domains

Attending and Understanding Communicating and Speaking Vocabulary **Emergent Literacy**

Goals for Sub-Domain: Emergent Literacy

- ▶ Goal IT-LC 9. Child attends to, repeats, and uses some rhymes, phrases, or refrains from stories or songs.
- ▶ Goal IT-LC 10. Child handles books and relates them to their stories or information.
- ▶ Goal IT-LC 11. Child recognizes pictures and some symbols, signs, or words.
- ▶ Goal IT-LC 12. Child comprehends meaning from pictures and stories.
- ▶ Goal IT-LC 13. Child makes marks and uses them to represent objects or actions.

For preschoolers, phonological awareness goals are in the Literacy domain and the Phonological Awareness sub-domain. The primary goal that addresses this skill is below.

- Goal P-Lit 1: Child demonstrates awareness that spoken language is composed of smaller segments of sound.

ELOF

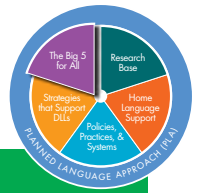


Preschooler Literacy Sub-Domains

Phonological Awareness Print and Alphabet Knowledge Comprehension and Text Structure Writing Literacy

Goals for Sub-Domain: Phonological Awareness

- ▶ Goal P-LIT 1. Child demonstrates awareness that spoken language is composed of smaller segments of sound.



WHY PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS MATTERS: UNDERSTANDING THE RESEARCH

Phonological awareness typically develops on a continuum. Children begin by noticing larger units of sound, like words and syllables, and progressing to smaller units of sound, like phonemes.¹⁰

TYPES OF PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS IN ENGLISH

Phonological awareness develops in different ways in different children. Most children develop several types of phonological awareness at once. They may learn how to recognize words and at the same time realize that some words rhyme. As children gain more experience hearing speech, they become aware of the following:

- Speech is made up of words
- Words are made up of syllables
- Syllables are made up of individual sounds (phonemes)

As children hear people talk to them and develop phonological awareness, they learn to break speech up into parts. There is no strict sequence for developing phonological awareness skills in English. However, some phonological awareness skills tend to be easier and develop sooner than others. Phonological awareness skills are listed below in order, from those skills that typically develop earlier to those that often come later in a child's development.

WORD AWARENESS

Children gradually learn that speech is made up of words. For example, beginning talkers may think of “all done” or “thank you” as single words. This is developmentally appropriate! As children develop more experience listening and talking, they learn “all” and “done” and “thank” and “you” are different words.

RHYME AWARENESS

Many words share an ending sound, or “rhyme.” As children hear different sounds, they realize that some words sound alike, or they rhyme. Many children enjoy pointing out, making, and creating rhymes. At this stage, children often want to read and reread their favorite rhyming books.

Some common English rhyming words:

- • -an
can, ban, fan, tan
- • -ing
sing, ding, ping, sling
- • -ent
bent, sent, lent, tent

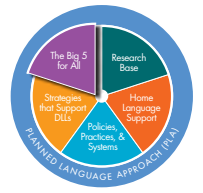
SYLLABLE AWARENESS

English is a language in which words are made up of one or more syllables. Syllables are short groups of sounds. Children learn to break up words into their smaller sound (syllables) in preschool or kindergarten.

- Some words are one syllable (eat, sleep, one, can, laugh).
- Some words are two syllables (eat-ing, sleep-y, Mar-ta, ap-ple).
- Some words are three syllables (ba-na-na, di-no-saur, cam-er-a).
- Some words are even longer (A-mer-i-ca, tel-e-vi-sion).

“Phonological awareness is critical for learning to read any alphabetic writing system. And research shows that difficulty with phoneme awareness and other phonological skills is a predictor of poor reading and spelling development.”⁷





PHONEMIC AWARENESS

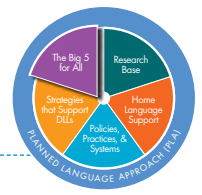
A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound. Even syllables break into individual sounds, or phonemes. As children gain more experience with sound, they identify, produce, and work with phonemes. Since most English letter sounds are a single phoneme, knowing phonemes helps children make and identify letter sounds. Children begin to develop this skill in late preschool, and they continue to refine it throughout kindergarten and first grade. Beginning-sound awareness is typically the first aspect of phonemic awareness that children develop. Many children learn the first sound in their own names: “Maria”, “Simon,” “Luci.” Children soon notice that other words begin with the same sound (alliteration), for example, “Maria,” “market,” and “mittens.”

Examples of one-letter phonemes in English		
A		A-pple
B	as in	B-all
C		C-ar

Examples of two-letter phonemes in English		
Th		Th-ick
Sh	as in	Sh-ell
Ch		Ch-in

Examples of two-phoneme words in English	
a-t	at
i-t	it
i-s	is
h-e	he
sh-e	she
i-ck	ick

Examples of three-phoneme words in English	
c-a-t	cat
b-i-t	bit
g-e-t	get
th-i-s	this
l-o-t	lot
s-i-ck	sick



DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Different languages have different phonologies, or sound systems. For example, Spanish includes a trilled “r” sound that does not exist in English. In Lao, a language spoken in Laos, the tone of voice can change the meaning of a word (this is not the case in English). English includes some sounds that do not exist in other languages, too. Different languages have different sounds and use them in different ways—this is part of what makes each language unique. Children who are DLLs listen, learn, and use sounds in two languages. Phonological awareness skills developed in one language can transfer to another language, especially if the languages have similar sounds and sound systems. If the two languages are quite different, children who are DLLs may need more practice and support in making and using the sounds of English.

Some evidence suggests that developing phonological awareness in the language that is most familiar to a child, and in which they have the most vocabulary, can be especially helpful.¹¹ It is very important that children engage in phonological awareness activities with a fluent speaker. Adults should use their own strongest language during phonological awareness activities. They can also share favorite nursery rhymes, songs, and chants with their children in their home languages. Emphasize how much this helps children learn both languages.

Korean is a phonetic language that matches letters and sounds. Researchers recently found that Korean-English bilingual children could perform tasks that required phonological manipulations more easily than their Korean monolingual peers. Children who speak European languages, such as Spanish, French, Italian, and alphabetic languages with different writing systems also reap benefits from their bilingualism.³

Phonological awareness in English helps children learn to read English because they are learning the sounds associated with words and letters. This relationship may not be true for all languages. For example, in some languages, a symbol represents a word or a part of a word (logographic languages such as Chinese). In these cases, phonological awareness develops differently than in English.

English has sounds other languages may not have. Given the different emphasis on and purpose of phonemes across languages, staff should note whether children who are dual language learners can hear and make sounds associated with English language in the course of daily interactions with children. Engage in real and meaningful conversation about things that are happening or materials you are using together. This is a more authentic and effective approach than using nonsense words, because DLLs won’t make sound connections that don’t have meaning.



“...children are able to use their phonological awareness developed in Spanish to help read words in English.” (13, p. 32)



THE DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRESSION FROM BIRTH TO AGE FIVE

Within the first five days of life, infants can discriminate between sounds they hear in their environments.⁹ “Through daily exposure to human and environmental sounds, infants gradually become aware of how sounds are made and how they vary. This awareness is a necessary [beginning] to hearing and making the sounds of the alphabet.”^(1, p. 34)

Infants and toddlers develop phonological awareness primarily by hearing and making sounds. Here are some examples of times when children develop phonological awareness.

- Infants babble and practice the sounds of their languages.
- Older infants and toddlers begin to make syllables and words.
- Adults provide infants and toddlers with fun and engaging sounds by talking, singing, playing, chanting, and reading to them.
- Adults and infants and toddlers often enjoy repeating sounds back and forth, making loud and soft sounds, and making each other laugh by using sounds.

Children develop phonological awareness at their own pace. Some children may develop these skills quickly and easily. Most children will require a lot of repetition and practice. Children develop and use phonological awareness when they do the following:

- Make and use the sounds in spoken language (including infant babbling)
- Play with the sounds of words by
 - Repeating sounds
 - Blending or stringing sounds together
 - Making up nonsense words made of different sounds
 - Rhyming sounds or words
- Sing, chant, or say simple rhymes and songs, including those that have motions
- Hear books and songs that have rhyming words or interesting sounds (e.g., Plop! Cowabunga! Ho! Go!)
- Practice and recognize words that have the same sounds
 - at the *end* (rhymes), such as my, by, cry, and try
 - At the *beginning* (alliteration), such as ball, bat, and boy
- Manipulate sounds (preschoolers and kindergarteners):
 - Blend sounds to make syllables and words
 - Compound words—blending air and plane to make airplane
 - Syllables—blending pan-da to make panda
 - Individual sounds—blending b-a-t to make bat
 - Segment (divide) to break words into smaller units
 - Compound words into two words—airplane into the words air and plane
 - Syllables—dividing the word panda into pan-da
 - Sounds within words—dividing the word bat into b-a-t



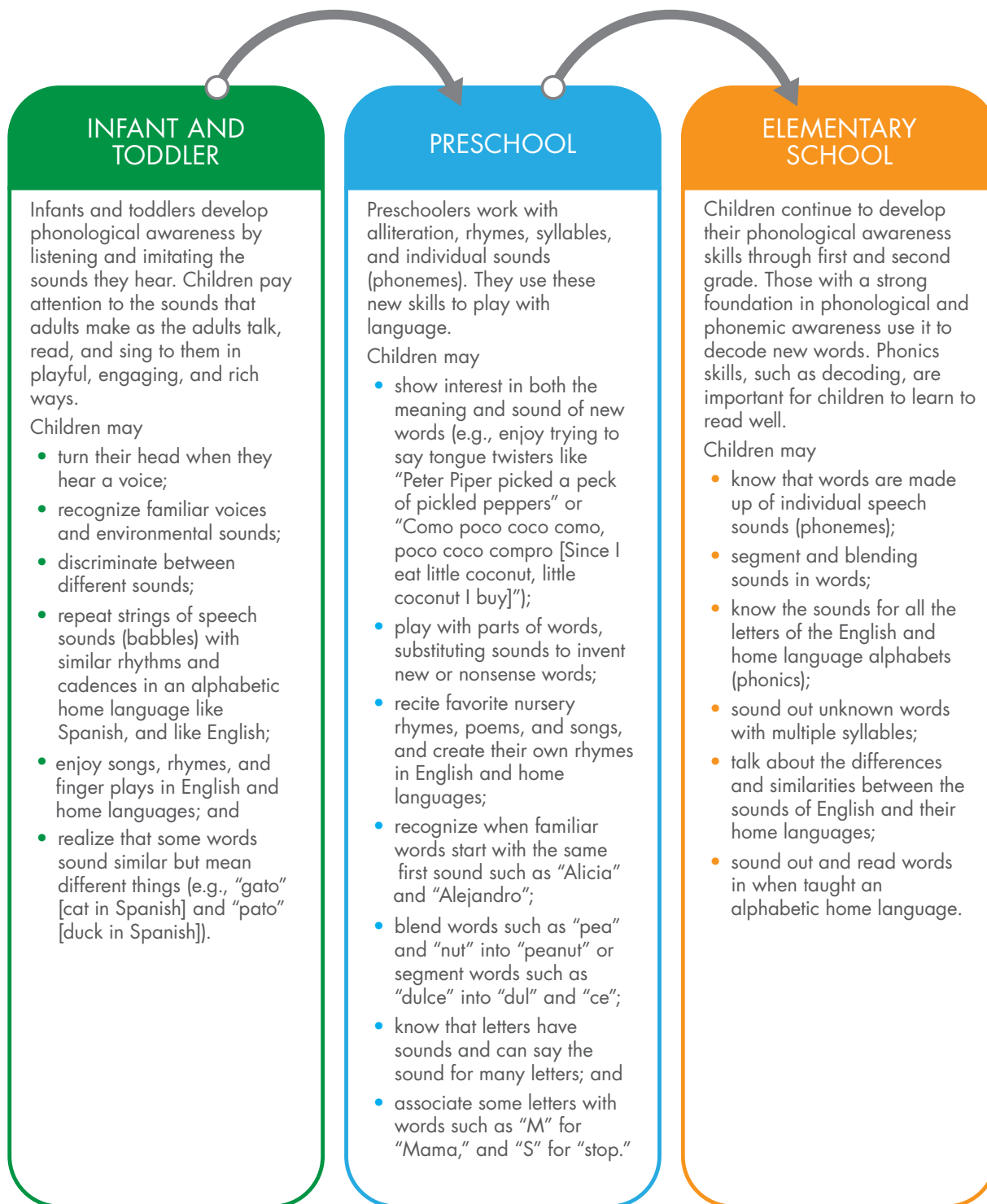
“Instruction in phonemic and phonological awareness should be playful as teachers read stories, tell stories, play word games, and use rhymes and riddles. Instruction in the area should be purposeful and planned.”^(8, p. 166)

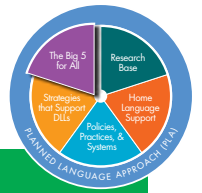




Recent research findings from bilingual (English-Spanish), low-income preschoolers show that these children develop their phonological awareness abilities over time, “with rhyme recognition being the easiest task at the preschool level, and initial phoneme and segmenting skills improving through the end of preschool and kindergarten.”⁵

HOW DOES PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS DEVELOP?





EFFECTIVE PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Using familiar songs, chants, and words helps children develop phonological awareness. Children who are DLLs will learn the sound system of their home language and English, though this will happen differently depending on the home language. Once children have mastered a skill (e.g., they become experienced in rhyming with different word endings), they won't need to practice it anymore. Instead, they can develop new skills, such as breaking words into syllables.

Research shows that explicit phonological awareness instruction helps young children who are deaf or hard of hearing, especially children who have functional hearing (i.e., they can access spoken language through hearing aids or cochlear implants).^{2, 6, 12} Adults who work directly with these children or with families who have children who are deaf or hard of hearing can benefit from working with specialists in speech and language or deaf education with expertise in phonological awareness instructional practices.

WAYS TO ENCOURAGE PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Play with language every day in every way! Create an environment in which children and adults play with the sounds throughout the day. Here are some examples.

- Use songs and rhymes during transitions—for example, at the beginning and end of the day, during routines such as snack or mealtime, diapering or toileting, going outside to play and coming back in, going to circle time, or between learning experiences and center activities.
- Choose fun and interesting picture books that play with sound based on the children's interests, suggestions from families, and your own interests and knowledge.
- Emphasize interesting, rhyming, or repeating sounds when you read by using a dramatic voice and funny faces.
- Have engaging rhymes and songs that toddlers and preschoolers can chant throughout the year, allowing them to change, match, and substitute sounds. Many children may especially enjoy chants with motions.
- Support children who are DLLs as they learn the English sounds and sound system, while they learn their home language's sounds and sound system.
- Support small-group sound play in preschool by
 - creating small groups of two to three children based on children's interests and needs (e.g., children who are DLLs who are learning specific English sounds that are new to them, or children who love rhyming and want additional opportunities to play with sound) and inviting them to short, interactive, and fun small group activities of 10-15 minutes or less;
 - chanting, singing, rhyming, or other phonological awareness activities; and
 - keeping activities fun and engaging because rote instruction or drilling is not the best way to support phonological awareness.

Families contribute to their children's phonological awareness in so many ways! Involve families by

- inviting them to share lullabies, rhymes, word games, songs, and stories with the children in the group care setting and at home;
- encouraging them to support children as they develop their home language's sounds and sound system;
- sharing rhymes, word games, songs, and stories; and
- inviting them to help you choose new sound play activities that their children will enjoy

SUPPORTING PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS IN LANGUAGES YOU KNOW WELL

To lead phonological awareness activities, adults must know a language's sounds and sound combinations very well. Only lead phonological awareness activities in languages in which you are fluent.



HOW TO SUPPORT BABIES AS THEY DEVELOP PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Babies learn the differences between sounds (e.g., voices, barking dogs, and vacuum cleaners) and language as they interact with others and explore the world around them. They recognize the sound of their mother's voice from birth. As they spend time with other caring adults, including teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors, they will begin to recognize their voices as well. With lots of repetition, babies will also begin to recognize their favorite songs, poems, and stories.

Babies begin to develop phonological awareness when adults

- sing songs and nursery rhymes in children's home languages;
- use child-directed speech or "parentese," which means speaking in a higher pitch, at a slower rate, with clearer enunciation, and in simpler and shorter phrases, combined with gestures and facial expressions;
- respond to babies' needs, for example changing a child as soon as he is wet or putting her down for a nap as soon as she appears sleepy;
- describe routines and actions (e.g., "Let's go wash your hands. We always want to wash our hands before we eat lunch!");
- use lots of different words;
- describe voices (e.g., "Oh, I hear your sister, Shayne, coming. She has a higher voice than your nana. There's Shayne!") and the sounds they hear (e.g., "Did you hear that doggy bark? He made a loud sound. Woof, woof!"); and
- share rhyming books, songbooks, and storybooks that contain brightly colored illustrations or photos, and label and describe the pictures.



Eight-month-old Dae falls asleep every evening as his father sings him a lullaby. His mother chants to him when she bathes him. Through these experiences, Dae develops an awareness of sound and the meaning and comfort it conveys. When he goes to his Early Head Start center, he hears different songs with different sounds. Dae adds to what he hears in EHS and builds on the phonological awareness he develops at home.

Home visitors can help parents identify, adapt, and try these practices during home visits and group socializations.

"Ba-ba-da," babbles six-month-old Marisol in delight. Her father, Caleb, repeats, "Yes, Da-da" back to her, enjoying making sounds with his daughter. The home visitor, Marie, shares the family's excitement at the baby's first sounds. She explains that Marisol will use these sounds to make words soon. Three-year-old Tonio is also playing with sound, rhyming, and making up silly words. "Truck, duck, muck muck," he says, laughing. Marie joins in the fun, "Stuck truck, stuck duck, stuck in the muck." She encourages Caleb to add rhyming words. "Bad luck!" he adds with a smile.





HOW TO SUPPORT TODDLERS AS THEY DEVELOP PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Toddlers, including children who wear hearing aids or have cochlear implants, pay attention to the sounds around them! As they listen to language and play with sounds, toddlers show they are developing phonological awareness. Adults can support them using sound play and by talking, reading, and singing with them. Toddlers who are dual language learners benefit from hearing their home language as well as English.

Toddlers develop phonological awareness when adults



- share nursery rhymes, rhyming books, alliterative texts, and songs and chants that play with words, including in home languages (as appropriate for the language), for example, “Willoughby, Wallaby, Woo,” and “Down by the Bay” in English or “Aroró Mi Niño” and “Los Pollitos Dicen” in Spanish;
- use languages they speak fluently with children, and play with sounds (as appropriate for the language);
- create a print-rich environment by labeling shelves and toy bins with words and pictures, creating a library area, and displaying signs and photographs;
- draw children’s attention to print in the group care setting, home, and community (e.g., labels, book titles, stop and exit signs);
- have one-on-one conversations with children daily—during playtimes, mealtimes, and quiet times—and have back-and-forth exchanges with two or more turns for each child;
- develop listening skills by asking for children’s attention (e.g., “Listen...”);
- point out rhyming words (e.g., “You said you have new shoes! Listen. ‘New’ and ‘shoe.’ They rhyme!”);
- encourage children to say the rhyming word at the end of a sentence (e.g., “Switcheroo, right foot, right _____ [shoe]!”);
- support attentional skills (e.g., “Jamal is showing us the tower he built. Let’s watch him first, then you can show me...”);
- introduce alphabet books and puzzles;
- talk about letters in languages children are learning (as appropriate for the language), including their shapes, sounds, and names;
- help children label and describe pictures and objects to build their vocabulary; and
- talk with older toddlers about the names of meaningful letters in their home language and in English, such as the letters in their names, and their sounds (e.g., “Look! There is the letter L just like in your name, ‘Lily’”).

Min, 34 months old, has an older sister who chants jump rope rhymes in English and Korean, which Min repeats. He also hears rhymes in Spanish when his sister plays with Mireya next door, “*Osito, osito, ¿puedes saltar? Ayúdame, ayúdame a contar.*” Min hears rhymes in English, Korean, and Spanish!

When Min reads *The Little Engine That Could* with his mother and home visitor during a home visit, Min chants “I think I can! I think I can! I think I can!” All these experiences help build Min’s phonological awareness.

Home visitors can help parents identify, adapt, and try these practices during home visits and group socializations.

GOAL IT-IC 9. CHILD ATTENDS TO, REPEATS, AND USES SOME RHYMES, PHRASES, OR REFRAINS FROM STORIES OR SONGS.



DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRESSION			INDICATORS
Birth to 9 Months	8 to 18 Months	16 to 36 Months	By 36 Months
Listens and attends to culturally and linguistically familiar words or signs in rhymes or songs.	Says a few words of culturally and linguistically familiar rhymes and repetitive refrains in stories or songs.	Says or repeats culturally and linguistically familiar rhymes, phrases, or refrains from songs or stories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Repeats simple familiar rhymes or sings favorite songs. ■ Retells familiar stories using props.

HOW TO SUPPORT PRESCHOOLERS AS THEY DEVELOP PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Preschoolers develop phonological awareness as they notice sounds and sound patterns (i.e., syllables, rhymes, and individual sounds or phonemes). They also begin to hear, identify, make, and work with language sounds and sound patterns. Although children don't use phonological awareness in everyday conversations, they'll need it to learn to read in alphabetic languages, such as English, Spanish, and Arabic.⁴ Preschoolers need many opportunities to hear rich language (in a home language as well as English), but they also need adults who can show them that sound and word play is fun. And remember—this is also true for children who are hard of hearing or deaf!

Preschoolers develop phonological awareness when adults

- talk, talk, talk—hearing lots of different words helps preschoolers build their vocabularies—the more words they know, the easier it will be for them to develop phonological awareness;
- encourage careful listening (e.g., “Listen for directions...”) and attention (e.g., “Use your eyes to see what I am doing and your ears to hear what I'm saying...”);
- read rhyming stories and poems and identify the rhymes in them (e.g., “This is a rhyming story. See ‘thumb’ and ‘plum’? They rhyme!”);
- play with interesting words (e.g., “Oh, this fruit has a name that is fun to say. Say ‘cantaloupe’ with me? Can-ta-loupe. Cantaloupe!”);
- model how to listen to and blend syllables into words (e.g., “Can you guess whose name this is—‘Mo-ha-med?’”);
- play games that encourage children to blend units of sound into words (e.g., “Raise your hand if you can tell me the word I am making: cow-boy.”), syllables (e.g., “What is cat-er-pil-lar together?”), and phonemes (e.g., “What is c-a-t together?”);
- combine phonological awareness with alphabet activities (e.g., “The sign says ‘playground.’ Playground also starts with P just like your name, Pilar!”);
- read and make up alphabet stories, particularly those that use rhyme and alliteration (e.g., “Lovely lions lick lemon lollipops.”);
- provide preschoolers with opportunities to play alphabet games and puzzles, and talk about letters and their sounds as they play;
- model how to sort words or objects, first by beginning sounds and later by ending sounds using items such as objects, picture cards, and stuffed animals; and
- encourage older preschoolers to “write for sounds” (i.e., invented spelling).

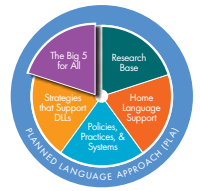
Home visitors can help parents identify, adapt, and try these practices during home visits and group socializations.

Teacher Kia plays a sound-matching game with four-year-olds Ari, Beatrice, and Jean using the first sound of the children's names. Kia planned this activity to help Ari, Beatrice and Jean listen for the beginning sounds of words. The next day, Ari shares the first sounds of the names of his family members with his teacher. Kia notes that Ari is interested in alliteration and shares the book *Alligators All Around*, by Maurice Sendak, with Ari and a few of his classmates. Ari tells the children that his name begins with the same sound as “alligator”—and all the other words in the book's title, too!



Five-year-old Alex is clapping out the syllables in very long dinosaur names. Alex is becoming aware that very long words are made up of smaller syllables, and he is learning how to break up those long words. He is becoming enthusiastic about reading!

At his family child care home, Alex segments and blends sounds while using the context and pictures in books to identify the names of dinosaurs. When reading a book about dinosaurs, his family child care provider, Stella, stops reading and has Alex clap out dinosaur names. Stella also includes dinosaur names on a foam display board and helps him write down the names of his favorite dinosaurs in his word journal.



GOAL P-LIT 1. CHILD DEMONSTRATES AWARENESS THAT SPOKEN LANGUAGE IS COMPOSED OF SMALLER SEGMENTS OF SOUND.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRESSION		INDICATORS
36 to 48 Months	48 to 60 Months	By 60 Months
Shows rote imitation and enjoyment of rhyme and alliteration. With support, distinguishes when two words rhyme and when two words begin with the same sound.	Demonstrates rhyme recognition, such as identifying which words rhyme from a group of three: hat, cat, log. Recognizes phonemic changes in words, such as noticing the problem with "Old McDonald had a charm." Is able to count syllables and understand sounds in spoken words.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides one or more words that rhyme with a single given target, such as "What rhymes with log?" Produces the beginning sound in a spoken word, such as "Dog begins with /d/." Provides a word that fits with a group of words sharing an initial sound, with adult support, such as "Sock, Sara, and song all start with the /s/ sound. What else starts with the /s/ sound?"



EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS PRACTICES IN EARLY LEARNING SETTINGS

EXAMPLES WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS

ON A HOME VISIT

Sara, a home visitor, watches six-month-old Avi gaze at and vocalize with his mother. He is making some of the language sounds that he hears around him. Avi’s mother returns her gaze and looks right at Avi as she repeats the sounds. “A-ga, a-ba, mmm,” his mother replies, “and A-vi!” Avi and his mother make sounds back and forth for several minutes. Sara shares with the mother how impressed she is with Avi’s sounds. “Wow! Avi is already making so many sounds. He loves it when you repeat the sounds back to him, doesn’t he? He looks right at you and smiles!”



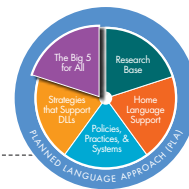
IN A FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME

Jhumur, a family child care provider, supports Santiago and two other toddlers in her group as they develop early phonological awareness. She looks for opportunities to play with sounds. Jhumur has collected some musical instruments, rhyming books, and other objects that help the children make and play with sounds. She integrates this type of play into the whole day.

CONNECTING HOME AND A TODDLER CLASSROOM

Walking home from Early Head Start, two-year-old Lan chants, “Con cò bé bé, nó đầu cành tre, di không hời me...” His mother, Xuan, smiles to herself. Lan’s teachers had invited her to teach this Vietnamese rhyme and its hand motions to the children in Lan’s Early Head Start class. Although she has been singing this song to Lan since before he was born, she is happy that other children may share a rhyme from her culture.





IN A TODDLER CLASSROOM

Siobhan is playing “The Broken Word Game” with a small group of older toddlers. “Can you guess what word this is? It is something we are having for lunch. Piz-za.” She stretches out the word. Luz jumps up, “Chicken nuggets!” she shouts. “Not chicken nuggets, although that is a lunch food. Listen to both clues—it is a lunch food and it sounds like this. Piz-za.” Luz claps and cheers, “Pizza, pizza!”

DURING A GROUP SOCIALIZATION

During lunch at a group socialization, Tabitha, a home visitor, sits with a small group of older toddlers and their parents. Tabitha and the parents planned a fun rhyming game they could do with the children while they ate. Tabitha starts by saying, “Mmmm, lunch! I like to munch on my lunch! Lunch and munch—they rhyme! Hear how they sound the same at the end? Lunch, munch!” The toddlers giggle. “Here’s another rhyme,” says, Erik, one of the dads, “Don’t eat with your feet!” Again, toddlers giggle and one repeats “eat with feet.” “That’s right!” Erik says, “Eat and feet. They rhyme!” Luz, a mom, adds, “But don’t do it or you might hit your nose with your toes! Nose and toes—they rhyme too!” After another chorus of giggles, the other parents add their silly rhymes, causing more giggling from the children. After lunch, two of the toddlers continue to repeat some of the rhyming words to each other, making each other laugh.

EXAMPLES WITH PRESCHOOLERS

IN A PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

Alex, a preschool teacher, meets with one small group of preschoolers during snack. She holds up a piece of bread that they made earlier and leads the children in naming it by saying, “Bread.” She then shows the children different toppings—butter, jam, and hummus. She and the children name each topping out loud. Finally, Alex says, “Bread, which topping starts with the same sound as bread?” Tom points to the butter. “Butter!” he says. “Butter-bread-bbb,” says Dani. “Yes,” Alex agrees, “‘butter’ and ‘bread’ both start with a ‘b’ sound!” All the children play with the “b” sound as they eat their snacks.



DURING A GROUP SOCIALIZATION

Some of the preschoolers who attend the group socializations can already break up speech into words that they know. Becca, a home visitor, and several parents, help a small group of children break words into syllables. During Becca’s home visits, these children have been singing and acting out “patty cake, patty cake, baker’s man” with their parents, and the children now know it well. Becca and the parents decide that it would be fun for the children to practice breaking this engaging and familiar song up into syllables in a small group. Becca tells the parents that most of the words are one-syllable words, so this will be a good introduction to syllables.

Becca, the parents, and the children start by singing together and making all the hand motions. The parents help children take turns deciding whose name will be in the song. Lia has the first turn.

Alex and the parents support the children as they break up each new line of the song into syllables.

While they do not expect the children to correctly break up the words every time, they know that this engaging game supports their phonological development.

Pat-ty cake, pat-ty cake, bak-er’s man

Bake me a cake as fast as you can

Pat it and roll it and mark it with an “L”

And put it in the ov-en for Li-a and me

CONNECTING HOME AND A PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

Vanessa volunteers in her daughter, Julia's, class. During circle time, they play a simple, fun game about beginning sounds. The teacher looks around the classroom and says, "Please raise your hand if your name starts with the same sound as 'cow'!" Carlos and Kara raise their hands. Then she says, "Please raise your hand if your name starts with the same sound as 'window'!" Wendy raises her hand. At home later, Vanessa is playing "school" with Julia and her stuffed animals. All are seated in a circle, just like in school. Vanessa says, "Please raise your paw if your name starts with the same sound as 'lamp'!" Julia raises her toy lion's paw. Then Vanessa says, "Please raise your hand if your name starts with the same sound as 'microwave'!" Julia raises her toy monkey's hand. They both laugh about how smart the lion and monkey are!



IN A FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME

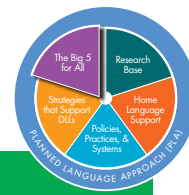
Maria, a family child care provider, has several preschoolers with different phonological awareness skills. She knows that when she plans phonological awareness activities for them, the activities should be engaging and individualized. José and Lily can blend syllables, so Maria decides to see if they can blend phonemes, like c-a-t and d-o-g. She plans to have them match the word to picture cards to start. Henry and Jamal have fun rhyming. Maria thinks they'll be able to tell her which words start or end with the same sound, like "cat," "tree," and "cup" or "lip," "hat," and "map."

SUMMARY

This resource focuses on the importance of phonological awareness in young children's development. It discusses the continuum for the units of sound, from larger to greater, and the connection between phonological awareness and HSELOF goals. It also provides examples of the developmental progression from birth to age five.

This document stresses the importance of understanding children's home language on phonological awareness. When education staff know children's home languages, they can more effectively support their language and literacy development.

Note practical strategies that support children's phonological awareness for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in different early learning settings. Vignettes describe young children's active learning of phonological awareness during a home visit, group socializations, home and school connections, in family child care homes and infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms.



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