

Parents as Partners: Why Phonemic Awareness is Important

Dear Parents,

Phonemes are the smallest units of sound. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are made up of individual sounds, and it is having the ability to hear and manipulate those sounds. Phonemic awareness is a strong predictor of young children's ability to learn phonics skills. Memorizing and play with the language of simple folk songs and nursery rhymes is the most powerful, efficient, and enjoyable way to develop this understanding. **The child's familiarity with the English language will support their future reading success.**

Phonemic awareness (playing with sounds) includes:

- Knowing when words rhyme (diddle and fiddle, Jill and hill)
- Knowing when words start with the same sound (monkey, Mom, McDonalds)
- Identifying how many sounds (phonemes) can be heard in a word (a/pp/le - 3 phonemes)
- Knowing how to segment words into sounds (cat/c-a-t and dog/d-o-g)
- Being able to hear the number of beats (syllables) a word has (all/i/ga/tor - 4 beats; bear - 1 beat)

The Best Things You Can Do to Support Your Child's Developing Phonemic Awareness Skills:

- **Memorize many Mother Goose rhymes.** Research shows that children who start kindergarten already reciting many rhymes have a good foundation for reading success.
- **Learn the *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read!* song to sing and sign with your child.** Emphasize the sounds as you fingerspell the letters.
- **Read and reread rhyming-word books and simple books with predictable language.** Pause before the end of a rhyming sentence and let your child supply the word. (*Cat and hat - Yes! Those words rhyme. Good listening for rhymes!*)
- **Start with your child's name and Mom and Dad's names.** Clap the rhythm of the name. (Ja/son) (Me/lis/sa)
- **Make up funny alliteration sentences (*Jumping Jason jives...Monkey Mommy makes marshmallows*) and nonsense rhymes (*Jason, mason, bason, cason...Mad Dad is sad...*)**

Enjoy playing with language!

With appreciation,