

## Phonemic Awareness

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

### Factoids

- Phonological awareness and phonemic awareness **are not** interchangeable terms. Phonological awareness is much broader, it deals with the manipulation of larger parts of spoken language—words, syllables, and onsets and rimes.
- Phonemic awareness **is not phonics** but a precursor for phonics instruction.
- Phonemic awareness **can be taught and learned**.
- Phonemic awareness helps children **read and spell**.
- Phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when children are taught to manipulate phonemes by **using the letters of the alphabet** and when instruction **focuses on one or two rather than several types of phoneme manipulation**.

(Taken from *Put Reading First*, 2001)

### How can I help students develop phonemic awareness?

Primary teachers can use a variety of activities to directly teach phonemic awareness, including:

**Phoneme isolation**—children recognize individual sounds in a word.

What is the first sound in fan?

**Phoneme identity**—children recognize the same sounds in different words.

What sound is the same in man, milk, and mouse?

**Phoneme categorization**—children recognize the word in a set of three or four words that has the odd sound.

What word does not belong? bus, bun, rug

**Phoneme blending**—children listen to a sequence of separately spoken phonemes, and then combine the phonemes to form a word. Then they write and read the word.

What word is /m/ /a/ /n/?

Now let's write the sounds in man.

/m/ /a/ /n/

Now we are going to read the word man.

**Phoneme segmentation**—children break a word into its separate sounds, saying each sound as they tap out or count it. Then they write and read the word.

How many sounds do you hear in milk?

Now let's write the sounds in milk:

/m/ /i/ /l/ /k/.

Now we are going to read the word milk.

**Phoneme deletion**—children recognize the word that remains when a phoneme is removed from another word.

What is smile without the /s/?

**Phoneme addition**—children make a new word by adding a phoneme to an existing word.

What sound do you have if you add /s/ to the beginning of park?

**Phoneme substitution**—children substitute one phoneme for another to make a new word.

The word is hug. Change the /g/ to /m/. What's the new word?

(Taken from *Put Reading First*, 2001)

### How do/can you integrate these activities into your reading instruction?

#### Additional Information

Additional activities for developing phonemic awareness are included in this Appendix. The activities are taken from the Illinois State Board of Education Training Modules for *Reading First: Enhancing Student Achievement in Reading Grades (K-2)*.

The activities include

- Phonemic Awareness Activity Cards
- Using Elkonin Sound Boxes/Usando las Cajitas de Elkonin
- Word Play/ Jugando con Palabras

#### References

Armbruster, B. and Osborn, J. (2001). *Put Reading First*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Health and Human Development.  
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