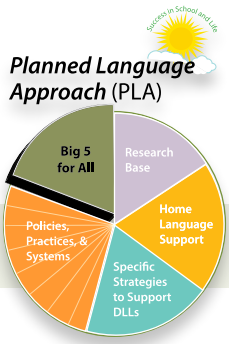
Joan Talks About the Big 5

Phonological Awareness



A child's phonological awareness is supported by a broad vocabulary (Dickinson, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010; Metsala, 1997). As children know and use their vocabularies, they have more opportunities to hear and recognize similarities between words. Poetry, chants, songs, and books written in rhyme or rhythm are wonderful ways for children to engage with a diverse range of words.

Children who are dual language learners are able to develop the ability to hear and recognize similar sounding words across their languages, whether the words have the same or completely different meanings.

Phonological Awareness meets Book Knowledge and Print Concepts

By reading books that play with language—highlighting the interesting sounds and musical flow of the words—teachers help children develop phonological awareness. Although experience with verse alone will not develop this skill, it is a critical and fun part of the process. All children benefit from being exposed to language in a way that is engaging and enjoyable.

Phonological Awareness meets Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing

Even though phonological awareness is an oral language skill that is developed without reference to print, alphabet knowledge and early writing can support it. Research indicates that coupling phonological awareness instruction with writing is highly effective (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Ukrainetz et al., 2000).

Phonological Awareness meets Background Knowledge

Background knowledge is all of the information that children learn and store in their memories about themselves, other people, objects, and the world around them. This includes rhymes, poetry, songs, raps, and chants shared in a family and community. Teachers and caregivers can gather rhymes and songs from families and share them with the children. They can also invite family members to teach them to all of the children in the classroom.

"Knowledge begets knowledge. Everything that children read or hear is automatically interpreted relative to what they already know about similar subjects…children with rich knowledge bases are more successful at learning new information" (Pinkham, Kaefer, & Newman, 2012, p. ix).

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This document was prepared under Grant #90HC0001 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, by the National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic