

# How Caregivers and Teachers Support Phonological Awareness

## STRATEGIES

### Introduction

Phonological awareness involves the sounds and sound patterns of alphabetic languages (in such languages as English, Spanish, and Arabic), apart from the meanings of words. Young children show they are developing phonological awareness when they:

- ▶ Notice and listen to the sounds of language
- ▶ 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”



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By playing with words and sounds in different ways, caregivers and teachers can support the development of phonological awareness—which, in turn, will one day help children to read!

# Supporting babies to develop Phonological Awareness

## STRATEGIES

Babies learn the differences between sounds (such as voices, barking dogs, vacuum cleaners) and language as they interact with others and explore the world around them. Babies recognize the sound of their mother's voice from birth. As they spend time with other caring adults—teachers 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 caregivers and teachers:**

- ▶ Sing songs and nursery rhymes in children's home language(s) (Gillon, 2007)
- ▶ 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 (Snow, 1991)
- ▶ Respond to babies' needs by, for example, changing him 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!") (Weizman & Snow, 2001)
- ▶ Talk using lots of different words
- ▶ Describe the voices (e.g., "Oh, I hear Sissy coming. There's Sissy!") and the sounds they hear (e.g., "Did you hear that doggy bark? Woof, woof!")
- ▶ Share rhyming books, songbooks, and storybooks that contain brightly colored illustrations or photos, and label and describe the pictures (Hoffman & Cassano, 2013)
- ▶ Help children label and describe pictures and objects to build their vocabulary (Gillon, 2007)



# Some ways caregivers and teachers support babies' Phonological Awareness

## STRATEGIES

### On a Home Visit

Sarah, the home visitor, shares with Kyi's mom how to engage 9-month-old Kyi in a conversation. "Look, Kyi!" Sarah says to get Kyi's attention. "Look at the book!" Kyi looks at and then reaches for the colorful board book that Sarah is holding. "Kyi, you want the book?" Kyi takes the book from Sarah. "Babababoo," he says. "Babababoo yourself!" Sarah says and laughs. "You like the book, don't you?" Sarah adds. "Look! There is a ball in the book. Let me show you." Sarah sits on the floor and encourages Kyi's mom to sit with them as she invites Kyi into her lap. "Ah ah gah!" Kyi says when he sees the picture of the ball. His mom notices that although Kyi isn't able to answer yet, he is listening and he is having a conversation in his own way.



### At the Early Head Start Center

One-year-old Sammy is looking at his favorite book about trucks with his teacher Myae Lynn. "This is a fire truck," Myae Lynn reads. "Woo, woo," Sammy says, pointing to the truck. "That's right," Myae Lynn says. "That's the sound of the fire truck's siren. Oh look! There is a Dalmation—that's the dog that rides on the fire truck. What sound does the Dalmation—the dog—make?" "Woof woof," Sammy barks loudly. "Wow!" Myae Lynn says. "You sound just like a Dalmatian dog. Would you like to ride on a fire truck like that Dalmatian?"



# Supporting toddlers to develop Phonological Awareness

## STRATEGIES

Toddlers pay attention to the sounds around them! As they listen to language and play with sounds, toddlers show that they are developing phonological awareness. Caregivers can support their development by engaging them in sound play and by talking, reading, and singing with them. The more language children acquire, the easier it will be for them to develop phonological awareness (Metsala & Walley, 1998; Metsala, 1999).



### Toddlers develop Phonological Awareness when caregivers and teachers:

- ▶ Share many nursery rhymes, rhyming books, alliterative texts, and songs and chants that play with words, for example, “Wibbaly, Wallalby, Woo,” “Down by the Bay” (Yopp, 1995; Adams, 1998)
- ▶ Create a print rich environment by doing such things as labeling classroom items, creating a classroom library, and displaying signs and photographs (Teale & Yokota, 2000)
- ▶ Draw children’s attention to print in the classroom and community—such things as labels, book titles, stop and exit signs (Adams & Osborn, 1990)
- ▶ Plan one-on-one conversations with children daily—during playtimes, mealtime, and quiet times (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Wells, 1985)—and “strive for five” by trying to give five turns for each speaker in the conversation (Dickinson, 2011)
- ▶ Develop listening skills by asking for children’s attention (e.g., “Listen . . .”) (McClelland et al., 2007)
- ▶ Point out rhyming words (e.g., “You said you have new shoes! Listen. ‘New’ and ‘shoe.’ They rhyme!”) (Bradley & Bryant, 1983)
- ▶ Encourage children to say the rhyming word at the end of a sentence (e.g., “Switcheroo, right foot, right \_\_\_\_\_ [shoe]!”) (Gillon, 2007)
- ▶ Support attentional skills (e.g., “Jamal is showing us the tower he built. Let’s watch him first, then you can show me . . .”) (Neville et al., 2013)
- ▶ Introduce alphabet books and puzzles and talk about the letters, including how they are formed, their sounds, and their names when reading (Paratore, Cassano, & Schickedanz, 2011)
- ▶ Talk with older toddlers about the name of meaningful letters, such as the letters in their names, and their sounds (e.g., “Look! There is the letter L just like in your name, ‘Lily.’”) (Pierce & Profio, 2006)



### Between Home and Early Head Start

Walking home from Early Head Start, two-year-old Lan chants, "*Con cò bé bé, nó đậu cành tre, đi không hỏi mẹ . . .*" His mother Xuan smiles to herself. Lan's teachers had invited her to teach this 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.



### At the Early Head Start Center

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. Pizza." 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!"

### At the Early Head Start Center

Tabitha is having lunch with a small group of toddlers. "Mmmm, lunch!" Tabitha says. "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," Tabitha says, "Don't eat with your feet!" Again toddlers giggle and one repeats "eat with feet." "That's right!" Tabitha says, "Eat and feet. They rhyme! 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, Tabitha tries to think of a few new rhymes to share with her lunch bunch.

# Supporting preschoolers to develop Phonological Awareness

## STRATEGIES

Preschoolers develop phonological awareness as they notice the sounds and sound patterns of language (i.e., syllables, rhymes, and individual sounds or phonemes in English) and begin to hear, identify, make, and work with the sounds and sound patterns of spoken language. Although phonological awareness is not required for everyday conversations, it is essential for learning to read in alphabetic languages, such as English, Spanish, and Arabic (Lonigan, Schatschneider, & Westberg, 2008). Preschoolers need many opportunities to hear rich language, but they also need teachers who can show them that sound and word play is fun!



### Preschoolers develop Phonological Awareness when caregivers and teachers:

- ▶ Talk, talk, talk! Hearing lots of words (Huttenlocher, Waterfall, Vasilyeva, Vevea, & Hedges, 2010; Hoff & Naigles, 2002) and many different words (Pan, Rowe, Singer, & Snow, 2005) helps preschoolers build their vocabularies, as the more words they know, the easier it will be for them to develop phonological awareness (Metsala & Walley, 1998)
- ▶ Encourage careful listening (e.g., “Listen for directions . . .”) and attention (e.g., “Use your eyes and ears to see what I am doing and 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!”) (Bradley & Bryant, 1983)
- ▶ 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’?”) (Yopp, 1995; Schickedanz & Collins, 2013)
- ▶ 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!”) (Ball & Blachman, 1991)
- ▶ Read and make up alphabet stories, particularly those that use rhyme and alliteration (e.g., “Lovely lions lick lemon lollipops.”) (Adams & Osborn, 1990)
- ▶ Provide preschoolers with opportunities to play with alphabet games and puzzles, and sit with them and talk about letters and their sounds as they play (Paratore, Cassano, & Schickedanz, 2011)
- ▶ Model how to sort words or objects, first by beginning sounds and later by ending sounds using such things as objects, picture cards, and stuffed animals
- ▶ Encourage older preschoolers to “write for sounds” (i.e., invented spelling) (Juel & Minden-Cupp, 2000; Read, 1971)



# Some ways teachers support preschoolers' Phonological Awareness

## STRATEGIES

### Between Home and Head Start

Vanessa is volunteering in her daughter Julia's class. During circle time, they are playing a simple and 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 'clock!'" 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 her daughter 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!



### At the Head Start Center

Heather and Maria are planning a series of phonological awareness tasks for their preschool class. They know that the tasks should be engaging, but they want to be sure that they make the tasks more challenging as the children develop more phonological awareness skill. "I'll work with José, Rocco, Sidney, and Lily," Heather says. "They can blend syllables. So let's see if they can blend phonemes, like c-a-t and d-o-g. I think I'll have them match the word to picture cards to start." Maria says, "Great! I'll work with Henry, Merrill, Cleo, and Jamal. They are having so much fun rhyming! I think they are ready to see if words start or end with the same sound, like 'cat,' 'tree,' and 'cup.'"



## Resources for Phonological Awareness

## STRATEGIES

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## Resources for Phonological Awareness

## STRATEGIES

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