

Phonological Awareness and Speech Sounds

Phonological Awareness is the awareness and understanding that sentences are made up of words and that words are made up of *sounds*. This is an important first step to the development of reading and writing skills. Without a strong foundation in phonological awareness, students will have difficulty relating sounds to their written representations (letters or combinations of letters).

Common phonological awareness activities in the classroom include:

- Identifying and producing rhyming words
- Identifying ‘words within words’ (e.g. *bus* has the word *us* in it)
- Clapping out syllables
- Identifying how many syllables are in a given word
- Listening for specific sounds in oral speech
- Identifying sounds in words (start, middle and ends of words)

Phonemic Awareness typically starts to develop after a student has some Phonological Awareness skills. Phonemic Awareness is when a student relates the sounds they hear to the written representation of that sound.

English is an orthographically ‘deep’ language, which means that some sounds are represented by more than one letter (e.g. the /dz/ sound can be represented by ‘j’ or ‘g’ as in ‘juice’ and ‘orange’) and some letters represent more than one sound (e.g. the letter ‘c’ can represent the /k/ or /s/ sounds). This means that linking letters to sounds is a more complex process in English than in some other languages (e.g. Italian and Finnish).

The relationship between speech sound delays/disorders and phonological awareness

Children with speech sound disorders need to start at the lower level of phonological awareness. Use songs, rhymes, rhythmic activities, finger-plays and stories to work on the following before moving on to higher level phonological awareness activities:

- Work on word awareness within the context of phrases or sentences (find all the instances of the word “Mother” in “Are You my Mother?”).
- Work on syllable awareness by finding syllables in words. Find “lock” in locket and padlock
- Count syllables, starting with 1 syllable vs. 2 syllables
- Add another syllable to make a new word (but/botton)

All children who have difficulty producing speech sounds would benefit from enriched phonological awareness instruction in addition to the speech-specific activities that your SLP is providing. These students are at an increased risk of having delayed reading and writing skills.

You can also help the student correctly “map” the target sound. Remember that the acoustic and tactile properties of the sound in error might be different for this student so we can help map the sound by using other means to talk about the sound. Instead of calling /t/ “tee”, you might want to call it the “ticking sound”.

Resources in Henry Grube library:

The Phonological Awareness Kit (published by Linguisystems)

Earobics software

Hearbuilder Phonological Awareness software (published by Webber)

SLP010

