



Facilitator's Guide

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
About this Guide	2
Learning Goals	2
Agenda	3
Preparation	3
Facilitation Tips	4
Icebreaker Ideas	4
Training	7
Introduction	7
Having Fun with Phonemic Awareness (Overview)	8
Play with Rhymes	9
Play with Sounds and Words	12
Try It	14
Wrap Up	15
Glossary	15
Handouts	16
Self-Assessment	
Learning Log	
Try It	
Best Practices	
Standards	
Training Evaluation	

Videos

Stream from http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/

“Having Fun with Phonemic Awareness” (Overview)

“Play with Rhymes”

“Play with Sounds and Words”

Introduction

This professional development training module is designed to help you lead educators in using best practices to teach phonemic awareness concepts to very young children. It is one of several modules developed for early childhood educators by the Department of Early Education and Care of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

This training meets the guidelines for Continuing Education Units (CEUs) as outlined by the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children (MassAEYC).

For more information about this professional development training module, visit http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/.

About this Guide

This Facilitator's Guide provides instructions and narrative for delivering a video-based training for early childhood educators. You'll find an agenda, learning goals, preparation suggestions, talking points, activities, and handouts. You'll also find general tips and resources to help you facilitate the training. Use these materials with the accompanying videos to lead family child care and center- and school-based educators in an engaging, content-rich training.

Note: *To access the videos referenced in this guide, go to http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/. Select "Having Fun with Phonemic Awareness." Be sure you have access to the videos prior to and while leading this training.*

Learning Goals

After participating in this training, educators will be able to:

- Define and understand phonemic awareness.
- Summarize the best practices for teaching phonemic awareness to young children.
- Identify ways to teach phonemic awareness with books, poems, and songs.
- Develop games and activities that teach phonemic awareness by focusing on sounds in words.

Agenda

Introduction	15 minutes
Having Fun with Phonemic Awareness	5 minutes
Play with Rhymes	15–20 minutes
BREAK (optional)	5–10 minutes
Play with Sounds and Words	15–20 minutes
Try It	15–20 minutes
Wrap Up	5–10 minutes
Total Time	75–100 minutes

Preparation

Before leading this training, you should:

- Watch the videos and get to know the best practices.
- Read through the training module. Become familiar with the talking points so that you can share them in a natural, conversational way.
- Obtain and test the technology you need to share the videos with participants and make sure you have a reliable Internet connection during the training.
- Gather any props or materials needed for the Try It activity.
- Rehearse and fine-tune your presentation to “make it your own.” Time yourself to make sure you are within the allotted time.
- Create a handout packet with copies of the following for each participant:
 - Self-Assessment
 - Learning Log
 - Try It
 - Best Practices
 - Standards
 - Training Evaluation
- Consider working with a partner the first time you lead this training. You can learn from and support each other when preparing, practicing, and facilitating. After the training, you can reflect on participants' evaluations together.

Facilitation Tips

Whether you're a new or experienced facilitator, these tips can help your training run smoothly.

- Arrive early to prepare the training room for optimal learning.
 - Place handout packets where participants check in.
 - Have pens or pencils and paper on every table.
 - Check your technology setup to make sure videos play without problem.
- Create a space that is inviting and comfortable.
 - Play soft music as people arrive.
 - Greet participants with a smile and a handshake. A personal introduction helps set the stage for collaboration and learning.
- Invite partner or small group discussion.
 - Before the training begins, invite educators to identify a partner—people learn best when they have a chance to talk about what they are learning or thinking.
 - Allow a few minutes for partners to introduce themselves to each other.
 - During the training, provide opportunities for partner interaction.
- Keep participants engaged.
 - Follow the “ten-two rule” as you present the training: Speak for no longer than ten minutes at a time and then provide participants at least two minutes of interaction or activity.
 - Avoid simply reading the talking points that have been provided. Become familiar with each point so that you can keep the training engaging, fluid, and conversational.

Icebreaker Ideas

When working with a group of educators who may or may not know each other, it's a good idea to provide a few moments to “break the ice.” This allows people to relax, laugh, move, and get to know each other (and you!). Below are just a few ideas you can use to begin a training session.

That's Me!

Read a statement aloud to the group. Ask participants to stand up, raise a hand in the air, and shout *That's me!* if the statement applies to them. It's fun to see which statements apply to all participants and which do not apply to any. Statements might include:

Facilitator's Guide (CONTINUED)

- *I teach at a family child care.*
- *I have worked with children for five years or more.*
- *I was born in Massachusetts.*
- *I write down the funny things that kids say.*
- *I laugh out loud at least once a day.*
- *I check Pinterest at least once a week.*
- *I have no idea what Pinterest is.*
- *I believe that there is no problem that good chocolate can't solve.*

You can come up with your own statements or invite a few participants to come up with statements. When they say their statement aloud, others (including you) can reply, *That's me!*

Weave a Web

Holding onto a ball of yarn, share your name and an interesting fact about yourself with participants. Keep the end piece as you toss the ball of yarn to a participant. Ask the participant to share his or her name and a personal fact, and hold onto the yarn as they toss the ball to another participant. Continue until everyone has had a turn and the "web" is complete.

Two Truths and a Lie

Ask participants to jot down two truths and one lie about themselves or their work with children. For example:

- *I speak Japanese.*
- *I am related to Davy Crockett.*
- *I have three sets of twins in my program this year.*

Form participants into small groups of three or four people. Have each person in the group read their statements aloud and ask the rest of the group to guess which statement is not true.

Four Corners

Post a word from a set of four related words in each corner of the room, such as:

- *lion, bear, eagle, deer*
- *desert, beach, mountain, city*
- *sushi, salad, enchilada, pizza*
- *hybrid, convertible, truck, Mustang*

Facilitator's Guide (CONTINUED)

Ask participants, *Are you a hybrid, convertible, truck or Mustang?* Direct participants to move to the corner of the room with which they most identify. Ask participants, now in small groups in their corners, to share with one another why they chose that corner and how it represents their interests, so that they can discover common attributes they may share. Have each small group pick one person to share the group's common attributes with the larger group. Repeat the process with another set of four words as many times as you like.

People Bingo

Photocopy and distribute the "bingo card" below. Invite participants to find people who match a fact listed on the card and have them sign off on that fact. Each person can sign off on only one fact. Explain that when a participant has obtained five signatures in a row (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally), he or she should shout *Bingo!* and introduce the people who signed his or her card to the rest of the group.

People Bingo				
Has traveled outside the U.S.	Likes pineapple on pizza	Has lived in MA for more than 10 years	Knows how to juggle	Has never been on a plane
Can speak a foreign language	Has 3 or more brothers	Likes to camp	Has been scuba diving	Reads the Sunday paper
Likes to scrapbook	Has a summer birthday	F R E E S P A C E	Likes to garden	Can say the alphabet backwards
Likes math	Does crossword puzzles	Owens a cat	Has been to Alaska	Likes to run
Likes thunderstorms	Has watched a meteor shower	Is afraid of snakes	Knows how to sew	Can play basketball

Training

Introduction

(15 minutes)

Welcome Participants to the Training

- Introduce yourself and share your background and experience.
- Announce the length of the training (75–100 minutes) and note other logistics, such as break times, restroom location, and so on.
- Review the agenda and explain the structure of the training.
 - Participants will watch an overview video and then two short videos that explore best practices in creating a learning environment.
 - After each video, participants will briefly discuss the main points and reflect on what they have learned.
 - Participants will also have the opportunity to share and reflect on their own practices.
- Share the learning goals and objectives. Participants will:
 - Examine phonemic awareness.
 - Explore the best practices for teaching phonemic awareness to young children.
 - Identify ways to teach phonemic awareness with books, poems, and song.
 - Develop games and activities that teach phonemic awareness by focusing on sounds in words.
 - Apply new knowledge to current practices.
- Introduce the Learning Log.
 - The Learning Log includes questions to help participants identify best practices and distill the important points made in each video. The *viewing questions* reinforce ideas from the videos. The *reflection questions* help educators draw connections to their own experiences.
 - The Learning Log can also be used to jot down notes, questions, and ideas.
- Consider doing an icebreaker activity to get participants “warmed up” and ready to learn and interact. (See Icebreaker Ideas for suggestions.)

- Ask each participant to identify a partner to work with during the training and encourage them to share ideas. (You can offer small group discussions if you prefer.)

Complete the Self-Assessment

Educators grow and hone their skills by continually identifying their own strengths and training needs and reflecting on their own practices.

- Invite participants to complete the first half of the Self-Assessment to help them discover the skills they already possess and to identify those they would like to work on.
- Explain that toward the end of the training, participants will complete the second half of the Self-Assessment to measure their growth and learning.

Having Fun with Phonemic Awareness (5 minutes)

Introduce the Topic

Phonemic awareness is the ability to understand that spoken words are made up of separate sounds, called *phonemes*—the smallest units of sound, and to differentiate those sounds. Beginning reading skills are based on phonemic awareness, phonological awareness (recognizing that words are made up of a variety of sound units), and finally phonics (letter-sound associations). One way to think about phonemic awareness is that it could be taught in the dark; in phonemic awareness children *listen* for sounds, while in phonics, children *look* at letters.

There is a sequence to teaching phonemic awareness skills. Rhyming and clapping syllables is often taught first—children learn to listen for, recognize, and then generate rhyming words. Then they identify beginning sounds, final sounds, and medial sounds.

The ability to understand and manipulate sounds in words is essential to becoming a reader. It is a first step toward understanding the alphabetic writing system. Phonemic awareness is present in good readers and usually absent in poor readers. It must be taught consistently and systematically. But it can also be taught in fun and engaging ways.

Introduce and View the Video

Introduce the overview video featuring Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Associate Professor of Education at Wheelock College. Use this brief video to set the stage for a discussion of best practices in teaching phonemic awareness to young children.



"Having Fun with Phonemic Awareness" (approx. 2 min)

Play with Rhymes

(15–20 minutes)

Introduce the Best Practice

Rhyming is a helpful first step toward phonemic awareness. When children play with rhymes, they listen to the sounds within words and identify word parts. For example, the /at/ sound in the word *mat* is the same /at/ sound in *cat*, *rat*, *sat*, and *splat*. Children typically learn to recognize rhyming words first and generate their own rhymes later. It is important to recognize that these skills are not always learned on a schedule. For some children, recognizing rhyme can be difficult. Educators can use different methods to help develop children's skills.

- **Have children listen to and identify rhymes in books.** Before reading, ask children to listen for rhyming words and raise their hands when they hear them. Or, stop before you get to the rhyming word and have children supply it.
- **Prompt children to produce words that rhyme.** Both real words and “nonsense words” are useful, such as *Peggy* and *leggy*; *turtle* and *Yertle*.
- **Provide opportunities to recite rhymes in song.** Music is a natural part of a child's world. They can be active participants, clapping, snapping, and adding their own motions to songs. For example, “*I'm a little lizard, my oh my! My skin has scales, it's nice and dry.*”

Introduce and View the Video

Tell participants that in this video they'll see educators use rhyming games, songs, and read-aloud books to teach phonemic awareness skills.

Ask participants to look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video. Use this question to guide their viewing:



“Play with Rhymes”

(approx. 2 min)

- *How do the educators use rhyme to develop children's phonemic awareness skills?*

Partner/Small Group Share

After viewing the video, get participants thinking, talking, and learning together.

- Invite participants to share with each other, in pairs or small groups, what they noticed as they watched. Challenge them to use the language stem *I noticed...* rather than *I liked....*
- Suggest that participants jot down notes, ideas, or questions in their Learning Log.

Review

Share and expand on key points covered in the video. Use the following questions and talking points in your discussion. Ask participants to offer examples from the video as well as to draw upon their own experiences.

What is phonemic awareness and why is it important?

- Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognize that words are made up of separate sounds.
- Phonemic awareness also includes the ability to manipulate sounds in speech.
- Phonemic awareness lays the foundations for learning to read and write.
- Research shows that children with good phonemic awareness skills are more successful in learning to read and write.
- Phonemic awareness can be integrated into other learning areas. In the video, children learned about reptiles in “Rhyming Reptiles,” while also learning phonemic awareness by suggesting rhyming words (*snake, take; lizard, blizzard*).

Why is rhyming an important skill for children to learn?

- Recognizing rhyming words is a basic level of phonemic awareness.
- Rhyming requires that children listen closely for sounds within words.
- Children who recognize rhyme learn that words are made up of separate parts.
- An early goal is to have children listen to a pair of words and decide whether or not the words rhyme.
- Eventually, the goal is to have children generate words that rhyme.

How can educators teach rhyming skills to children?

- Use music and songs to teach rhyme. Sing active songs that invite children to use movement. Fingerplays such as “Itsy Bitsy Spider” invite active participation in a rhyming game.
- Use books and read-aloud stories to teach rhyme. Rhyming texts, both fiction and nonfiction, support literacy in general and help children learn phonemic awareness skills.
 - Before reading, ask children to listen for words that rhyme.
 - Encourage children to raise their hands when they recognize a rhyming word.
 - Stop and have children supply a rhyming word in the text.
 - After you have read a poem or story aloud, ask for rhyming words. (*What word rhymes with mittens?*)

Facilitator's Guide (CONTINUED)

- Use games to teach rhyme.
 - Toss a beanbag onto a picture grid. Have children think of a word that rhymes with the picture (*fish, wish; goat, boat*).
 - Play “I Say Night.” Teach children to respond with a rhyming word: *I say night. You say (right.) Or I say bread. You say _____.*
 - Play rhyming partners. As children “buddy up” for an activity, give one child a random word, for example, *mitten*. The first child to suggest a rhyming word becomes that child’s buddy.
- Use nursery rhymes to teach rhyme. Traditional nursery rhymes are fun to teach. Children can learn them quickly and enjoy repeating them.
- Make a chart of rhyming words. (If possible, connect the words to concepts being taught in the curriculum, such as colors, plants, weather, etc.) Add a word each day (*pink, clink, wink, sink, blink*). Once you have a bank of words, have children create their own silly rhymes. (*Wink, wink, wink. Watch me blink.*)
- Have fun with rhymes. Children enjoy saying rhymes in different voices. Whisper them, shout them, sing them, and chant them.
- Children need not suggest real words when supplying rhymes. Nonsense words (*alligator, shmalligator*) enable children to focus on the sound rather than the meaning. In time, children will develop the ability to generate real words that begin with the same sound, contain the same sound, or end with the same sound.

View Again (optional)

Emphasize the key messages by showing the video a second time, if possible. Seeing the video again will give participants an opportunity to notice things they may have missed and to expand their learning.

Reflect

Help participants make the connection between what they have learned and what they do in their own programs. Ask them to answer the *reflection questions* in the Learning Log.

Break (optional)

(5–10 minutes)

Play with Sounds and Words

(15–20 minutes)

Introduce the Best Practice

When teaching phonemic awareness skills, educators should also focus on helping children learn the sounds of language. These important skills should be taught sequentially, from easiest to most difficult, but can still be shared in informal, fun ways. Children often begin with clapping syllables, first in their own names and then in other words. Next, children begin to recognize and match like sounds at the beginning of words. Finally, when children learn to recognize letter forms and letter sounds, they match sounds to make words. At this point, children are moving into phonics. The sequence of skills looks like this:

- **Clap syllables.** Help children recognize that words are made up of parts, and the parts make a whole word.
 - Clap names. Have children clap the syllables in their own names. As the game progresses, have children determine who has the longest name, e.g., Victoria (the most claps), or the shortest name, e.g., Sean (only one clap). Play a guessing game: *I am going to clap a name. (clap twice) Whose name has two claps?*
 - Clap words. Children can progress to clapping words. It's especially fun to clap unusual and interesting words. Challenge children to think of a long word they would like to clap: *hippopotamus, elephant, chalkboard, or calliope.*
- **Match sounds.** Soon after they understand how to clap syllables, children will begin to recognize words that start with the same sound (sound matching). At this stage, children are not asked to *name or identify* beginning letters. They are recognizing the *sound* of the letter with which the word begins. For example, encourage children to recognize that *sand* and *sun* both begin with /s/ or that *bell* and *ball* begin with /b/. Ask, *What do you notice about these two words: rhyming, reptiles?* Praise children for hearing the sound itself.
- **Identify and isolate initial sounds.** Children learn to hear and identify the sound that comes at the beginning of words. Ask, *Who knows another word that begins with the sound /h/?*
- **Match sounds to letters.** Once children learn letter sounds, they begin to move into phonics and match those sounds within words. For example, say, *Tell me the sound you hear first in mat, mouse, and mail? What letter stands for that sound? Or, Who can tell me the letter you hear at the beginning of sail, Sam, and sit? Or, If I want to write Bella's name, what letter will I write first?*

Facilitator's Guide (CONTINUED)

Introduce and View the Video

Tell participants that in this video they'll see educators teach phonemic awareness by playing with sounds and words.

Ask participants to look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video. Use these questions to guide their viewing:



"Play with Sounds and Words" (approx. 2 min)

- *What strategies do the educators use to encourage children to listen for word "chunks" or syllables?*
- *How do the educators teach sound matching activities?*

Partner/Small Group Share

After viewing the video, get participants thinking, talking, and learning together.

- Invite participants to share with each other, in pairs or small groups, what they noticed as they watched. Challenge them to use the language stem *I noticed...* rather than *I liked....*
- Suggest that participants jot down notes, ideas, or questions in their Learning Log.

Review

Share and expand on key points covered in the video. Use the following questions and talking points in your discussion. Ask participants to offer examples from the video as well as to draw upon their own experiences.

How can educators use songs and games to help children learn phonemic awareness skills?

- Singing songs is fun for children, and they can learn from each other as they sing.

What do children learn by clapping syllables in names or other words?

- Children learn to listen for sounds in words.
- Children begin to understand that words are made up of separate sounds.

Why is sound matching an important skill?

- Sound matching activities prompt children to listen to the beginning sounds in words.
- As children identify the beginning sounds of words, they can group words that begin with the same sound. For example, /h/: *head, hair, hummingbird.*
- Once children master the skill of identifying beginning sounds, they will be able to match the sounds to letters in the alphabet.

View Again (optional)

Emphasize the key messages by showing the video a second time, if possible. Seeing the video again will give participants an opportunity to notice things they may have missed and to expand their learning.

Reflect

Help participants make the connection between what they have learned and what they do in their own program. Ask them to answer the reflection questions in the Learning Log.

Try It

(15–20 minutes)

The Try It activity helps educators plan how to apply new ideas to their own early childhood program. Ask participants to work with a partner and direct their attention to the Try It handout in their packets.

Mystery Sound Games

Educators will design phonemic awareness games.

- Ask partners to imagine they have been given three envelopes, each one containing materials to teach phonemic awareness. The envelopes contain no instructions.
- Have partners use the materials to design three unique phonemic awareness games. Ask them to write directions and note the learning goals for each game.
 1. **Envelope #1** contains 9 index cards. Each card contains a picture of a common item: lamp, lollipop, lion, mitten, money, map, socks, snake, sun. Design a game that teaches a beginning phonemic awareness skill: rhyme, sound matching, or syllable counting.
 2. **Envelope #2** contains 10 index cards. Each card contains a picture: cat, hat, bat, dog, log, frog, hair, bear, chair, school bus. Design a game that teaches a beginning phonemic awareness skill: rhyme, sound matching, or syllable counting.
 3. **Envelope #3** contains 10 blank index cards. Design a game that teaches a beginning phonemic awareness skill: rhyme, sound matching, or syllable counting.

Wrap Up

(5–10 minutes)

- Invite participants to complete the second half of the Self-Assessment and then measure their growth and learning.
- Ask participants to look over their notes from the training and jot down three things that they want to remember from today in their Learning Log.
- Invite partners or small groups to meet and share their three “keepers.” Then ask a few participants to share their “keepers” with the larger group.
- Thank participants for attending.
- Encourage participants to fill out and return the Training Evaluation.

Glossary

phonemic awareness: the ability to recognize that spoken words are made up of separate sounds (*phonemes*, the smallest units of sound), and to manipulate those sounds in speech

phonics: the understanding that letters represent the sounds in words

phonemes: the smallest units of sound

phonological awareness: the ability to recognize that words are made up of a variety of sound units

nonsense words: made-up words, used for the phonemic principle being taught

sound matching: the ability to match words that begin or end with the same sound



Self-Assessment

Name: _____

Date: _____

Before the training: Place a ✓ in the box that best represents your current comfort level.

After the training: Place a ✓ in the box that best represents your new comfort level.

1 = Very uncomfortable 2 = Uncomfortable 3 = Neutral 4 = Comfortable 5 = Very comfortable

	<i>Before</i>					<i>After</i>				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
General										
I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Understand what phonemic awareness is.										
Differentiate between phonemic awareness and phonics.										
Play with Rhyme										
I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Create interesting, fun activities that engage children and invite them to explore language.										
Use rhyme as a vehicle to teach phonemic awareness.										
Use songs to teach rhyming words.										
Find engaging read-aloud books that include rhyme.										
Play with Sounds and Words										
I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Help children play games that focus on sounds in words.										
Help children clap the syllables in their own names.										
Help children clap syllables in words.										
Play games with children that focus on sound matching.										
Help children manipulate units of sound in speech (syllables, rhyming words).										



Learning Log

Play with Rhymes

View

In the video:

- *How do the educators use rhyme to develop children's phonemic awareness skills?*

Reflect

In your program:

- *What daily activities do you do with children to teach phonemic awareness?*

- *What did you learn that you will take back to your learning environment and put into practice?*

Notes

Play with Sounds and Words

View

In the video:

- *What strategies do the educators use to encourage children to listen for word “chunks” or syllables?*

- *How do the educators teach sound matching activities?*

Reflect

In your program:

- *What strategies do you use to teach children to focus on sounds in words?*

- *What did you learn that you will take back to your learning environment and put into practice?*

Notes



Try It

Mystery Sound Games

Design games to teach phonemic awareness skills.

Imagine that you have been given three envelopes, each one containing materials to teach phonemic awareness. No instructions have been given with the envelopes. Design three unique phonemic awareness games based on the materials in the envelopes, that teach a beginning phonemic awareness skill: rhyme, sound matching, or syllable counting. Write directions and note the learning goals for each game.

Envelope #1 contains 9 index cards. Each card contains a picture of a common item: lamp, lollipop, lion, mitten, money, map, socks, snake, sun.

Envelope #2 contains 10 index cards. Each card contains a picture: cat, hat, bat, dog, log, frog, hair, bear, chair, school bus.

Envelope #3 contains 10 blank index cards.



Best Practices

Phonemic awareness is the ability to understand that spoken words are made up of separate sounds, called phonemes—the smallest units of sound, and to differentiate those sounds. Beginning reading skills are based on phonemic awareness, phonological awareness (recognizing that words are made up of a variety of sound units), and finally phonics (letter-sound associations). One way to think about phonemic awareness is that it could be taught in the dark; in phonemic awareness children listen for sounds, while in phonics, children look at letters.

There is a sequence to teaching phonemic awareness skills. Rhyming and clapping syllables is often taught first—children learn to listen for, recognize, and then generate rhyming words. Then they identify beginning sounds, final sounds, and medial sounds.

The ability to understand and manipulate sounds in words is essential to becoming a reader. It is a first step toward understanding the alphabetic writing system. Phonemic awareness is present in good readers and usually absent in poor readers. It must be taught consistently and systematically. But it can also be taught in fun and engaging ways.

Play with Rhymes

Rhyming is a helpful first step toward phonemic awareness. When children play with rhymes, they listen to the sounds within words and identify word parts. For example, the /at/ sound in the word *mat* is the same /at/ sound in *cat*, *rat*, *sat*, and *splat*. Children typically learn to recognize rhyming words first and generate their own rhymes later. It is important to recognize that these skills are not always learned on a schedule. For some children, recognizing rhyme can be difficult. Educators can use different methods to help develop children's skills.

- **Have children listen to and identify rhymes in books.** Before reading, ask children to listen for rhyming words and raise their hands when they hear them. Or, stop before you get to the rhyming word and have children supply it.
- **Prompt children to produce words that rhyme.** Both real words and “nonsense words” are useful, such as *Peggy* and *leggy*; *turtle* and *Yertle*.
- **Provide opportunities to recite rhymes in song.** Music is a natural part of a child's world. They can be active participants, clapping, snapping, and adding their own motions to songs. For example, “*I'm a little lizard, my oh my! My skin has scales, it's nice and dry.*”

What is phonemic awareness and why is it important?

- Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognize that words are made up of separate sounds.
- Phonemic awareness also includes the ability to manipulate sounds in speech.
- Phonemic awareness lays the foundations for learning to read and write.
- Research shows that children with good phonemic awareness skills are more successful in learning to read and write.
- Phonemic awareness can be integrated into other learning areas. In the video, children learned about reptiles in “Rhyming Reptiles,” while also learning phonemic awareness by suggesting rhyming words (*snake, take; lizard, blizzard*).

Why is rhyming an important skill for children to learn?

- Recognizing rhyming words is a basic level of phonemic awareness.
- Rhyming requires that children listen closely for sounds within words.
- Children who recognize rhyme learn that words are made up of separate parts.
- An early goal is to have children listen to a pair of words and decide whether or not the words rhyme.
- Eventually, the goal is to have children generate words that rhyme.

How can educators teach rhyming skills to children?

- Use music and songs to teach rhyme. Sing active songs that invite children to use movement. Fingerplays such as “Itsy Bitsy Spider” invite active participation in a rhyming game.
- Use books and read-aloud stories to teach rhyme. Rhyming texts, both fiction and nonfiction, support literacy in general and help children learn phonemic awareness skills.
 - Before reading, ask children to listen for words that rhyme.
 - Encourage children to raise their hands when they recognize a rhyming word.
 - Stop and have children supply a rhyming word in the text.
 - After you have read a poem or story aloud, ask for rhyming words. (*What word rhymes with mittens?*)

Best Practices (CONTINUED)

- Use games to teach rhyme.
 - Toss a beanbag onto a picture grid. Have children think of a word that rhymes with the picture (*fish, wish; goat, boat*).
 - Play “I Say Night.” Teach children to respond with a rhyming word: *I say night. You say (right.) Or I say bread. You say _____.*
 - Play rhyming partners. As children “buddy up” for an activity, give one child a random word, for example, *mitten*. The first child to suggest a rhyming word becomes that child’s buddy.
- Use nursery rhymes to teach rhyme. Traditional nursery rhymes are fun to teach. Children can learn them quickly and enjoy repeating them.
- Make a chart of rhyming words. (If possible, connect the words to concepts being taught in the curriculum, such as colors, plants, weather, etc.) Add a word each day (*pink, clink, wink, sink, blink*). Once you have a bank of words, have children create their own silly rhymes. (*Wink, wink, wink. Watch me blink.*)
- Have fun with rhymes. Children enjoy saying rhymes in different voices. Whisper them, shout them, sing them, and chant them.
- Children need not suggest real words when supplying rhymes. Nonsense words (*alligator, shmalligator*) enable children to focus on the sound rather than the meaning. In time, children will develop the ability to generate real words that begin with the same sound, contain the same sound, or end with the same sound.

Play with Sounds and Words

When teaching phonemic awareness skills, educators should also focus on helping children learn the sounds of language. These important skills should be taught sequentially, from easiest to most difficult, but can still be shared in informal, fun ways. Children often begin with clapping syllables, first in their own names and then in other words. Next, children begin to recognize and match like sounds at the beginning of words. Finally, when children learn to recognize letter forms and letter sounds, they match sounds to make words. At this point, children are moving into phonics. The sequence of skills looks like this:

- **Clap syllables.** Help children recognize that words are made up of parts, and the parts make a whole word.
 - Clap names. Have children clap the syllables in their own names. As the game progresses, have children determine who has the longest name, e.g., Victoria (the most claps), or the shortest name, e.g., Sean (only one clap). Play a

Best Practices (CONTINUED)

guessing game: *I am going to clap a name. (clap twice) Whose name has two claps?*

- Clap words. Children can progress to clapping words. It's especially fun to clap unusual and interesting words. Challenge children to think of a long word they would like to clap: *hippopotamus, elephant, chalkboard, or calliope.*
- **Match sounds.** Soon after they understand how to clap syllables, children will begin to recognize words that start with the same sound (sound matching). At this stage, children are not asked to *name or identify* beginning letters. They are recognizing the *sound* of the letter with which the word begins. For example, encourage children to recognize that *sand* and *sun* both begin with /s/ or that *bell* and *ball* begin with /b/. Ask, *What do you notice about these two words: rhyming, reptiles?* Praise children for hearing the sound itself.
- **Identify and isolate initial sounds.** Children learn to hear and identify the sound that comes at the beginning of words. Ask, *Who knows another word that begins with the sound /h/?*
- **Match sounds to letters.** Once children learn letter sounds, they begin to move into phonics and match those sounds within words. For example, say, *Tell me the sound you hear first in mat, mouse, and mail? What letter stands for that sound? Or, Who can tell me the letter you hear at the beginning of sail, Sam, and sit? Or, If I want to write Bella's name, what letter will I write first?*

How can educators use songs and games to help children learn phonemic awareness skills?

- Singing songs is fun for children, and they can learn from each other as they sing.

What do children learn by clapping syllables in names or other words?

- Children learn to listen for sounds in words.
- Children begin to understand that words are made up of separate sounds.

Why is sound matching an important skill?

- Sound matching activities prompt children to listen to the beginning sounds in words.
- As children identify the beginning sounds of words, they can group words that begin with the same sound. For example, /h/: *head, hair, hummingbird.*

Best Practices (CONTINUED)

- Once children master the skill of identifying beginning sounds, they will be able to match the sounds to letters in the alphabet.

Glossary

phonemic awareness: the ability to recognize that spoken words are made up of separate sounds (*phonemes*, the smallest units of sound), and to manipulate those sounds in speech

phonics: the understanding that letters represent the sounds in words

phonemes: the smallest units of sound

phonological awareness: the ability to recognize that words are made up of a variety of sound units

nonsense words: made-up words, used for the phonemic principle being taught

sound matching: the ability to match words that begin or end with the same sound

View the self-paced video workshop at <http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators>.



Standards

This professional development training module is aligned to Massachusetts standards and guidelines.

Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

Center and School Based:

- **Curriculum and Learning 1A: Curriculum, Assessment, and Diversity: Level 2**
Program uses screening tools, progress reports, formative assessments, and information gathered through observation to set goals for individual children across all developmental domains; Staff demonstrate language and literacy skills either in English or the child's language, that provide a model for children.
- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 2**
All staff receive orientation and ongoing formal professional development and supervision in how to support positive relationships and interactions through positive, warm, and nurturing interactions.

Family Child Care:

- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 2**
Educator has participated in formal professional development on how to support positive relationships and interactions with children through positive, warm, and nurturing interactions.
- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 4**
Educators utilize teaching strategies that ensure a positive learning environment, engage children in learning, and promote critical thinking skills.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice:

- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning B.2** Teachers continually gather information about children in a variety of ways and monitor each child's learning and development to make plans to help children progress.

Standards (continued)

- **(2) Teaching to enhance development and learning G.2** Scaffolding can take a variety of forms; for example, giving the child a hint, adding a cue, modeling the skill, or adapting the materials and activities. It can be provided in a variety of contexts, not only in planned learning experiences but also in play, daily routines, and outdoor activities.
- **(3) Planning curriculum to achieve important goals A.1** Teachers consider what children should know, understand, and be able to do across the domains of physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development and across the disciplines, including language, literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and health.
- **(3) Planning curriculum to achieve important goals D.1** Teachers plan curriculum experiences that integrate children's learning within and across the domains (physical, social, emotional, cognitive) and the disciplines (including language, literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and health).

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy

Reading Standards: Foundational Skills for Pre-Kindergarteners:

- **Phonological Awareness MA.2** With guidance and support, demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).
- **Phonological Awareness MA.2.a** With guidance and support, recognize and produce rhyming words (e.g., identify words that rhyme with /cat/ such as /bat/ and /sat/).



Training Evaluation

Thank you for your participation. Please indicate your impressions of the training below.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The training met my expectations.					
I will be able to apply what I have learned.					
The trainer was knowledgeable.					
The training was organized and easy to follow.					
Participation and interaction was encouraged.					
The handouts were pertinent and useful.					

1. How would you rate this training overall?

Excellent

Good

Average

Poor

2. What was most beneficial to you in this training?

3. What suggestions do you have to improve this training?