



*The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool*

# Phonological Awareness

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*The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* includes a wide variety of activities that promote children’s phonological awareness—hearing and understanding the different sounds and patterns of spoken language. Phonological awareness develops gradually and sequentially, from simple skills (e.g., listening) to very complex skills (e.g., manipulating individual sounds in words). Building these activities into the daily schedule is critical, as young children’s phonological sensitivity is a strong predictor of later spelling, writing, and reading ability.<sup>1</sup> In *The Creative Curriculum®* classroom, teachers are guided by the *Foundation* and *Daily Resources*. These resources help teachers guide children as they learn to

- hear and differentiate between the separate sounds of oral language that are blended into ordinary speech (which plays a vital role in learning to read);
- notice and discriminate rhyme and alliteration; and
- explore sounds, syllables, and words by examining onset (the part of the syllable before the first vowel) and rime (the first vowel and everything after it).

*The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* emphasizes the importance of individualized instruction. The five knowledge-building volumes help teachers understand how children typically develop phonological awareness and why it is important. This understanding helps teachers identify each child’s level of phonological awareness and provide appropriate experiences.

Teachers can then differentiate phonological awareness instruction using *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool: Daily Resources*, such as *Teaching Guides™* (comprehensive daily plans for an entire year), *Intentional Teaching Cards™* (playful, engaging activities that teachers can adapt according to the needs and abilities of each child) and *Mighty Minutes™* (short activities that can be used anywhere to teach important skills during “in-between” times).

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## Strategies for Promoting Phonological Awareness

Individualize instruction, especially during small-group time. *The Creative Curriculum® Teaching Guides* build phonological awareness instruction into each day by integrating specific *Intentional Teaching Card™* activities that promote development of these important skills. The teaching sequence on each *Intentional Teaching Card™* explains how to adapt the activity according to each child’s level of development and learning. This individualized approach enables teachers to support and challenge each child appropriately.

Draw children’s attention to phonemes. *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* offers multiple opportunities throughout the day for encouraging children to blend and segment phonemes, which are the smallest units of sound. For example, a teacher using Mighty Minute 100, “La, La, La,” sings, “Dow, dow, dow your boat.” The children will probably say, “No! That’s not right! It’s row.” In this playful way, they are paying attention to phonemes. Another example is the small-group activity described on Intentional Teaching Card LL16, “Tongue Twisters,” which encourages children to notice the beginning sounds of alliterative words. Other *Intentional Teaching Cards™* offer guidance for intentionally exploring onset and rime with children.

Use songs, games, and rhymes to help develop children’s phonological awareness. *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* contains resources that use playful songs, games, and rhymes to draw children’s attention to the separate sounds of spoken

language. For example, Mighty Minutes 17, “Leaping Sounds,” instructs teachers to say a letter sound and describe an action. Children whose names begin with that sound then perform the action (“If your name begins with the /s/ sound, hop on one foot”). Children enjoy the various activities while learning to listen to and distinguish between letter sounds. Teachers can promote continued learning at home by suggesting that families sing childhood or other familiar songs and rhymes. Another great resource for helping families promote children’s phonological awareness is *The Creative Curriculum® LearningGames®* series. Activities such as “Rhyming” and “Same Sounds” offer suggestions for family–child interactions that focus on phonological awareness. *LearningGames®* show how to carry out the activity and suggest ways to adapt the game for to meet individual children’s strengths and abilities.

### Encourage children’s curiosity about and experimentation with language.

The early childhood years are the ideal time to promote exploration of phonological skills, as “young children have a natural propensity to play with language.”<sup>2</sup> If teachers demonstrate their own enjoyment of words, children will soon follow. The *Curriculum* encourages teachers to invite children to make up new verses to songs and rhymes. For example, Intentional Teaching Card LL19, “Silly Names,” encourages children to create alliterative names to add to a rhyme. Other activities involve teachers reciting a chant during cleanup, dismissing children to go outside by identifying the first sounds in their names, or tapping syllables with rhythm sticks during large-group time.

**Use repetition of sounds.** *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* incorporates activities that use repetition of sounds, which can be especially important for children who are English- or dual-language learners, who benefit from additional repetition of songs, rhymes, and fingerplays in the classroom. These types of activities help English- and dual-language learners to distinguish phonemes in English that may not be part of their home languages. In addition, the *Curriculum* encourages teachers to model, rather than correct, English pronunciation for children who may not say English sounds exactly as the teacher does.

**Demonstrate how to separate sentences into words and words into syllables.** Many *Curriculum* resources offer opportunities for teachers to help children understand that oral speech can be divided into “parts,” e.g., sentences and syllables. For example, Intentional Teaching Card LL52, “Tap It, Clap It, Stomp It, Jump It,” guides teachers to say each child’s name while clapping the syllables. The teaching sequence on the card helps teachers adapt the activity according to each child’s skill level (e.g., encouraging a child to chant his name and clap each syllable or, for a child who has a stronger grasp of syllables, inviting the child to combine and separate syllables).

**Offer books that foster phonological awareness.** The *Teaching Strategies® Children’s Book Collection* provides a vast array of high-quality children’s books, several of which are particularly useful for teaching phonological awareness. For example, books such as *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (which illustrates alliteration as well as rhyming),

*Henny Penny*, *Crazy Pizza Day*, and *Peeny Butter Fudge* are filled with funny, rhyming text that encourages children to recognize the sounds in word endings.

### General Information About *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool*

*The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* features research-based content and daily resources that are fully aligned with the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* and state early learning standards. It supports children’s development and learning in relation to 38 objectives that include predictors of school success. Furthermore, it helps children develop confidence and lifelong critical thinking skills through encouraging exploration and discovery as a way of learning. The *Curriculum* offers numerous tools devoted to early language and literacy development. *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool: Foundation*, is the five-volume knowledge-building component of the *Curriculum*. Two of these volumes are particularly useful to teachers as they nurture children’s phonological awareness. *Volume 3: Literacy* focuses completely on early language and literacy development, and includes research on phonological awareness as well as tips for teachers to promote this skill set. *Volume 5: Objectives for Development & Learning* provides detailed information about the objective that addresses phonological awareness. This volume presents research findings, progressions of development and learning for the dimensions of this objective, and strategies for promoting all children’s phonological awareness.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> National Early Literacy Panel. (2004). *A synthesis of research on language and literacy*. Retrieved June 2004, from <http://www.famlit.org/ProgramsandInitiatives/FamilyPartnershipinReading/index.cfm>
- <sup>2</sup> Yopp, H. K., & Yopp, R. G. (2009). *Phonological awareness is child's play!*. Beyond the Journal, Retrieved May 2012, from <http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200901/BTJPhonologicalAwareness.pdf>

