# **Phonological Awareness and Early Literacy Birth to Five – Virtual KIT**

**Kit QT**

Understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds is fundamental to learning to read. Phonological awareness is a term that describes an individual’s ability to detect and manipulate the sound structure of spoken language (Lonigan, 2006) and is an important and reliable predictor of later reading ability (NELP, 2008). The National Early Literacy Panel *NELP* (2008) synthesized the research in early literacy to identify the knowledge, skills and abilities that young children need to learn to ensure later literacy development. NELP identified four areas as important for young children's early literacy experiences: oral language (which includes vocabulary knowledge), phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print knowledge (National Institute for Literacy, 2009).

*Phonological awareness* (PA), *phonemic awareness* and *phonics* are terms describing related constructs that are all important to learning to read, yet often confused. PA is the broadest term and describes an ability to isolate and play with the syllables and sounds of words. Clapping out syllables or breaking words into onset and rime are examples of PA skills. *Phonemic awareness* is a more complex component of PA that involves being aware of and able to manipulate words at the individual phoneme (sound) level. Isolating the sounds of a word (e.g. /c/ /a/ /t/) or deleting a sound from a given word (e.g. saying stop without the /s/) are examples of PA at the phonemic level. *Phonics* is a method of teaching reading and spelling based on the sounds of letters. Young children must acquire skills in PA to be able to learn to read through phonics.

The development of phonological awareness progresses along a continuum from larger (words and syllables) to smaller (phonemes) units of sound, and easier to more complex tasks. The article below by Philips, Clancy-Menchetti and Lonigan (2008) *Successful Phonological Awareness Instruction with Preschool Children* describes the developmental continuum of PA and what they believe that continuum suggests for instructional practices. Rather than teaching children PA skills in stages, teachers should proved a wide variety of experiences with PA as children’s skills tend to overlap between levels.

While rhyming is a PA task, PA is much more than just rhyming in preschool. In fact, according to Philips, Clancy-Menchetti and Lonigan (2008), rhyming is not the simplest PA skill to master and may not be the most important skill to teach preschool age children. Teachers must understand both the developmental continuum of PA and the complexity of PA tasks to provide children with optimal instructional experiences. PA is not a naturally developing ability in young children; it requires intentional teaching and opportunities for practice along a planned scope and sequence. Several of the articles below describe how teachers can incorporate PA into their classroom activities and routines.

Families and professionals have an opportunity and responsibility to incorporate language and literacy enhancing experiences into children's daily lives. To do this, they must understand the most current research in early literacy and the evidence-based practices associated with supporting young children's language and literacy development. This Virtual Kit was designed to provide information about Phonological Awareness Skills that will support early literacy, birth to five.

**Show me now! (I need this tomorrow.)**

These websites will help you find an evidence-based practice, or the evidence base for your practices.

* [The Development of Phonological Awareness Skills](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/28759/)
* [Phonological Awareness Instructional and Assessment Guidelines](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/6254/)
* [Kansas Guide to Learning Literacy: Birth to Five Years](https://community.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=mGa80anlsXw%3D&tabid=5899&mid=14457) (.pdf)

**What does this look like in practice? (I have a little more time to read about this.)**

* [Successful Phonological Awareness Instruction with Preschool Children](http://www.earlylit.net/ecrtr)
* [Nursery Rhyme Knowledge and Phonological Awareness in Preschool Children](http://jolle.coe.uga.edu/past-issues/)
* [Addressing Emergent Literacy Skills in English-Language Learners](http://www.asha.org/Publications/leader/2008/080923/f080923a/)
* [What Works Clearinghouse: Phonological Awareness Training](https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED494754.pdf) (.pdf)

**What does the ECRC have on this topic?**

Below are selected resources from the Early Childhood Resource Center. For additional resources related to the literacy go to the KITS Early Child Resource Center and click on ECRC catalogue, or call (620) 421-6550 ext. 1638 for personal assistance.

Adams, M., Foorman, B., Lundberg, I., & Beeler, T. (1997).  *Phonemic awareness in young children; a classroom curriculum.*  Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Blachman, B., Ball, E., Black, R. & Tangel, D. (2000). *Rode to the code: a phonological awareness program for young children.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Enz, B. J. & Morrow, L. M. (2009). *Assessing preschool literacy development: informal and formal measures to guide instruction.*  Newark, Del.: International Reading Association.

Gillon, G. T. (2004).  *Phonological awareness from research to practice.*  New York: Guilford Press.

Invernizzi, M. (2010).  *Phonological awareness literacy screening (PALS)* Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia.

McCormick, C. E., Throneburg, R. N. & Smitley, J. M. (2002). *A sound start: phonemic awareness lessons for reading success.* New York: Guilford Press.

Opitz, M. (2000). *Rhymes and reasons literature and language play for phonological awareness.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Strickland, D. S. & Schickedanz, J. A. (2009).  *Learning about print in preschool: working with letters, words, and beginning links with phonemic awareness.* Newark, Del. : International Reading Association.

Torgensen, J. K. & Bryant, B. R. (2004).  *Test of phonological awareness (TOPA) 2+.* Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Wagner, R., Torgesen, J., & Rashotte, C. (1999). *Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP).* Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

**How can I find training materials on this topic?**

* [Oregon Online training: How to Teach Phonological Awareness](http://oregonliteracypd.uoregon.edu/topic/phonological-awareness)
* [Phonological (Sound) Awareness Webinar](http://www.getreadytoread.org/early-learning-childhood-basics/early-literacy/early-literacy-webinars)

**What if I still need help?**

Contact KITS by e-mail to request assistance or by calling 1-800-362-0390 ext. 1618.

**If you thought this kit was helpful, you might also like ….**

* [Kansas Kids Ready for Learning: Language and Literacy](http://readyforlearning.net/html/langdev.shtml)

**Evaluation**

Please take a minute to complete a brief survey located on the Virtual Kits page on the website to let us know what you think about this virtual kit, and what other topics you would like to see addressed in the future.

**References:**

Lonigan, C. J. (2006). Conceptualizing phonological processing skills in prereaders. In D. K. Dickinson & S. B. Neuman (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research* (Vol. 2, pp. 77-89). New York: Guilford Press.

National Early Literacy Panel. (2008). Developing early literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel. Washington DC: National Institute for Literacy.

National Institute for Literacy. (2009). Early Beginnings: Early Literacy Knowledge and Instruction. Jessup, MD: U.S. Department of Education.

Phillips, B. M., & Piasta, S. B. (2013). Phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge: key precursors and instructional targets to promote reading success. In T. Shanahan & C. J. Lonigan (Eds.), *Early childhood literacy: the National Early Literacy Panel and beyond* (pp. 95-116). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.