

SECTION

I

Essential Strategies for Teaching Phonemic Awareness

What is phonemic awareness and how does it impact reading? Many early childhood and primary grade teachers wrestle with these questions on a daily basis. This section presents the research on phonemic awareness and best practices for training students to identify sounds.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Phonemic awareness is the ability to focus on and manipulate phonemes in the *spoken* word (Ehri, Nunes, Willows, & Schuster, 2001). Phonemes are the smallest units in the spoken language, with English containing approximately 41 phonemes (Ehri & Nunes, 2002). Young students often have difficulties letting go of the letters and just concentrating on the sounds in the spoken word. Yet research indicates that phonemic awareness and letter knowledge are key predictors to students' success in learning to read (National Reading Panel, 2000). In fact, predictive studies show that when children enter kindergarten with the ability to manipulate phonemes and identify letters, they progress at a faster pace in learning to read (Ehri & Roberts, 2006).

An ongoing discussion in the field of literacy is whether phonemic awareness is a conceptual understanding about language or whether it is a skill. According to Phillips and Torgesen (2006), it is both an understanding and a skill. For example, in order to identify the phonemes in [cat], students must understand that there are sounds at the beginning, middle, and end that can be manipulated. Students must also be able to complete phonemic awareness tasks such as the following:

- Phoneme *isolation*: Isolate phonemes; for example, “Tell me the first sound in *cat*.”
- Phoneme *identity*: Recognize common sounds in different words; for example, “Tell me the same sound in *rug*, *rat*, and *roll*.”

- Phoneme *categorization*: Identify the word with the odd sound in a sequence; for example, “Which word does not belong in *sat*, *sag*, *rug*?”
- Phoneme *blending*: Combine separate sounds to form a word; for example, [b-a-t] for *bat*.
- Phoneme *segmentation*: Break out the word into separate sounds; for example, “What are the sounds in *bag*?” (Ehri et al., 2001)

There is also a developmental progression for young children in tackling these phonemic awareness tasks. Research indicates that identifying beginning and ending sounds is much easier than recognizing medial phonemes (Inverizzi, 2003). This finding points to the need for explicit, systematic instruction in phonemic awareness that is integrated within a literacy program (National Reading Panel, 2000).

INSTRUCTION IN PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Many students enter preschool or kindergarten having already obtained knowledge of letters and sounds through language play or exposure. However, for those who need these concepts and skills, explicit, systematic instruction in phonemic awareness will be necessary (Phillips & Torgesen, 2006). It is critical to know that older striving readers and English language learners also benefit from phonemic awareness training. Research shows that when English language learners are provided explicit phonemic awareness instruction, they are able to catch up with native speakers’ progress on word identification and spelling (Geva & Siegel, 2000).

The key to success is data-driven instruction that uses assessment to determine students’ level of phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is the broader construct for knowing speech sounds, rhyming, and alliteration and includes phonemic awareness (Inverizzi, 2003). When teachers use data to inform instruction, targeted sessions are implemented on specific needs such as phoneme blending or categorization. It is also important to note that data may determine that some students do not require instruction in phonemic awareness as they already possess the concept and skill. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), effective phonemic awareness instruction occurs in small groups and is combined with letter identification to aid transfer of skills to reading. This chapter presents several strategies that use guidelines formed from research on best practice to instruct students in identifying and manipulating sounds.

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING PHONEMIC AWARENESS

During the past several years, a body of research indicates that early, systematic, explicit phonemic awareness instruction can successfully jump-start emergent and early readers’ reading performance (McGee & Ukrainetz, 2009). The following guidelines provide the framework for phonemic awareness instruction:

1. Analysis of phonemic awareness assessment data should drive instruction, as only a small percentage of students need explicit instruction (Ehri & Roberts, 2006).
2. Phonemic awareness instruction should be a positive, enriching experience that allows students to engage in language play (Yopp, 1992).

3. Effective phonemic awareness instruction provides for individual differences in abilities and uses leveled scaffolding to facilitate growth (McGee & Ukrainetz, 2009).
4. Developmentally appropriate phonemic awareness instruction uses chants, poetry, songs, and rhymes to engage students' curiosity about language and to develop metalinguistic awareness (Yopp & Yopp, 2000).
5. Effective phonemic awareness instruction explicitly labels sounds and demonstrates the process of blending-segmenting of sounds (Ehri et al., 2001).

A STRATEGY FOR ASSESSING PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Research indicates that phonemic awareness tasks are the best predictors of students' success with reading acquisition (Yopp, 1995). Due to its critical nature, it is imperative that teachers assess students' phonemic awareness skills in order to differentiate instruction or to provide intervention if necessary (Ehri et al., 2001). The purpose of assessing phonemic awareness may be to screen for targeted instruction or to conduct progress monitoring. The Phonemic Awareness Checklist shown in Figure I.1 may be used for either formative or summative assessment. However, teachers need to analyze and reflect on the data to denote patterns among students. For example, if students are struggling with a particular subskill, such as blending and segmenting phonemes, teachers may need to reteach the skill before selecting students for small-group instruction.

A GUIDE FOR USING RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION FOR PHONEMIC AWARENESS

After analyzing the data from the Phonemic Awareness Checklist (Figure I.1), students at the developing or beginning levels may be selected for intervention. The instructor groups students with similar needs, such as blending or segmenting phonemes, and uses the Sound Sorts activity to target specific sounds. Instructors may choose to begin with picture sorts if students are in the beginning stage. Learners that were evaluated as “developing” may begin with sound sorts without picture clues. In this section, “Essential Strategies for Teaching Phonemic Awareness,” five instructional strategies are presented to facilitate phonological awareness. The strategies, which are based on data analysis of student needs, are presented as guides for teachers to use.

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

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| <p>Adams, M., Foorman, B., Lundberg, I., & Beeler, T. (1997). <i>Phonemic awareness in young children: A classroom curriculum</i>. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.</p> <p>Blevins, W. (1999). <i>Phonemic awareness activities for early reading success</i>. New York: Scholastic.</p> <p>Florida Center for Reading Research. (2009). <i>Florida Center for Reading Research</i>. Retrieved from http://www.fcrr.org</p> | <p>Justice, L., & Sofka, A. (2010). <i>Engaging children with print: Building early skills through read-alouds</i>. New York: Guilford.</p> <p>Scott, V. (2009). <i>Phonemic awareness: Ready-to-use lessons, activities, and games</i>. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.</p> |
|--|---|

Figure I.1

PHONEMIC AWARENESS CHECKLIST			
Directions: Observe the student perform a phonemic awareness task focused on the appropriate sub-component. Based on observational data from a minimum of three sessions, evaluate the student's performance as <i>Beginning</i> , <i>Developing</i> , or <i>Proficient</i> .			
PA Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient
Recognizing Rhymes	Student <i>rarely</i> identifies words as rhyming. (1 point)	Student <i>sometimes</i> identifies words as rhyming. (2 points)	Student <i>always</i> identifies words as rhyming. (3 points)
Generating Rhymes	Student <i>rarely</i> generates rhyming words. (1 point)	Student <i>sometimes</i> generates rhyming words. (2 points)	Student <i>always</i> generates rhyming words. (3 points)
Identifying Phonemes	Student <i>rarely</i> identifies targeted phoneme. (1 point)	Student <i>sometimes</i> identifies targeted phoneme. (2 points)	Student <i>always</i> identifies targeted phoneme. (3 points)
Manipulating Phonemes	Student <i>rarely</i> manipulates phonemes in initial/media/final position. (1 point)	Student <i>sometimes</i> manipulates phonemes in initial/media/final position. (2 points)	Student <i>always</i> manipulates phonemes in initial/media/final position. (3 points)
Blending Phonemes	Student <i>rarely</i> blends segmented sounds to make whole word. (1 point)	Student <i>sometimes</i> blends segmented sounds to make whole word. (2 points)	Student <i>always</i> blends segmented sounds to make whole word. (3 points)
Segmenting Phonemes	Student <i>rarely</i> segments words into individual phonemes. (1 point)	Student <i>sometimes</i> segments words into individual phonemes. (2 points)	Student <i>always</i> segments words into individual phonemes. (3 points)
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Proficient</i> = 18–13 points <i>Developing</i> = 12–7 points <i>Beginning</i> = 6–1 points</p>			

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Strategy

1

Rhyme Generation

SPEAKING BRIEFLY: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERACY STRATEGY

Rhyme Generation is an instructional strategy that develops explicit phonemic awareness skills. During this activity, students are engaged in isolating, blending, and manipulating sounds on several levels. Students first identify the rhyme within an authentic context, such as a poem or song. Playing with language enables students to practice making words through rhyme generation.

The primary purpose for implementing the rhyme generation activity is to encourage students to develop critical phonemic awareness skills such as manipulation of the onset and rime. The onset is the beginning sound/letter, such as /b/ in *bat*. The rime is the stem of the word, such as [at] in *bat*. Identification of rhymes is a foundational phonemic awareness skill that many students pick up through language play (Ehri & Roberts, 2006). Rhyme generation typically occurs during the morning message or shared reading time. However, it can be implemented during intervention sessions with students of varying ages who need additional instruction in phonemic awareness.

Source: International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (1996).

IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

USING RHYME GENERATION

When to use the strategy: Rhyme generation may be used during any segment of the literacy block, depending on student needs. For example, teachers may choose to

demonstrate the activity during morning message and then coach students in the phonemic awareness skill during guided reading. Students may also engage in the activity during literacy center time or as an intervention task.

Strategy modifications for grade levels: The strategy may be modified for older students by using multisyllabic word families.

IMPLEMENTING THE RHYME GENERATION STRATEGY: STEP BY STEP

1. **Introduce rhyme generation to students.** Teachers present the concept of “rhyme” and ask students to define it and give examples.
2. **Present rhymes in context.** Teachers conduct a shared reading of a poem or song and ask students to identify the rhymes.
3. **Demonstrate how to manipulate onset and rime.** Teachers use the identified rhymes to color-code the onset and rime on chart paper. Using a word ladder graphic, teachers demonstrate how to generate new rimes from previous words. They list initial consonants and demonstrate how to manipulate the onset to create a new rhyme. For example, the word [fat] may be changed to [sat] by selecting a new onset.
4. **Record rhymes generated from original poem or song.** Teachers display selected sentences from the song or poem used to introduce the activity on sentence strips. Students apply the skill by creating their own sentence that generates a new rhyme for the context.
5. **Facilitate students’ application of rhyme generation.** Teachers develop students’ skill in manipulating onsets and rimes by encouraging rhyme generation with their names. During literacy stations or intervention, students use their own names to generate rhymes on a word ladder. After exhausting the list for their own names, they may create a new list of rhymes with classmates’ names.

APPLYING THE RHYME GENERATION STRATEGY: KINDERGARTEN LESSON ON RHYME GENERATION

The kindergarten teacher shows students a picture of Buckingham Palace in London and asks students if they know what it is and who lives there. After discussing the picture, the teacher presents the poem “Buckingham Palace” (Milne, 2004) on chart paper and asks students to define what makes a poem special. After introducing the concept of rhymes, the teacher conducts a read-aloud of the poem. After the read-aloud, the teacher invites students to identify the rhymes by highlighting them with colored markers. Using the word ladder graphic organizer shown in Figure 1.1, the teacher directs students to do the following:

- Make a new word by changing the initial sounds in [came/same].
- Use the rhymes to generate more words.
- Create a new sentence for the poem using the generated rhymes.

After they have completed their sentences, students read their new rhyming sentences. The teacher records their generated rhymes on chart paper for students to reread during literacy station time.

Figure 1.1 Rhyming Words Ladder

RHYMING WORDS LADDER	
came	bike

Source: International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (1996).

IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts

10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Research indicates that English language learners benefit from explicit phonemic awareness training (Geva & Siegel, 2000). In order to provide explicit instruction, teachers may need to scaffold English language learners' understanding of rhyme. English language learners might need a picture sort activity to grasp the concept of "rhyme" before the Rhyme Generation lesson. In this activity, teachers guide students in sorting pictures into rhyming categories such as "box with fox." Teachers may also use a picture sort activity to gather additional data on students' phonemic awareness skills and their grasp of oral vocabulary.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with special needs may need additional support in manipulating the onset and rime to generate new words. One method for differentiating this activity is to use multisensory materials to enable them to acquire this phonemic awareness skill. Using magnetic letters with raised bumps helps students with special needs create new rhymes from a poem or song. The magnetic letters enable them to visualize the new words they are creating as they transfer skills to reading.

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Strategy

2

Multisensory Mapping

SPEAKING BRIEFLY: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERACY STRATEGY

Multisensory Mapping uses all modalities (auditory, visual, kinesthetic-tactile) to facilitate retention and processing of sounds. Research confirms that the most common barrier to acquisition of emergent reading skills is the inability to process phonologically (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Multisensory techniques such as tracing, illustrating, and chanting of sounds enable young learners to process sounds in multiple ways.

As students play and manipulate sounds through the senses, they begin to grasp the alphabetic principle. Research indicates that emergent and striving readers experience rapid growth in performance when they receive intensive, explicit training in phonemic awareness (Torgesen & Bryant, 1993). Multisensory Mapping may be used as an intervention strategy for dyslexic or striving readers. It should be implemented as a supplementary activity to provide students with multiple opportunities to process sounds, rather than as an introduction to phonemic awareness.

Source: International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (1996).

IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts

1. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

USING MULTISENSORY MAPPING

When to use the strategy: Multisensory Mapping may be presented as a literacy station activity after it has been demonstrated for the students. Teachers may also choose to

implement this strategy in a tutorial session with a striving reader who requires additional support to retain and manipulate sounds.

Strategy modifications for grade levels: The strategy may be modified for older students by using technology such as digital cameras or computer software to match letters and sounds.

IMPLEMENTING THE MULTISENSORY MAPPING STRATEGY: STEP BY STEP

1. **Present the target sound in context.** Teachers and students join in a poem or song as keywords are highlighted. After singing the song or chanting the poem, the teacher leads students in a choral reading.
2. **Select target sounds.** Teachers select target sounds such as “c” or “t” from keywords in the song or poem and identify them for students.
3. **Match letter and sound.** Teachers call on individual students to match the target sound with a picture in a sound sort activity. After the sound sort activity, students write the letter that represents the sound in the air, chanting the sound at the same time.
4. **Trace the letter.** Teachers invite individual students to use cornmeal to trace the letter as they recite the sound. Immediately after tracing the letter, students generate words that begin or end with the target sound.
5. **Review target sounds and letters.** Teachers distribute pictures and letter cards with raised bumps or sandpaper. Students work with partners to repeat the process as a review. Previous sounds and letters should be added to the review.


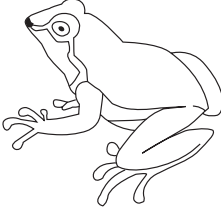

APPLYING THE MULTISENSORY MAPPING STRATEGY: FIRST-GRADE LESSON ON MULTISENSORY MAPPING

Students gather on the rug as the teacher leads them in a read-aloud of the nursery rhyme “Jack Be Nimble” (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998). The teacher demonstrates movements to accompany the read-aloud so that students use whole-body learning to map the rhymes. After color-coding rhyming pairs in the poem, the teacher provides each student with a packet. The packet contains a set of multisensory rhyming pair cards. Using the Multisensory Mapping of Sounds guide shown in Figure 2.1, the teacher directs students to work with their reading partners on the following:

- Match the rhyming pair cards with their pictures (**box, fox**).
- Use the magnetic letters to create the words and trace them.
- Chant the sounds as you trace the letters (**box, fox**).
- Create new words on your Rhyming Pair Word Study sheet that match (**box, fox**).

As students complete their packets, they review the original nursery rhyme “Jack Be Nimble” on the chart. Partners try out new lines for the rhyme with their generated rhymes and add them to the chart. When all students have completed their task, the teacher gathers them on the rug again to read the new rhyming lines generated by the class.

Figure 2.1 Multisensory Mapping of Sounds

Picture Card	Word	Rhyming Word
	Fox	Box
	Frog	Hog
	Knot	Hot

Source: International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (1996).

IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts

10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Technology provides the English language learner with multisensory experiences (Hodge, 1998). As second-language learners see the printed word on the text, type in their rhyme, and listen to accompanying songs or stories, they are provided with multiple exposures to sounds. Interactive word-building activities such as “Construct a Word” on the Read/Write/Think website (www.readwritethink.org) enable second-language learners to generate words that match the rhyme. This website provides feedback on each response and also tallies scores. The teacher can provide further remediation with

a follow-up podcast of rhyming pairs with an accompanying word sheet so English language learners can practice repeated readings.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Similarly to English language learners, students with special needs also benefit from repeated exposure to multisensory mapping of sounds (Daly, Chafouleas, & Skinner, 2005). One intervention method for students with special needs is to use the song “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” (Yopp, 1992) to generate rhymes and wordplay. After listening to a podcast of the song, striving readers use their multisensory rhyming pairs to create a flip book. The flip book has pictures of the rhyming animals with color-coded text. Students with special needs swap their flip books with one another for continued practice in wordplay and rhyming.

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Strategy

3

Picture Card Snap

SPEAKING BRIEFLY: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERACY STRATEGY

Picture Card Snap provides emergent and early readers with scaffolded practice in identifying and categorizing sounds. Young children often struggle with phonemic awareness activities since we are asking them to treat speech sounds as objects to be manipulated (Yopp, 1992). However, research indicates that with specific training in identifying and manipulating sounds, young readers make significant progress in reading and sound spelling at a much earlier age (McGee & Ukrainetz, 2009).

Picture Card Snap provides emergent and early readers with specific, repeated practice in matching initial, medial, or final sounds to pictures. An integral component of the instructional strategy is the levels of scaffolding that are provided to the young readers as they attempt to complete the card game. As teachers use assessment data to layer their prompts during this activity, young readers receive differentiated feedback to improve their performance. Picture Card Snap should be used as a small-group activity or for intervention tutorials. Once students have participated in the scaffolded activity, the card game may be used as a literacy center activity during the literacy block.

Source: International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (1996).

IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

USING PICTURE CARD SNAP

When to use the strategy: Picture Card Snap uses the group setting to encourage students to play with speech sounds. It is imperative that teachers encourage and positively

reinforce young readers' attempts to identify and categorize speech sounds during this picture card activity.

Strategy modifications for grade levels: The card activity can be differentiated for challenge level by asking students to match the target sound in all positions (initial, medial, final) or by including several sound card matches.

IMPLEMENTING THE PICTURE CARD SNAP STRATEGY: STEP BY STEP

1. **Analyze assessment data.** During the planning process, teachers examine assessment data to determine the speech sound to be the focus of the card activity (initial, medial, or final). Teachers also analyze the data to gauge the levels of scaffolding needed by individual students.
2. **Prepare picture cards.** Teachers select pictures to represent target sounds and “odd-man out” pictures to complete the pack of cards.
3. **Model identification of sound.** Teachers explicitly model the target sound. For example, if the target sound is initial [b], teachers will prompt, “I will look for pictures that begin with the sound of [bbb] as in *boy*,” elaborating the sound for emphasis.
4. **Match sounds and pictures.** Teachers model taking turns to draw a card from the face-down pile and place it on the face-up pile. When a newly drawn card has the same targeted beginning, medial, or final sound as the top card in the face-up pile, the first child to identify and match the sound says “SNAP!” and takes the whole pile of cards.
5. **Review target sounds.** After students have completed the card activity, teachers facilitate a review of the sound matches by asking individuals to report their matches.

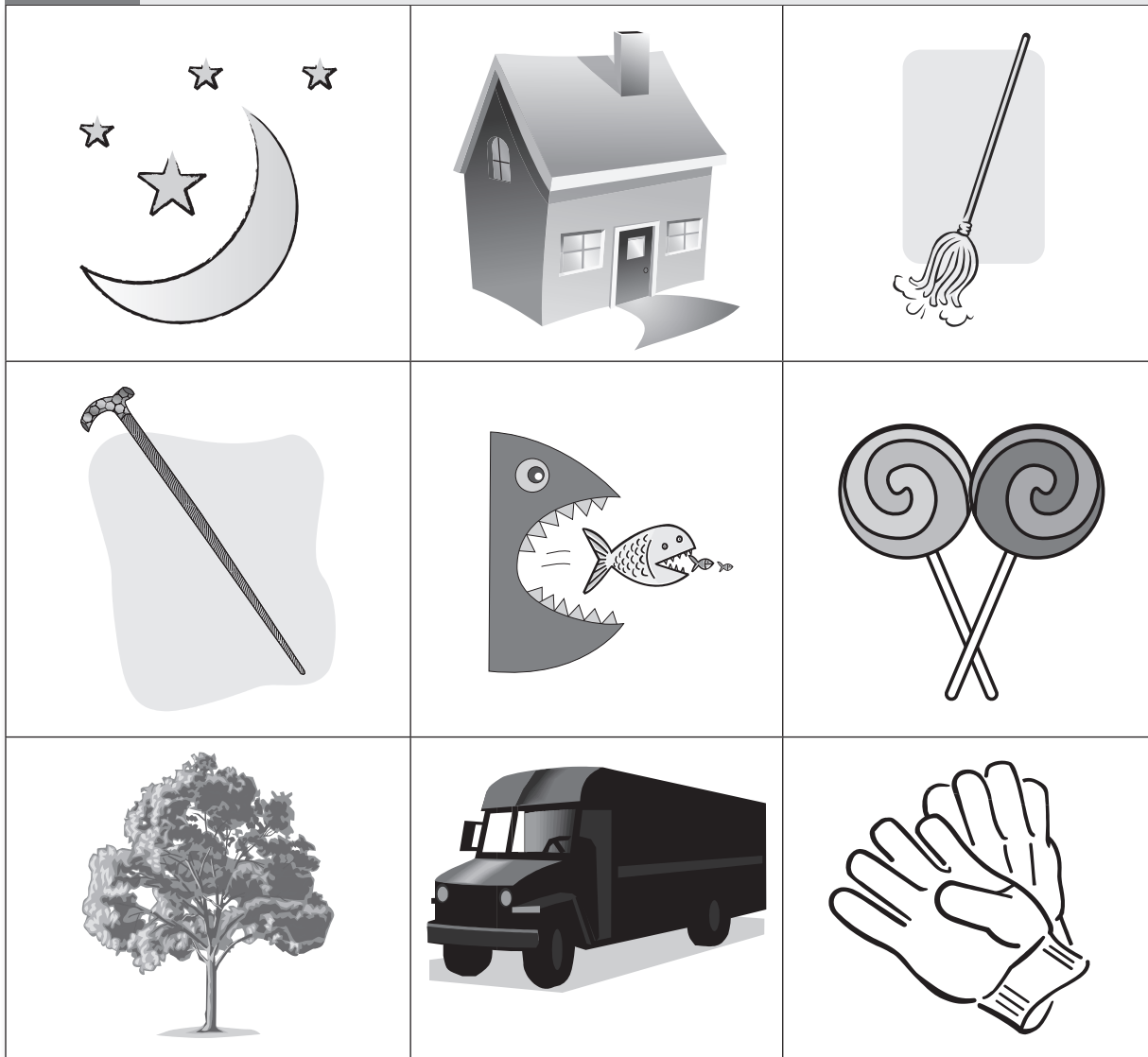
APPLYING THE PICTURE CARD SNAP STRATEGY: KINDERGARTEN INTERVENTION ACTIVITY

After analyzing assessment data from the prior week's lessons, the teacher selects a group of three students who did not achieve benchmark on isolating and manipulating initial sounds. The teacher creates a Picture Card Snap card pack (see Figure 3.1) based on assessment data, then gathers the small intervention group and provides the following scaffolding:

- *Let's identify the sound at the beginning of [moon]. [Mmm] is the first sound we hear in [moon]. Let's all say it together: [mmm].*
- *Can you think of other words that have the same initial sound as [moon]?* Teacher takes several oral responses. Then the teacher asks students to find the picture from a group of three that begins with the same sound, [m].
- The teacher then models for the group how to play the card game Picture Card Snap. As individual students select picture cards, the teacher identifies the picture. Students repeat the name of the picture and emphasize the initial sound they hear before attempting to match the card.

When students complete the card activity, the teacher reviews each sound match by asking group members to call out their sounds. After the review, students orally generate more examples of words that include the target sound.

Figure 3.1 Picture Card Snap!



Source: International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (1996).

IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts

- Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

English language learners may find it especially difficult to identify and categorize initial, medial, and final sounds. One method for scaffolding Picture Card Snap for second-language learners is to include sound boxes as an addendum to the card activity (McCarthy, 2008). As English language learners select a picture card, teachers ask them to use the sound boxes to identify the number of sounds in the word. For example, as the student selects the picture of a cat, the teacher prompts, “*Let’s see how many sounds are in that word. C-a-t. How many sounds did you hear?*” Teachers guide students in placing a token for each sound in the box. Teachers then provide the following prompt, “*Now we’re going to focus on the sound in the first box. Let’s see if we can find a picture card that also begins with /ccc/.*” This simple addendum provides second-language learners with a specific visual prompt to identify and categorize sounds.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Research confirms that when students with special needs are provided explicit, systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, they make significant gains in reading achievement (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Students with special needs respond to multisensory instruction, as it facilitates the processing and retrieval of sounds (Daly, Chafouleas, & Skinner, 2005). One method for differentiating Picture Card Snap for students with special needs is to provide cued signals for sounds. For example, teachers may call students’ attention to how their mouths form the sounds or direct them to place their hands in front of their mouths for voiced sounds. When students are given kinesthetic-tactile associations for sounds, it facilitates the processing and mapping of speech.

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Strategy

4

Sound Sorts

SPEAKING BRIEFLY: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERACY STRATEGY

Sound Sorts is an instructional strategy that facilitates students' attention to phonemes. As emergent and early readers focus on and think about sounds, they are developing metalinguistic awareness (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Metalinguistic awareness is the ability to see language as an object to study (Yopp, 1992). Some students experience difficulties with phonemic awareness instruction because they are unable to see speech sounds as objects that can be manipulated. Sound sort activities provide students with opportunities to step back and focus on the sounds they hear in words.

The primary purpose for implementing the Sound Sorts activity is to facilitate readers' ability to perceive that speech is made up of a series of sounds (Yopp, 1992). Activities that involve blending and segmenting of sounds facilitate emergent and early readers' decoding and encoding skills (Manyak, 2008). As students focus on initial, medial, or ending sounds and categorize them, they improve their ability to identify and manipulate sounds (Griffith & Olson, 1992).

Source: International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (1996).

IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

USING SOUND SORTS

When to use the strategy: Sound Sorts is primarily used for guided reading groups or intervention tutorial sessions. It may be used as a whole class activity to model the task

if students are given partners. It is critical that teachers use their assessment data to change the focus of the sound sort activity depending on student needs.

Strategy modifications for grade levels: The card activity can be differentiated for older students by using multisyllabic word families for the sound sorts.

IMPLEMENTING THE SOUND SORTS STRATEGY: STEP BY STEP

1. **Present the target sound.** Teachers present the target sound in a chant to the tune of “Happy Birthday.” Students join in as the teacher chants, “Where is the sound? Where is the sound? Can you find it?” Teachers explain that students will be identifying and sorting sounds.
2. **Model the target sound sort.** Teachers present the focus of the target sound sort. For example, the teacher says [bat, net, fit]. All have the same ending sound, /t/.
3. **Demonstrate how to sort sounds.** Teachers use picture cards to demonstrate how to sort sounds. Students are selected to come up and align the pictures that all end in /t/. Teachers ask students to explain why the odd picture did not fit in the category.
4. **Pair students to perform task.** Students are paired up and given bags with picture cards. Teachers provide students with the target sound in either initial/medial/ending position to sort. Students note their rationale for categorizing pictures.
5. **Review students’ performance.** Teachers ask students to report out their sound sorts and explain their categories. After reviewing the sound sorts, teachers ask students to generate other words that would fit the category. These words are written on chart paper for students to read aloud as a summary of the lesson.

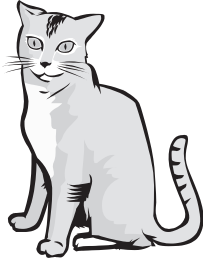
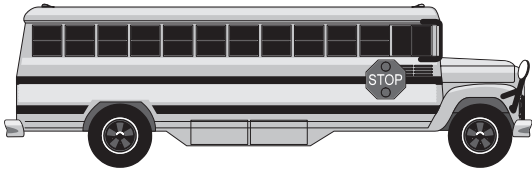


APPLYING THE SOUND SORTS STRATEGY: FIRST-GRADE LESSON ON SOUND SORTS

The teacher calls students to the rug for a shared reading of *There’s a Wocket in My Pocket* (Geisel, 1974). After the shared reading, the teacher writes the following words from the book on chart paper: **wocket, pocket, _____**. Next, the teacher asks students to generate more nonsense words that fit the pattern, such as *packet, sacket, macket*. Students chant all the words on the chart paper. After the choral reading, the teacher asks students to identify the ending sound that all the words have in common, /Tt/. The teacher then demonstrates a sound sort with the picture cards cat/bat/net/bus. Students are then placed in pairs to begin sorting their own packet of cards. Using the ending sound sort shown in Figure 4.1, the teacher directs students to do the following:

- Say the name of the picture and talk about the ending sound.
- Match the pictures that have the same ending sounds.
- Explain to your partner why the odd picture card does not fit.

After they have completed their sound sort activity, students review their categories. The teacher also leads students’ generation of new words that fit the sound categories they formed.

Figure 4.1 Ending Sound Sort

	<p>cat</p>
	<p>bus</p>
	<p>bat</p>
	<p>net</p>

Source: International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (1996).

IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts

- Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The Sound Sorts strategy enables English language learners to focus their attention on the target sound. Research indicates that second-language learners benefit from explicit,

systematic phonemic awareness instruction such as sound sorts (Geva & Siegel, 2000). One method for differentiating Sound Sorts for English language learners is to create individual practice packets based on assessment data. For example, teachers may create picture cards focusing on the medial short [o] sound. Next, English language learners listen to a podcast created by the teacher that labels each picture and provides prompts to categorize the sounds. The cards also contain numbers on the back to provide self-correction. As second-language learners become more adept at categorizing target sounds, they can be weaned off the podcasts.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The most common barrier to early reading success is the inability to process language phonologically (Ehri & Nunes, 2002). Students with special needs are especially at risk for reading failure if they did not receive phonemic awareness instruction. One way to differentiate the Sound Sorts activity for students with special needs is to provide tactile letter cards to facilitate processing of sounds. For example, before learners sort picture cards with the ending /Tt/ sound, teachers provide them with the letter card containing raised bumps or they write the letter in cornmeal. The process of tracing the letter and chanting its sound will facilitate the sorting task.

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Strategy

5

Treasure Chest

SPEAKING BRIEFLY: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERACY STRATEGY

Treasure Chest is an instructional strategy that focuses on the skills of segmenting and blending sounds. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), instruction that explicitly focuses on one or two skills in phonological awareness is most effective. When students engage in segmenting and blending sounds, they are preparing for the decoding and encoding of words (Ehri, Nunes, Willows, & Schuster, 2001).

The objective of the *Treasure Chest* activity is to provide emergent or early readers with repeated practice in segmenting and blending phonemes. This activity is best suited for a literacy center or tutorial session. However, it can also be used as an independent work packet to be used at home with parents.

Source: International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (1996).

IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual languages to accomplish their own purpose (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

USING TREASURE CHEST

When to use the strategy: *Treasure Chest* is used after teachers have modeled and scaffolded the segmentation and blending of sounds. Its primary purpose is to provide students with multiple opportunities to engage in sound play as they count phonemes and then reconstruct them into words through oral blending.

Strategy modifications for grade levels: The card activity can be differentiated for primary grade students by implementing it as a whole class lesson.

IMPLEMENTING THE TREASURE CHEST STRATEGY: STEP BY STEP

1. **Place students in pairs.** Teachers use assessment data to pair students with a buddy to work on the packet.
2. **Model how to implement activity.** Teachers display the Treasure Chest sheet and instruct students how to proceed with picture cards and penny coins.
3. **Identify picture cards.** Teachers name each picture card in the packet before students begin to work to prevent confusion.
4. **Work in pairs to segment sounds.** Students select a picture card from the deck, and one partner says the name of the picture and places a penny to represent every sound in each box on the Treasure Chest.
5. **Blend phonemes into words.** The other student orally blends the sounds and quickly states the word. After blending the phonemes, the student collects the penny counters.
6. **Repeat process with new picture cards.** Students use a new deck of picture cards to swap roles. The process is repeated with first orally segmenting and then blending phonemes.

APPLYING THE TREASURE CHEST STRATEGY: FIRST-GRADE LITERACY INTERVENTION ACTIVITY

The first-grade teacher begins by assigning two students to the Phonemic Awareness Literacy Station. The teacher shows the Treasure Chest packet of materials to the students and asks them to choose roles for segmenting and blending sounds. Using the Treasure Chest graphic organizer and picture cards shown in Figure 5.1, the teacher directs students to do the following:

- Say the name of the picture and stretch out the sounds /f/i/sh/.
- Place a penny counter for each sound in the Treasure Chest boxes [three for fish].
- Blend the sounds to quickly say the word to gather the coins in the Treasure Chest.

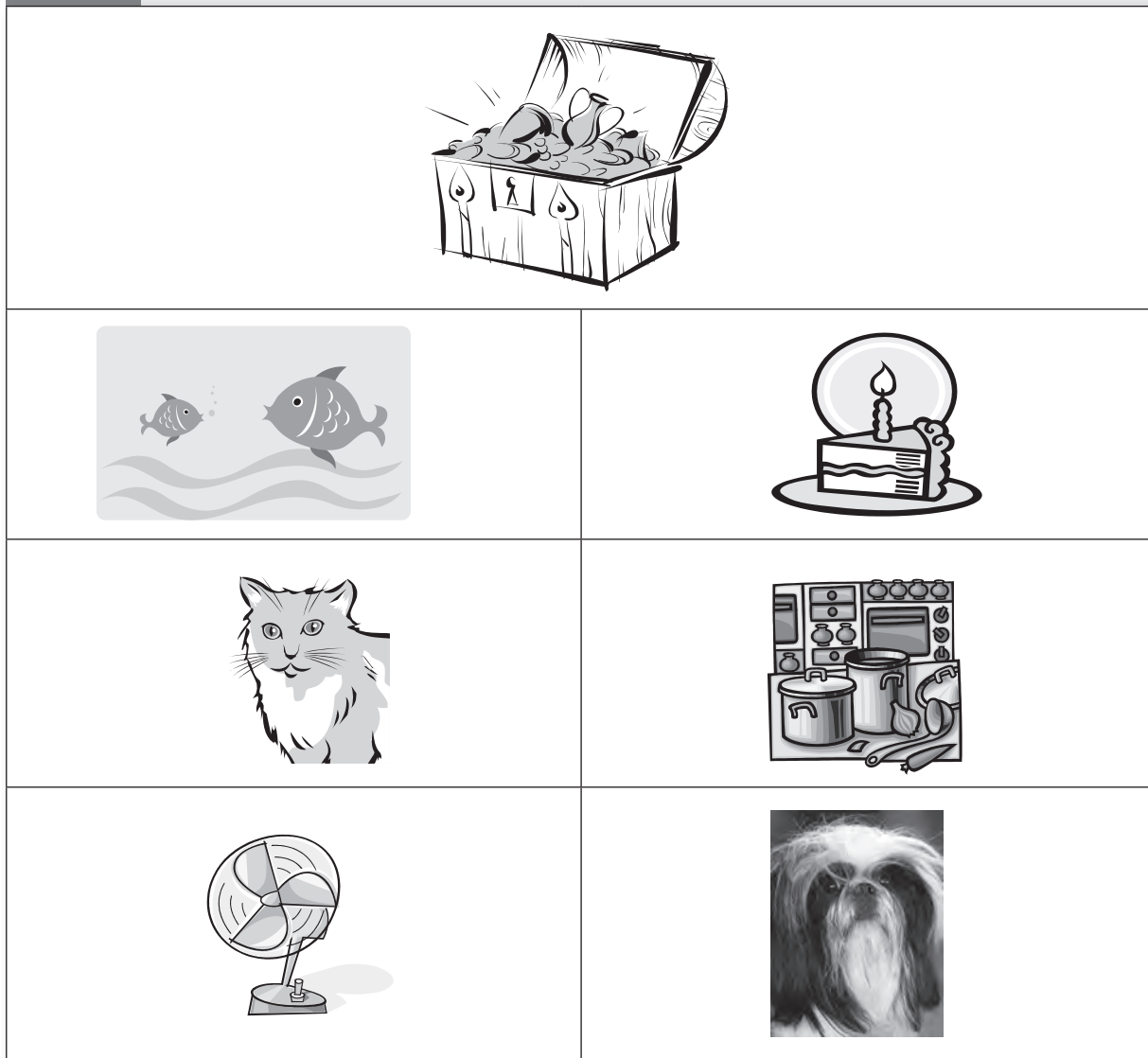
When students have completed the activity with the first deck of cards, they switch roles to repeat the process with a new set of picture cards.

IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts

10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

Source: International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (1996).

Figure 5.1 Treasure Chest Graphic Organizer



DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Early, explicit instruction in segmenting and blending phonemes enables readers to develop the prerequisite decoding skills in learning how to read (Pressley, 2006). English language learners need targeted, repetitive practice in separating and blending of sounds. One way to differentiate the Treasure Chest activity for English language learners is to provide students with a podcast identifying the names of the picture cards. The speaker on the podcast would also segment and blend the sounds for the English language learner. As they listen to the podcast at home or in school, students would use the picture cards to work alongside the speaker on the podcast and therefore receive additional support.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The ability to separate and blend sounds is a critical phonemic awareness skill (Gambrell, Morrow, & Pressley, 2007). Striving readers may receive additional practice in this skill by transforming the Treasure Chest activity into a guessing game. Working with a reading partner, students select a picture card and then give clues to their partner regarding the object. The partner has to respond by segmenting the sounds. For example, if the picture was of a fish, the student might say, “It lives in the sea.” The reading partner would respond, “/f/i/sh/.”

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