8-2010

Let the Sounds Be Heard Phonemic Awareness Of The Emergent Reader

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The purpose of this study was to see how the strategies of phonemic awareness develop the Emergent Reader’s reading ability. The students’ level of phonemic awareness varied among blending, segmentation and sound deletion. Data was collected through observations teacher and student one-to-one conferencing, and interviews with the literacy coach and speech pathologist. The findings showed that there were three specific behaviors of phonemic awareness: sound identification, repetition, and application of strategies in reading. The results indicated it is essential that students acquire phonemic awareness skills to develop their reading ability. Students need instruction and/or intervention from trained teachers to support the strategies efficiently.
Let the Sounds Be Heard
Phonemic Awareness
Of
The Emergent Reader

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
M.S. Literacy Education

Supervised by

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August 2010
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to see how the strategies of phonemic awareness develop the Emergent Reader’s reading ability. The students’ level of phonemic awareness varied among blending, segmentation and sound deletion. Data was collected through observations teacher and student one-to-one conferencing, and interviews with the literacy coach and speech pathologist. The findings showed that there were three specific behaviors of phonemic awareness: sound identification, repetition, and application of strategies in reading. The results indicated it is essential that students acquire phonemic awareness skills to develop their reading ability. Students need instruction and/or intervention from trained teachers to support the strategies efficiently.
Let the Sounds Be Heard

As a teacher of first grade students, I spend much of my time teaching a literacy based curriculum. One aspect of the curriculum is Guided Reading Instruction which is teacher support to students’ reading development by using strategies for processing leveled texts and increasing the difficulty of texts (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996). During this instruction students are divided into small groups according to their reading ability. The ultimate goal is to be able to get the student to learn how to use the strategies learned and read independently. Students who struggle with reading have a more difficult time matching sounds to letters, decoding words, being fluent and comprehending what was read that can delay their development of reading strategies which then impacts students reading development (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, 2001; National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998).

When I was a child growing up in the 1960’s, Guided Reading was not discovered yet; however, there was some reading support offered in the summer, and I attended this class to increase my comprehension skills. I experienced difficulty with reading retention and therefore went to learn to better retain what I read as well as express it with retelling strategies. I remember spending much of my time working on Science Research Associates better known as SRA kits in which I read small passages and answered response questions on what I had read.

Being a teacher who has struggling readers, I am always looking for techniques that I can instruct my students with and improve their skills. One area that interested me greatly was phonemic awareness. Students who lack the ability to understand that sounds are paired with letters have difficulty matching the sound to letter relationship which therefore impacts their reading or writing skills. Without phonemic awareness students’ success in
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reading will be greatly affected (Atwill, Blanchard, Gorwin, Burstein, 2007; Brice & Brice, 2009).

With the opportunity to engage in action research, it allowed me to see how students are impacted by their phonemic awareness skills in reading development. Phonemic Awareness is one of the best predictors of success in reading (Atwill et al., 2007). With my work experience and study of this topic in previous coursework, I know that phonemic awareness is one of the first skills students need to grasp to be a successful reader. If this skill is not grasped, the students success rate is affected. Therefore, studying the strategies of phonemic awareness and how it impacts an Emergent Reader was an area of interest to me. This led to my research in wondering “how is phonemic awareness taught to support students in developing their reading ability?” Researching this topic allowed me to study students who lack phonemic awareness, to work with trained professionals in this area, to look at the research that has been done to acquire these strategies, and to discover how it develops students’ reading abilities.

Theoretical Framework

Children are introduced different skills at different ages with the understanding that children will progress and acquire them in sequence. Through the learning process children are active members of a constantly changing community in which knowledge constructs and is constructed by larger cultural systems (Cole 1996, Lee and Smagorinsky, 2000; Rogoff, 2003). Children gain literacy knowledge through the classroom that is grounded in sociocultural historical theory. This relationship between the teacher and student is constructed, and learning becomes a part of everyday life in formal and informal settings. This perspective of learning
gives teachers the opportunity to see how students participate in everyday practices and how it relates to the curriculum (Larson & Marsch, 2005).

Ehri (1995) states that the model of reading education comes from the work of cognitive psychologists who proposed different stages of reading acquisition. In teaching phonics, children learn that there is a phoneme (sound) to grapheme (letter) relationship. Children must learn the basic speech sounds and patterns which traditionally relates to the development of reading and writing literacy practices. These practices can be taught to children either in group or isolation. Repeated practices of these skills will give the child the knowledge and understanding of the sound letter relationship. For students who do not acquire these skills it may lead to students at risk. These students may be viewed at risk due to their socioeconomic status of living at the poverty level. However, not all students live at the poverty level who may struggle with phonemes. Students of upper class and middle class families may lack phonemic awareness which can be contributed to a variety of reasons, such as speech delay and processing difficulties.

Children learn to read and make the distinction between letters and sounds that make words. Children who are non-readers and writers see letters as symbols of what they may have seen in text when something has been read aloud, such as in a story or shared reading with the teacher. As part of the emergent reader process, a child learns that these symbols are called words and need to learn that these words need to be heard as “composed of submorphemic constituents, namely, syllables and phonemes” (Cushman, Kintgen, Kroll, Rose 2001, p.119). Children see a word first in print before they understand that is a unit of speech (Francis, 1987; Reid, 1966).
According to a review done by Goswami and Bryant (1990) it was noted that young children are not aware of phonemes, but are “sensitive to the initial and final sounds of words and phrases, what they refer to as ‘onsets’ and ‘rimes,’ which may be a factor of early word recognition” (p.119). As they develop into an Emergent Reader, it then may lead into the alphabetic signs of syllable representation (Cushman et al., 2001). Syllable representation is learning the sounds of the syllables and being able to segment them into phrases through “one’s continuous speech” (Goswami & Bryant, 1990, p.119).

Vygotsky (1962/1978) constructed the zone of proximal development which has given teachers and researchers a better understanding of early childhood learning, literacy, and language. He presents a detailed “analysis of the relationship between thought and speech, and argues that the primary function of speech is communication or social interaction” (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p.104). In learning language acquisition and developing reading and writing literacy practices, Vygotsky’s notion applies to the emergent reader as they develop and acquire their skills. Emergent literacy suggests that children learn as they are engaged in language activities such as phonemic awareness. The development of phonemic awareness shifts the student from sounds and syllables of letter identification to formulating whole words and being able to understand the relationship such as in the word c-a-t. Once the student understands the letter to sound relationship over time, students will be able to identify the sound relationship as in the example remove c from c-a-t, you have a-t. With practice, children are learning segmenting of letters and sounds which will increase reading and writing abilities. This view of literacy learning constitutes participation of the student in a communicative interaction. In addition “children’s capabilities as literate beings are recognized and legitimized in the classroom and community” (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p.106).
The classroom culturally based community consists of learners whose social practices are similar to the larger community from within their society. The teacher and student work together to put into practice what one lives and learns each day. Rogoff (1992) discusses communities and the different layered effect of participation. Specifically he states “guided participation emerges as a key for applying sociocultural historical theory to classrooms” (p. 108). This idea is useful to teachers as it guides varied strategies of literacy instruction or scaffolds needed that would advance student instruction.

With Rogoff’s idea of community in the classroom it fits into the phonemic awareness instruction when “assessment occurs through ongoing observation and working with the child” (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 109). For example when working one-to-one instructing phonemic awareness strategies having the student segment sounds of a word models the sociocultural historical theory in the classroom.

Kucer (2005) compares growing up in the 1950’s to the current era. He states that reading was something that was learned in first grade without prior reading experience. Today it is much different as children experience reading at a much earlier age within the home or preschool environment through shared reading. He questions, “what is a teacher to do with children who lack these experiences?” (p. 285). Interestingly, the response is to instruct with phonics which also correlates with students needing to know the letter sound relationship of phonemes. Today this response is very common in the classroom which has led to my interest in studying phonemic awareness. Kucer brings up a good point; instruction should be based on what the student lacks and not the need to “catch-up” to those children who bring book knowledge to the classroom (p.285). In addition to what the student may lack, Kucer believes
that literacy instruction such as guided reading should occur, yet he states that it is important to remember what the student lacks such as the experience of being read to.

Furthermore, Kucer (2005) acknowledges “socioculturally various communities or social groups emphasize the use of letter-sound relationship and ‘close’ readings to varying degrees” (p.286). He concludes that the development of the letter and sound relationship is through the child who is acting like a “scientist” building an understanding of the graphophonemic system within meaningful context (p. 286). Through reading and writing, the student experiments with the relation of letters to sounds. As emergent readers and writers they are building their skills while attempting to acquire them.

It is noted that many researchers have looked at literacy development from a socioculturally environment (Cole, 1996; Lee & Smagonsky 2000; Rogoff 2003). A child can not develop this alone but with the exposure of being read to and learning how the language system we use works. Koutsoftas, Harmon & Gray (2009) state that the development of letter to sound relationship is one of the first stages of literacy acquisition.

**Research Question**

Through this theoretical framework of literacy being a social practice, the area of literacy acquisition using phonemic awareness will be examined through the use of various instruction and strategies. The study discovered the strategies used in developing an emergent reader which led to the following question: how do the strategies of phonemic awareness in an Emergent Reader develop their reading ability?


**Literature Review**

Based on the findings of previous research (Manyak, 2008) prior to conducting my own study, it was found that phonological processing or phonemic awareness is one of the very first skills a beginning reader must acquire. Studies (Atwill et al., 2007; Manyak, 2008) use both terms to describe the use of segmentation, blending and deletion of phonemes. For the purpose of this study, it will be referred to phonemic awareness with reference to phonological processing in some studies. In supporting literacy acquisition, phonemic awareness could be categorized into the following four sections English Language Learners, students with intellectual disabilities or impairments, students receiving intervention, and educator’s instruction.

*English Language Learners*

When a child begins to read, the basic skill needed is phonemic awareness to be a successful reader. Research by Atwill et al. (2007) noted that phonemic awareness is key to language proficiency. At birth, infants make sounds of their native language. Shortly after they will begin to produce words with these sounds. As the native language takes precedence, a gap begins to form between the native and English language. Through this gap, if a child does not have phonemic awareness, there would be little language. Brice and Brice (2009) agree that English Language Learners who do not have phonemic awareness skills will have difficulties learning the English language as well as developing reading skills.

Atwill et al. (2007) reviewed phonemic awareness of the cross-language transfer whom used their native and English language along with their receptive vocabulary ability in their native language. The kindergarten students tested were administered Phonemic Awareness in
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English which was measured with the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS, 6th ed, Benchmark 2; Good and Kaminski, 2002) and in Spanish with the Indicadores Dinamicos del Exito en la Lectura (Dynamic Indicators of Skill in Literacy; IDEL, 6th ed, Benchmark 2; Good, Bank, & Watson, 2003). The receptive vocabulary that was administered completed the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Third Edition (PPVT-III; Dunn & Dunn 1997) and the Test de Vocabulario en Imagenes Peabody, Adaptation Hispanoamericana (TVIP; Dunn, Padilla, Lugo, & Dunn, 1986). The findings showed that cross-language transfer of phonemic awareness was influenced by receptive vocabulary ability, as were the relationships between receptive vocabulary and phonemic awareness measurement tasks. Through these findings one must not assume that English Language Learners have similar linguistic backgrounds and should not be able to fit the “one size approach” (Atwill et al., 2007, p. 100) for all.

Similarly, Brice and Brice (2009) examine the ability to read on grade level of English Language Learners or those who may have a learning disability. The participants consisted of four different kindergarten groups with or without disabilities, 20 high reading English monolinguals, 20 low reading English monolinguals, 20 high reading English-Spanish bilinguals and 20 low reading English-Spanish bilinguals. Similar to Atwill et al. (2007) assessments were used to study these participants that included DIBELS to group the students according to their reading level. Through a varied time period different parts of the assessment were given such as Initial Sound Fluency (ISF), Letter Naming Fluency (LNF), Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) and Nonsense Word Fluency (NSF). The results showed significant differences between the high versus low groups as well as monolingual versus bilingual groups in the phoneme and grapheme identification based on their phonemic awareness skills and phonic skills within reading groups. Results varied; however, the most significant difference for monolingual versus
bilingual speakers was the ability to identify voice versus voiceless contrasts. In addition these findings exhibited an achievement gap exists in reading levels between monolingual and bilingual students even at the kindergarten level (Brice & Brice, 2009). The study implied that students who speak English as their second language have a more difficult time acquiring the skills in contrast to English learners as their primary language. Brice and Brice (2009) state that their must be a link to provide speech-language pathologists and educators with the right instruction to develop the emergent reader efficiently.

Low levels of language show difficulties among children and their reading ability. There is a gap of intervention between students of various degrees of language skills and reading abilities. Reading acquisition for children with low levels of language in English as a first language and as a second language has risen over the past years resulting in more intervention. Resembling Brice and Brice (2009) and Atwill et al. (2007), O’Connor, Bocian, Beebe-Frankenberger and Linklater (2010) wanted to know if there was an outcome of differences between interventions that began in September as opposed to interventions that began in February. The participants of O’Connor et al.’s (2010) study were kindergartners selected from both urban and rural schools in southern California and rural Montana. The group was a diverse population of mixed ethnicities as well as varied languages with English being the primary for some, and secondary for others.

The screening measures used were LNF, and ISF which are subtests of the DIBELS and PPVT-III that correlate with the studies from Atwill et al. (2007) and Brice & Brice (2009). The tests were administered at different points throughout the school year and implemented a variety of intervention based on results of the screening. Phonemic awareness was one of the three areas of focus for intervention along with alphabet knowledge and oral language that began in the
beginning of the school year and was carried out through the end. With increased interventions based on the needs of the participants there was an increase of difficulties based on the progress made of the participants (O’Connor et al., 2010). Part of this study had some inadequate results due to the administrator of the tests. It was noted that the instructor of one of the tests was incorrectly modeling the phonemes and therefore had to be dismissed (O’Connor et al., 2010).

Overall the results exhibited that intervention activities such as phonemic awareness showed some gains with students of language difficulties and the earlier intervention begins the more successful the student may be. Unlike Brice and Brice (2009), O’Connor et al. (2010) did not find a big significance between first language and second language learners. However, O’Connor et al. (2010) did show that all learners will benefit from early intervention in helping with literacy acquisition.

Intellectual disabilities

O’Connor et al.’s (2010) findings include that intellectual abilities of learners is impacted by intervention. Allor, Mathes, Hones Chaplin, and Cheatham, (2010) have viewed that students with intellectual disabilities (ID) or impairments such as mental retardation are represented by a population who experience difficulty in reading ability. Research has shown that students of this nature are capable of learning (Allor et al., 2010). In this study, there were three students who were the participants that responded well to the tasks given. Due to their individual needs, each student had to have their instruction tailored accordingly. Each participant made slow growth over a long period of time; however progress was made after receiving daily instruction in phonemic awareness and other reading skills. Likewise, Syverud, Guardino, and Selznick (2009) believe the acquisition of phonemic awareness is critical and can
be taught at its own pace to students with impairments. In the case of a deaf student or hearing loss, the instruction would be different than to those of ID in that more pictorial cues and hand gestures would be used. Programs such as Reading Mastery I and Corrective Reading Decoding are both phonological skill based that have been used in the study which have shown improvement in student skills. Research results show that phonologically based interventions such as Direct Instruction are viable options to help with reading ability (Syverud et al., 2009).

Allor, Fuchs, and Mathes (2001) state that a reading disability is the most common disability in students and correlate with certain deficiencies. However, not all deficiencies are limited to the lack of phonological processing. This study looks at lexical retrieval weakness also known as long-term memory deficiency and phonemic awareness to see how the two may be inter-related and what type of instruction can be administered. The methods used in the study were varied phonological tests that were given by teachers to the lowest first grade students identified by a fluency test.

Results implied that lexical retrieval appears to impact the development of an emergent reader independently due to the impact of phonemic awareness. In addition, it may affect other reading subskills such as vocabulary development. Agreeing with this thought is Manis, Doi, and Bhadha (2000) whom discuss the study of reading disabilities that explored the measures of naming speed along with phonemic awareness. The naming speed test “Rapid Automatized Naming” (RAN) asks the participants to name various pictures, letters, in an order as rapidly as possible.

Manis et al., (2000) discusses the double deficit hypothesis proposed by Bowers and Wolf (1993), “according to their double-deficit hypothesis of reading disability, reading
difficulties can result from slow symbol naming speed, independently of phonological skill” (p.1). If children possess both, their difficulties will be more severe than one or the other. This has been supported by some studies using RAN as evidence for its findings (Spector and Moore, 2004).

*Interventions*

Looking at these difficulties what can be done to help students? Studies have shown that early intervention of young children may prove to show success in gaining phonemic awareness skills regardless of their economic status (Lipson & Wixon, 2010). In 2004, the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) recognized a new model of assessment for children called Response to Intervention (RTI). The main focus of this model is to look at children who may be struggling in their everyday learning. This model carefully looks at the child, identifies his/her need and establishes a model of individualized intervention using a three tiered model of instruction. Each model suggests that 80% of students are progressing in response to their instruction. Those who may not make sufficient progress in Tier 1 will move into Tier 2 receiving more intense instruction. Tier 2 instruction may include special services in a small group environment. If there is not sufficient progress in Tier 2, then an even more intense instruction is administered in the Tier 3 model which could include students who have been classified or evaluated as learning disabled (Lipson & Wixon, 2010). Koutsoftas, Harmon., & Gray (2009) studied the effect of Tier 2 intervention of preschool children in a Response To Intervention Model. These participants were members of low income families and the purpose of this study was to increase their phonemic awareness skills by being enrolled in Early Reading First classrooms.
Phonemic awareness has been predicted as one of the best indicators of reading. Vygotsky (1962/1978) looks at language and the impact it has on children and their ability to make words and produce sounds that match those words. Children have different levels of difficulty with phonemic awareness. Using the sociocultural theory studies have shown that a child’s environment and daily interactions impacts how one develops intellectually (Larson & Marsh, 2005). Many children of low income families have been studied to see how they are impacted in their reading ability (Koutsoftas et al., 2009).

Koutsoftas et al. (2009) used four different assessments that measured the Tier 2 intervention effectiveness using a specific timeline for each assessment. Findings showed that 71% of the children receiving intervention increased their phonemic awareness skills. Children were able to sustain what was learned. For those who did not have success in gaining their phonemic awareness skills along with other learning difficulties, may be candidates for Tier 3 instruction (Koutsoftas et al., 2009). According to the National Reading Panel (NRP) intervention of phonemic awareness improves on word reading, nonsense words, along with comprehension skills. Fast For Word Language (FFW-L) is an intervention that was developed to improve attention, sequencing, discrimination, and memory of auditory signal (Loeb, Gillam, Hoffman, Brandel, and Marquis, 2009).

Research conducted by Loeb et al., (2009) examined children who had language impairments and poor reading skills. The purpose of this study was to see how the FFW-L impacts phonemic awareness and reading skills of the participants in both short and long term spans of time. The intervention consisted of three summers with multiple interventions in place. Several tests were used for phonemic awareness and reading measures that consisted of but not
limited to blending, sound segmentation, sound deletion as well as word attack, word identification and passage comprehension.

Using a generalized linear model, repeated measure analysis to evaluate the changes in phonemic awareness and reading across intervention during the study allowed researchers to collect data and statistics to see the effectiveness of treatment (Loeb et al., 2009). The findings of this study did not show much improvement in phonemic awareness or reading ability using the FFW-L model. There were small gains in portions of phonemic awareness such as phonemic blending, but not phoneme deletion. Deletion of phonemes may not have made gains due to the difficulty in the phoneme task. The reading measures did not show any gain for children in improving their reading skills which led to their discussion which suggested that students with language impairments and poor reading skills should have a more comprehensive plan that goes beyond phonemic awareness abilities.

Therefore, early literacy instruction studies (Atwill et al., 2007; Brice & Brice, 2007) have shown that children with language, learning disabilities, or impairments benefit from early intervention in reading skills such as phonemic awareness. McGee and Ukrainetz, (2009) conducted a study in a preschool classroom in which the teacher instructed phonemic awareness. The participants in this study were the teacher and a preschool class which was made up of different socioeconomic backgrounds. During the study, McGee & Ukrainetz, (2009) noticed the teacher used a scaffolding technique as an intervention method with some of her students. Scaffolding is a differentiation strategy that allows the child to complete a task they could not accomplish on their own. For this to be successful, the teacher needs to know the student’s needs and what practice will work best for each child to respond correctly to the task and become independent. The teacher prompts the child with more direction and guidance to answer the
question. Once the scaffolding is in place, it starts out as an intense process, with time and practice it requires less support with more moderate scaffolding. Children will be given different tasks of using sounds such as pointing to the mouth to see the how the sound is manipulated. The main goal is to be able to have the child obtain independence through the scaffolding process.

In this scaffolding study, the results were positive over a period of time. Teachers were able to work one-to-one with students to assess their phonemic awareness abilities and used scaffolding techniques beginning with maximum level of support decreasing to low level of support. Results of the study exhibited that phonemic awareness intervention using the scaffolding technique was successful with over 75% of children entering into kindergarten with 90% of these participants being a low income family. These children were considered at risk due to their socioeconomic background however with the scaffold intervention they were able to acquire the varied complex levels of phonemic awareness (McGee & Ulkraimentz, 2009).

Concurring what McGee & Ulkraimentz, (2009), Atwill et al.(2007), and Brice and Brice (2007) implied in their studies, Menzies, Mahdavi, and Lewis (2008) state that early intervention and treatment are important to children with reading difficulties. If children do not acquire phonemic awareness skills by first grade they will be struggling readers when they reach the upper grades. Therefore, it is necessary to begin intervention whether it is in isolation or in small group. The belief is that early intervention is a must in order for children to become proficient readers. Statistics show that 32% of children in the fourth grade were proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading measures of 2003 (Menzies et al., 2008).
Menzies et al. (2008) studied 42 first-grade students in a small elementary school that was at risk for failure in an urban area. The participants were of a multicultural mix with a Spanish bilingual model of education and grouped according to needs. Different than McGee & Ulkrainetz, (2009); Atwill et al., (2007) and Brice and Brice (2007), Menzies et al. (2008) selected a variety of assessments but the main assessment to the child was the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). Similar to the other research assessments all literacy skills were targeted including phonemic awareness. In addition teachers used collaboration and differentiation as intervention instruction to support their participants. The results stated that those participants who made gains need to be monitored to see that they maintain what was learned. Those who did not may be candidates for the RTI model (Lipson & Wixon, 2010).

**Instruction**

Additionally, Menzies et al., (2008) state that success in teachers’ instruction is the knowledge of phonemic awareness and when it needs to be put into practice. Different type of learners may need differentiated intervention in making progress in their reading abilities; therefore, Loeb et al., (2009) states “studies that evaluate training and generalization of phonemic awareness in children with dual diagnoses of language impairment and reading disorders are needed to more fully understand how phonological representations can be improved in these children” (p.384). Looking at teacher instruction will help to understand how students’ intervention plans are developed.

Viewing how instruction for pre-service and in-service teachers began, Joshi, Binks, Graham, Ocker-Dean, Smith and Boulware-Goeden (2009) examined the idea of how textbooks were used in college courses and the extent at which these books look at the five components of
literacy instruction such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension recommended by the National Reading Panel. Evidence supported the lack of information presented in the text did not cover adequately the components of literacy instruction and the necessary procedures of how to teach the components.

Joshi et al. (2009) studied five major textbook publishers which have supplied books for universities which instructed elementary level reading classes. Seventeen books in all were examined and the researchers looked at the following three criteria: all components by the NRP of literacy instruction were included, the definition was required to meet the NRP’s definition, and the extent to which the components were covered in the text dividing the number of pages covering each component by the total number of pages in the book.

The findings showed that 13 of the 17 books included all five components and 10 accurately defined the five components by the NRP. In addition, the findings in the textbooks gave less attention to the necessary components of reading instruction that included phonemic awareness, fluency and phonics. Joshi et al. (2009) noted that the information on phonology concepts and the instruction of them were inaccurately stated in the text and not clear to the reader. Due to the lack of textbook information on phonology concepts, it is necessary to look at instruction of literacy skills and the accuracy of its instruction by teachers and educators. How is one supposed to deliver the instruction if the materials used are not accurate? Without the proper training and accurate professional development the children’s effective literacy instruction is at risk.

The importance of proper literacy instruction is critical to students’ success therefore, Spencer, Schuele, Guilot, and Lee (2010) chose to “evaluate and compare the phonemic
awareness skill of several groups of educators, including speech-language pathologists, kindergarten teachers, first-grade teachers, reading teachers and special education teachers” (p.76). In an effort to examine proper instruction, Spencer et al. (2010) conducted a study whose participants completed a pencil paper measure of phonemic awareness that used three tasks. This assessment of explicit phonemic awareness within context of print represented a high level of skills critical to teaching (Spencer et al., 2010).

Spencer et al. (2010) studied 541 participants that gathered data over a five year period. The tasks looked at were phoneme segmentation, phoneme identification and phoneme isolation. Due to the large group of educators, the measure was an opportunity for educators to look at their own skills and gain insight on their own teaching instruction. Educators were allowed to take a good look at how they as teachers work with phonemes and make sure the process is accurate enabling them to transfer their knowledge into positive instruction for students.

Spencer et al.’s (2010) study of educators resulted in quantitative varied performance patterns with different types of educators and speech teachers. The explicit phonemic awareness skill of five groups was explored and determined to group according to their teaching specialty. The outcomes showed that there are varied levels of phonemic awareness skills among the educators. Speech teachers had better phonemic skills than general educators which may be in part to their professional training; however, general and special educators did not show a varied difference. Their outcomes were quite similar which was not what the researches had expected (Spencer et al., 2010). What kind of instruction do educators need to enhance their own ability of phonemic awareness? If teachers’ skills are lacking, how can they teach it to a child?
Looking back to the study of O’Connor et al. (2010) one of the administrators was incorrectly instructing phoneme awareness and therefore was dismissed from the study. Proper instruction is crucial to get accurate results. Spencer et al. (2010) states that there were some limitations and there was a need for pre-service and in-service teachers to have an increased training of phonemic awareness. Although different states may have different policies, these results may attribute to different knowledge and skills of the educator. Further research needs to be done in investigating educators’ knowledge and skills to obtain a better measure for adequacy, (Spencer et al., 2010).

In addition to educator’s instruction, another area of interest to look at with literacy instruction is how the home environment effects and contributes to the success of the reader. The home environment factors are often related to the socioeconomic status such as income, occupation, and education of the parents. Kirby and Hogan (2008) and Levin and Erhi (2009) state that children of low income families often perform at the lower reading level and may show some reading difficulties such as phonemic awareness skills which is critical to the emergent reader’s success in reading and is a good predictor of how one will perform. Rhyming and alliteration in oral language skills would be beneficial to the emergent reader to use in their home environment and would be helpful to the development of the phonological skills.

Kirby and Hogan (2008) researched a group of children and parents in Ontario, Canada who differed in reading levels and social classes. The purpose of the study was to see how the phonological processing and early reading skills differed from their home environment. The method used for the study was questionnaires and interviews related to the home environment, type of reading at home, parent education, amount of television watched and what type of programs, and number of adult and children’s books in the home.
The findings revealed that children who received literacy instruction in the home had higher levels of reading ability. It is important to note that parents themselves need to have a good base of literacy skills in order for this to work. Increasing the frequency use of activities that can develop phonological skills contributes to the positive results. These activities may be as simple as playing listening memory games or spoken word games. If the family and educator work together on literacy instruction, reading abilities can develop in the home environment, and as families practice these activities, literacy skills overall can be improved.

As one has examined different studies of phonemic awareness, one has seen various needs of intervention and instruction. One area of instruction that has been studied by Spector and Moore (2004) is Reading Recovery. In their study, they looked at phonemic awareness, verbal short-term memory and rapid automatized naming and students’ responsiveness to receiving Reading Recovery Instruction. Students who were pretested were mostly weak in the area of phonemic awareness and half of the group was below average in rapid automatized naming. Those with low scores of short-term memory and phonemic awareness who were in Reading Recovery were less likely to be at grade level by the end of the 20 week program than those with higher scores. The pretest did not show more or less responsiveness to the intervention for rapid automatized naming (Spector & Moore, 2004).

The study’s main focus was to investigate characteristics that distinguish between Reading Recovery students who achieve the 20 week goal of instruction versus those students who do not make the accelerated progress expected during that time frame. Participants of this study were teachers from various schools along with students from Reading Recovery in first-grade. These students were the most at risk in lacking reading abilities who received varied time of instruction within a time period of 19 to 22 weeks.
The assessment used was an observation survey which was developed by Clay in 1993. This survey measured students’ abilities in phonemic awareness, verbal short-term memory and naming speed. In testing phonemic awareness, which includes rhyming, alliteration, segmentation and deletion, Spector and Moore (2004) chose the Yopp-Singer test which asks students to pronounce, in order, each of the sounds in a spoken word whereas sounds not letter names, were the appropriate response (2004).

The findings state that 51% of students did not meet the goal of Reading Recovery success. The other 49% of students who did meet the goal and achieved the progress were graduated from the program. However, those that did not meet the goal were referred for small group instruction or special education services (Spector & Moore, 2004). In addition, the low scores were prevalent with past studies of phonemic awareness being the most critical literacy skill to acquire for emergent readers. As consistent with other findings of previous research, (Lane, Pullen, Hudson, Konold, 2009) has linked phonological processing to reading development. Students in Reading Recovery who have difficulty with phonemic awareness may be likely to receive additional services beyond the 20 week program. The benefit of Reading Recovery is individualized instruction which fits the need of the student and not an all for one approach.

Lane et al. (2009) examined one-to-one literacy tutoring to help the struggling reader similar to Reading Recovery studied by Spector and Moore (2004). One-to-one tutoring instruction works on various needs of the student. Lane et al. (2009) looked at various components of one-to-one tutoring that included phonemic awareness, word work, phonological studies, written word work and a generalization component, using an early intervention program.
to support its findings. Early intervention programs have been successful in making sure students are placed according to needs of instruction (Lipson & Wixon, 2010).

The early intervention program used for the study of Lane et al. (2009) is the University of Florida Literacy Initiative (UFLI) pronounced you-fly. The phonological component of this study used “Elkonin boxes, sound phonemes, and phoneme blending and segmenting activities using manipulative letters” (Spector & Moore, 2004, p. 228). As evidence presents itself in recent studies (Atwill et al., 2007; Brice & Brice, 2009), reading disabilities correlate with the sounds of language.

Participants of this phonological component consisted of 12 first-grade elementary schools in the southeastern United States. Each student received individual tutoring for 40 sessions which occurred three to four days per week. The length of the sessions varied due to the components of the conditions specified for the individual. The tutors consisted of 32 master level graduate students in elementary, special education, communication disorders, and psychology professionals who were hired as the tutors using the UFLI model. Each tutor was trained prior to the study to ensure each one knew the expectations and conditions of the tutoring. Most tutors worked with one to five students per week and varied conditions to reduce teacher effects of the study. Different variables had different results according to the conditions of the study and the student participants as well as tutors. Overall the findings confirmed UFLI is effective with increasing the skills of struggling readers. One area of increased skills is in phonemic awareness. Consequently, there were gains made in the students instructional reading levels (Lane et al., 2009).
The purpose of this study (Lane et al., 2009) was to examine how this educator’s tool through instructional strategies is applied and how the graduate students acquire the understanding of the process of reading through one to one reading. Although the tutors were practicing students who may not have had as much experience as a practicing teacher, intervention for struggling students was successful which students made progress in literacy skills.

As one can see, acquisition of phonemic awareness skills is one of the most critical components of reading and is the strongest predictor of reading ability. If a student does not grasp the smallest units of sounds that make up the speech pattern, then there will be difficulties in reading abilities. Through most studies (Atwill et al., 2007; Brice & Brice, 2009; Koustofas et al., 2009; O’Connor et al., 2010), it was prevalent that phonemic awareness is crucial in emergent readers in kindergarten and first grade who may have a language disability, may be an English language learner, learning disability or live in a low level income area where literacy skills may not be taught in the home. It is important as an educator to evaluate the whole situation prior to instruction and or intervention, making sure the instruction for the student fits the individual’s needs. Most importantly the educator needs to be knowledgeable in administering the instruction to the student in order to achieve the goals set.

Methods

Context

Research for this study occurred at East Primary school (pseudonym) in the classroom of the researcher who is an active participant of the study. This school is a part of the Westfield County School District (pseudonym) located in a rural area in Upstate, New York. East Primary
is a primary building with students’ kindergarten through second grade which currently accommodates 350 students. The socioeconomic status of this school is mostly middle to lower class students with students of both single and dual families. The students in this classroom are all of Caucasian descent ranging from lower to middle class. The classroom itself is located in the A wing of East Primary and faces North to South direction.

Participants

The student participants in this study are six students, four girls and two boys all of whom are in the first grade and attend East Primary near their homes. All students are currently receiving reading services in Reading Recovery (one to one) or Reading Boosters (small group) and two students receive speech services. All names in this study are pseudonyms.

Mark is six years old and a Caucasian male. He is a low functioning, energetic boy who enjoys hands on activities, playing on the computer and watching television. Mark lives with his parents, older brother, twin brother and younger sister in a single family home located in a middle class socioeconomic area. He does not have a positive attitude toward school, and has a difficult time focusing on his learning for any given time period. Mark is receiving reading services in Reading Recovery for five days, for 30 minutes sessions. Currently, he is in the process of being tested through the district for possible intervention services for the next school year.

Next, there is Cory who is seven years old and a Caucasian male. He is an energetic boy who enjoys playing outside, sports and playing with his friends. He lives with his parents and older and younger brother in a single family home in a middle class socioeconomic neighborhood. Cory has a positive attitude toward school, and has a hard time staying focused
on his school work. He receives reading services in Reading Boosters for five days each week for 30 minute sessions. His mother is currently having him privately tested through his pediatrician’s office for possible attention deficit problems.

Destiny is six years and a Caucasian female. She is a low functioning student who enjoys playing outside, being with her family and friends. She has a positive attitude toward school and lacks home support. Destiny is currently receiving reading services for Reading Recovery for five days each week for 30 minute sessions and receives Speech services for two days each week for 30 minute sessions. She lives with her mom and sister in a in a lower socioeconomic area.

Janie is six years old and a Caucasian female. She is a student who enjoys dance, reading and her family. Janie receives reading services in Essential Literacy which is a one to one program through Reading Recovery that meets daily for 30 minutes. She lives with her parents and older brother in a single family home in a middle class socioeconomic neighborhood.

Rileigh is seven years old and a Caucasian female. She is a student who enjoys dance, playing with friends and her family. Rileigh receives reading services in Reading Boosters daily for 30 minutes. She lives with her parents and two older brothers in a middle class socioeconomic area.

Lastly, there is Madison who is seven years old and a Caucasian female. She is a student who enjoys dance, pioneer girls, and being with her family. Madison receives reading services in Reading Boosters five days each week for 30 minute sessions and receives Speech services for two days each week for 30 minute sessions. She lives with her parents, two younger sisters and younger brother in a middle class socioeconomic area.
In addition to the student participants, I interviewed the Literacy Coach for the school Ms. Kathy LaRocco who coaches half the day with staff and is a reading specialist working with students for the other half of the day. Ms. LaRocco has been employed with the district for 20 years. In addition I interviewed the Speech Therapist Sara Nelson who has been employed with the district for 25 years and services some of the students (both names are pseudonyms).

**Researcher Stance**

As an action researcher, I used a qualitative study with my participants daily through ELA instruction. This allowed me the opportunity for a “reflective stance” (Mills, 2011, p.9) to critically look at my teaching instruction, and the strategies I used and improve or enhance instruction as I saw necessary. I teach first grade and I am currently a graduate student at St. John Fisher College. I am working on obtaining my Master’s Degree in Literacy and have a current bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education and Sociology. My Elementary certification is Grade one through six.

**Methods**

During this study, I assessed students in phonemic awareness. Through this assessment it allowed me to look at the needs of the students and decide which students needed intervention. As I reviewed these assessments and observed student work, I was able to work with students in small group and one-to-one to instruct the necessary phonemic awareness strategies that would give the students direct instruction based on their needs. Through the one-to-one conferencing students were given additional strategies to use in helping them with the sounds of unknown words. This one-to-one conferencing allowed me to see how these strategies impacted their reading ability. The strategies that were addressed are segmenting of sounds, sound deletion,
blend deletion and language games. The language games consisted of listening to sounds, rhyming, syllables segmentation, and the separation of phonemes in words.

I administered the Phonemic Awareness Test (PAST) that is recognized by the school district as a measurable variable to student ability. Using the results of this assessment, I began instruction that was necessary for students. Based upon the findings I determined the neediest students who needed phonemic awareness instruction and implemented intervention. This intervention consisted of direct instruction for 15 minutes, and then students worked independently for an additional 10-15 minutes using phonemic awareness manipulatives such as moving the chip to match sound to letters, etc. In addition, students worked independently using the computer accessing www.starfall.com which is a web site that assists students with sounds, blends and word recognition.

To close this study, I assessed the participants through observation, notes from their work sessions, and sections of the PAST test that showed their weaknesses. I compared their abilities from the beginning to the end of the study to see if there was progress and if the instruction of strategies impacted their reading ability.

**Quality and Credibility of Research**

In doing this research, it was important to ensure the quality and credibility of this study. Credibility defined by Mills (2007) is the ability of the researcher to take into account the complexities that may occur in the duration of the study and to deal with patterns that may not be easily explained. The strategies that I used during this study to help assure credibility was to work with my critical colleague who helped with debriefing of the study reflecting on what may or may not have worked and what could be beneficial to the research (Mills, 2007). Working
with my critical colleague gave insight to my research and helped me to analyze the strategies used throughout the process of the study. In addition, I used the practice of triangulation which allowed me to use multiple sources of data using different methods with my participants in order to look at the data (Mills, 2007). I collected data using varied approaches which included observing my participants as well as myself being an active participant in the study. I also interviewed the literacy coach and speech therapist. Lastly, I have artifacts and student work to show the progress of the participants and how the strategies used helped them.

During this research, I also planned to ensure transferability which refers to the researcher’s belief that everything in the research is context bound using detailed data and descriptors of the context (Mills, 2007). Dependability is another validity of my research that ensured the stability of my data collected using the triangulation process of multiple methods that overlapped with each other. I kept accurate records of the instruction and intervention implemented in the study. Working with my critical colleague helped to keep track of documentation and feedback from her that was a benefit to my research.

To conclude with the validity of qualitative research I planned to ensure confirmability during my study which Mills (2007) defines as the neutrality or objectivity of the data gathered. The triangulation process helped to ensure confirmability as the methods I planned were compared with others which allowed me to cross check the information collected. I also used practiced reflexivity as this allowed me to look back at my research questions, reflect on my questions through my findings of the study and ask new questions that furthered my research. I also kept a research journal to record notes and thoughts along with daily reflections.
Informed Consent and Protecting the Right of the Participants

Before beginning my research process, I needed to collect informed consent and protect the rights of the participants. This was a qualitative study in which I worked in small groups and one-to-one with individual participants. All my student participants were minors under the age of 8 years old; therefore I gave the parents a consent form to fill out on behalf of them. With this consent form I explained in detail the purpose of the study which allowed me work with the students and asked for their permission and signature. All parents knew that their child’s name would be anonymous and identification marks of the work performed would be removed from all the artifacts used during the study. In addition the literacy coach and speech therapist were given a consent form to sign. All participants’ names were replaced with pseudonyms and confidentially guaranteed.

Data Collection

During this study, I collected multiple forms of data to analyze the findings in this research. I was an active participant and used active observation along with assessments, student work and student participation to see how the students responded to the instruction and intervention strategies of phonemic awareness. I kept anecdotal notes on each session and each participant that I was able to refer to throughout the study for assessing and analyzing the data. I had informal conversations with the students to see how they felt each strategy has helped them with their reading ability. In addition to anecdotal notes, I kept all student work, and assessments, that would help me in reviewing how the strategies instructed by me would help their reading ability. To conclude, I conducted two interviews along with two questionnaires that were filled out by the literacy coach and speech teacher.
Data Analysis

As I collected my data, multiple steps were taken to analyze the data throughout my research. First, as an active researcher, I administered a Phonemic Awareness assessment (Appendix A) along with a Phonemic Awareness Inventory (Appendix B) to see how each student participant responded to sound identification, blending and segmentation of sounds and analyzed the results to see the specific needs for student instruction. Upon analyzing each participant’s assessments, it was apparent to me that each one needed instruction in sound recognition, blending and segmentation. In agreement with Atwill et al, (2007) and Manyak, (2008), blending and segmentation is an important aspect of phonemic awareness and must be one of the first steps to begin in literacy acquisition. Second, I took anecdotal notes during my observations to record what I noticed in small group and one-to-one conferencing with the participants. Through these notes, I was able to confer with each participant to use direct instruction with their phonemic awareness needs such as using intervention as an instructional tool. Concurring with O’Connor et al. (2010), intervention based on the needs of the individual increased instructional difficulty and progress was made in each of the participants. Similarly the small gains showed that the earlier intervention begins, the more successful the student will become.

Next, I reflected on each day’s observation and instruction to see how I, as an active researcher could implement strategies that would help the participants develop their reading ability. Through each reflection, I noted the needs of each participant which guided me for the next day’s lesson. I was able to see similarities and differences between the participants and group them based on their needs. Using the Fountas and Pinnell (1996) model of Guided Reading, I instructed the students according to similarities allowing them to use the strategies in
their reading ability. Lastly, I interviewed the speech pathologist and literacy coach orally and through a participant questionnaire (Appendix C). Both professionals had very similar ideas which allowed me to see phonemic awareness is one of the first skills needed in an emergent reader. Likewise, Atwill et al. (2007) noted grasping the sound to letter relationship is the key to language proficiency. I observed the speech pathologist (Ms. Nelson) working with some of my students in my classroom. Ms. Nelson taught the participants to manipulate the sounds and blends using their tongue. This gave me insight as how to differentiate and instruct participants reinforcing this technique. Through the interview and questionnaire, I was able to look at the student work and compare and contrast my notes along with the speech pathologist and literacy coach giving me the opportunity to better instruct my participants with the proper strategies.

In addition, I kept index cards on each participant which allowed me to differentiate with certain terms such as application or repetition and give specific evidence to support each term in determining a pattern or theme to the findings. Initially, I had 13 categories as I coded the above data for each participant. The data was in categories such as practice, repetition, connections, applying, processing, response, reinforcement, segmentation, blending, deletion, orally, sounds and time. It was then organized according to subcategories such as identifying sounds in words, blending, segmenting, repeating sounds, I was then able to reduce it to the following three themes: sound identification, repetition, and application of strategies in reading. Once I was able to label these three themes from the data collected, I was able to support the evidence with the data collected.

**Findings and Discussions**

After carefully looking over the data gathered throughout my research, three themes emerged involving specific behaviors of phonemic awareness. These themes were demonstrated
by the students in their reading ability along with the interviews of the speech pathologist and literacy coach. Each method of gathering data in my research provided me with a different perspective in regards to how students learn and apply phonemic awareness strategies in addition to the importance of direct instruction. With these findings I was able to code these categories into themes. These themes included the following: sound identification, repetition, and application of strategies in reading.

**Sound identification**

The first important theme I noticed consistently throughout my research was sound identification. With sound identification it is important to understand phoneme detection. Lane and Pullen (2004) state “given a target sound, the child can determine if that sound is in the word” (p. 7). In addition, Lane and Pullen (2004) note that the “capacity to attend to and manipulate sounds is necessary to use those sounds in concert with letters” (p.6). Through observations, students’ assessment, student work, interviews, and professional responses, strategies were determined that affect phonemic awareness in emergent readers. To develop reading ability, sound identification became a primary focus in this research.

At the beginning of each lesson, we began with a warm up exercise using word work. I had students practice familiar one to three letter words identifying sounds and then each student progressed onto harder words that would require blending, segmenting and sound deletion as they were ready. After each lesson, the students would work independently or in small groups continuing with sounds while I worked one-to-one with students.

The degree to which Mark, Cory, Destiny, Janie, Rileigh and Madison demonstrated sound identification varied with Mark and Cory showing the largest need with sound identification. Mark and Cory needed reinforcement of the sound identification activity. For
example, Mark would ask me to repeat the sound we were working on (ex. letter \( b \) the sound would need to be identified more than once). In one-to-one conferencing, Mark said “could you please say that sound again” (personal communication, June 17, 2010). Cory on the other hand was able to identify the sound, but had to process it silently in his head before responding orally. Mark required more time to think about the sound in his head before he was able to orally identify it. Destiny, Janie, Rileigh and Madison showed proper response to single letter sound identification but had some difficulty with blending sound identification. For example, in the word \( \text{black} \), there would be some difficulty identifying the \( \text{bl} \) sound, sometimes it would not be heard by the participants) Destiny, Rileigh, and Janie said “b-a-c-k” and did not hear the \( l \) of the \( \text{bl} \) blend. Madison after two attempts was able to identify the \( \text{bl} \) sound when the others had more difficulty (after the second day of collecting my data, Madison had to withdraw from the study due to illness). These activities supported my theory and the literature of Menzies et al. (2008) that intervention in small groups or isolation is beneficial in working with students becoming more proficient and allows for closer monitoring of student progress.

In my interview with Ms. LaRocco and Ms. Nelson both stated that sound identification is one of the first strategies a student must possess to be able to read and write. Ms. LaRocco stated that a student “must hear sounds before they can read or write” (personal interview, June 21, 2010). Therefore, Ms. LaRocco noted a lot of instruction is needed on sound identification in order for a student to make gains in reading development. Similarly this is supported by the literature of Lane and Pullen (2004) who stress the importance of letter to sound relationship in student reading ability. In addition, Ms. LaRocco works with both Destiny and Mark and confirmed that she too has seen the same blending behaviors that I noticed with both students. When she works one-to-one with Mark he would need more time to think silently before he
could answer it orally. It is apparent that both Destiny and Mark need more direct instruction with their blending of sounds. Evidence from my observation and discussion with Ms. LaRocco shows that Mark needs more time to think and process before he can orally respond. As a result he may be a candidate for RIT instruction as noted by Lipson and Wixson, (2010) and the literature of Koutsoftas et. al. (2009). As a candidate for RTI instruction it would give Mark more individualized instruction in addition to what he all ready receives.

**Repetition**

The second theme that emerged from my data findings is repetition. Repetition as defined by Clay (2002) is when…“the child goes back over a group of words, or returns to the beginning of the line or sentence in his repetition…” (p.60). Repetition involves repeating the process more than once to practice the strategy and become familiar with its use. Each of the students showed different levels of repetition as each student is different in their ability to grasp the idea of how repetition impacts their performance. However, repetition is valued as a positive reading enforcer that develops reading ability. Each of the students did well with using repetition of phonemes to enhance their reading development. Repetition is a good strategy used in rhyming and alliteration which all the students used in small group work.

In my observation, I noticed that students were making a connection using the repetition strategy. For example, Rileigh was reading a line in the Cluster book and she noticed the blends were identical to the ones she used when doing independent work with Janie playing a phonemic awareness game. It is evident that Rileigh is able to carry over the connection from what she read in the text to the game she was playing, which furthers her reading ability.

Ms. Nelson stated in her interview when working with her students “she gives them a blend sound such as play, has them repeat it, giving the student several opportunities to do this
(personal interview, June 20, 2010). In addition, I have observed her instruction with students, as she has pushed into my class and I have seen her instruct Destiny using this strategy. Destiny would repeat the word given multiple times, and then she would be given similar words to connect. For example, with the word *play* after saying it multiple times the next word would be *clay*. The same process would be used and then another word is given until the activity is completed. Given her accurate responses, repetition increased Destiny’s performance of blending sounds. It is clear that repetition supports student ability to learn blending and segmenting sounds. Clay’s (2002) observation survey supports the idea of repetition being used to confirm students attempt to read. Repetition with word sounds in rhyming help the students become familiar with sounds and are able to make connections in their reading development. Rileigh and Janie both were confident when repeatedly practicing phoneme sounds through rhyming and alliteration.

Mark and Cory both needed repetition to help them with their processing of strategies. The more repetition given on a task the better they performed on their activity. For example in small group work, I would ask Cory to “say the word sun without the *s* what would be left” he would respond “un” we would repeat this exercise until he was comfortable with what we were doing. I would say to Mark “say the word rat without the *r* what would be left,” he would respond “at,” next I would say the word bat without the *b* what would be left, he would say “at” (personal communication, June 18, 2010).

As an active participant, I would then carry this over to the students reading and have them read a sentence in their book and take off the beginning sounds of certain words. Repetition of these strategies daily was a good strategy for reinforcement of word work which reinforced their reading ability. Repetition reinforcement clearly indicates positive impacts on
student readability. Evidence shows that students involvement in repeating strategies allows them to perform better when reading (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996).

**Application**

A third theme that emerged through my data was application of reading strategies. Based on my own observations and student work, I noticed the importance of each student being able to apply the phonemic awareness strategies learned in their reading development. Through each activity, small group work and one-to-one conferencing I noticed different learning behaviors among all participants. These behaviors included varied processing rates, self-correction responses to the task at hand and attention span. Each student applied their learning skills in a different manner and progressed at varied rates. Concurring with my observation and literature students need to be instructed to their reading ability and progress with support and guidance from their teacher (Atwill et al., 2007).

Janie, Rileigh, and Madison were quicker at grasping the blending and deletion strategies learned and able to apply them quicker when doing group work or one-to-one work. Whereas Destiny, Mark and Cory took longer to process what was learned and apply it. Janie was always quick to respond as was Rileigh. Both were accurate in their response of segmentation and blending and were able to self correct themselves immediately if they were incorrect. Destiny at times would be fidgety in her chair when applying the strategies while reading. For example, when she was reading a rhyming exercise, she would sit on her feet, then put her feet down and sit on her feet again. After some time, she got back on track and was able to read the card and blend the sounds according to the way she learned. Similarly, Cory would rock from side to side and took longer to think about what he was doing and use it when reading. His response time was longer while thinking, yet he was able to apply the strategies of blending the sounds together
when given directions to a task. In informal conversation with Cory, he told me he would forget what I asked him and that he needed me to repeat it. At times his answers would be right on target and other times he would be off target. He was able to apply the task at hand such as when I asked him to move the chip along to the sounds he heard in the word, and he was able to connect that activity to a familiar word in his reading of text. Looking at the different response and behaviors those that had more difficulty, my evidence supports that students similar to Cory’s behaviors may also be a candidate for RTI intervention also noted by Koutsoftas et al (2009).

Likewise, Mark would be distracted by anything that was around him. In small group instruction, there was a bird out the window flying by, he said “look at that bird, out there” I then said to him “Mark please read this rhyming activity card, again he said “but look at the bird.” I acknowledged “yes, I see the bird but now we are working on this activity and I need you to work with me now and we can talk about the bird when we are done” (personal communication, June 18, 2010). Mark got back on track and he read his rhyming card using the necessary strategies of blending the sounds the way he was supposed to. In addition to my work and observation of Mark’s strategic behaviors, Ms. LaRocco confirmed what I knew in our interview “Mark often gets off task with when working one-to-one but when he does get back on track he is able to apply the strategies that have been taught even though it may be at a slower pace than we might like” (personal interview, June 19, 2010). Mark is a student who is easily distracted and as noted earlier through my observation and literature of Lipson and Wixson, (2010) and the literature of Koutsoftas et al. (2009), may be a candidate for further one-to-one intervention through RTI instruction.
Implications

The research of Atwill et al. (2007) and O’Connor et al. (2010) along with my findings suggest several implications for me as a teacher of students in the primary grades. First, it is essential that students who are at the kindergarten and first grade reading level must acquire phonemic awareness skills. In agreement with the research of Atwill et al. (2007) my observation and student work phonemic awareness is the key to language proficiency. Vygotsky (1962/1978) looks at language and the impact it has on children and their ability to make words and produces sounds that match those words. Students must learn the sound to letter relationship before they can put letters into print. Children are introduced different skills at different ages with the understanding that children will progress and acquire them in sequence. Through the learning process children are active members of a constantly changing community in which knowledge constructs and is constructed by larger cultural systems (Cole 1996, Lee and Smagorinsky, 2000; Rogoff, 2003). As the literature (Larson & Marsh, 2005) and my findings suggest, literacy is gained through a culturally based classroom. With the varied levels of participants’ socioeconomic backgrounds and the multicultural classroom environment, evidence supports the idea of the changing community. The environment students participate in and the affect it has on their learning is impacted on the development of reading skills.

As the students’ teacher it is my responsibility to see that they possess the sound to letter relationship of phonemic awareness skills. Through oral language exercises, I will assess all students according to the district’s standards. If the students do not complete the activities within the district’s benchmark, then direct instruction and/or intervention will be implemented. Students will work in small group or one-to-one activities learning the strategies such as blending, segmenting or sound deletion that will help them progress in their reading ability. It is
my responsibility to instruct students with the necessary strategies to develop student reading ability as Syverud et al. (2009) states; results have shown that intervention such as Direct Instruction is a necessary option.

Secondly, intervention is a strategy that is essential in working with students who need phonemic awareness instruction. Intervention helps the students with the necessary individual skills needed. All students receiving instruction and intervention have varied levels of needs. Some participants may receive speech services and or reading services. In both the literature (Brice & Brice, 2009) and my findings, students receiving intervention services benefitted and progressed with their reading development. In addition, the findings in Brice and Brice (2009) implied that all learners will benefit from early intervention in helping with literacy acquisition. It is important that teachers are aware of these student needs. Each student will be monitored by me and progress will be on an individual need. Allor et al. (2010) argues that students with language difficulties of any nature have the capability to learn. It is necessary for teachers to keep concise records of students work and assess on a regular basis. In addition they can consult with the literacy coach and speech pathologist about students’ needs. If needed additional support or intervention services will be implemented.

Another key implication of this study from my observation and participation along with literature of Menzies et al. (2008) is the knowledge and success of a teacher’s instruction of phonemic awareness and knowing when it needs to be put into practice by the students.

I have learned as a participant and observer that it is key to know how to effectively instruct students in what they lack in phonemic awareness. As an educator, I
have learned the value of knowing the necessary literacy components as stated in Joshi et al. (2009) whose evidence supports how to teach these components with phonemic awareness being one of them. Being properly trained to administer phonemic awareness is a necessity in order to have student success. It is critical that teachers work with colleagues to ensure that they are trained efficiently so that they can effectively instruct students.

Working with both Cory and Mark, I realized that due to their need for additional time to process and need for much repetition, I needed some guidance from both the literacy coach and speech therapist. In my conversations with both Ms. LaRocco and Mrs. Nelson, I have become aware of the importance of teaching my students the necessary phonemic skills to develop their reading ability. They both gave me suggestions on how I can instruct them to make sure they are processing what I am saying. For example, how I move my lips when saying certain letters may help, or how I project the letters. I have also noticed that I had a tendency to speak too fast, and needed to slow down for both of them to be able to process what I asked. In addition, I needed assistance from Ms. LaRocco and Mrs. Nelson to make sure I was doing the assessments accurately and scoring them correctly to gather the correct data from all students.

**Conclusion**

The theoretical framework of this study focused on literacy as a social practice through social interaction in the area of literacy acquisition using phonemic awareness examining the use of various instruction and strategies. How do the strategies of phonemic awareness in an Emergent Reader develop their reading ability? My findings and implications show that students need instruction and or intervention from trained teachers to support the strategies. The strategies such as sound segmenting, blending, and deletion need repeated practice. As part of
this study, I was limited with the time allowed to assess and to see a significant growth. I did see a small growth, but am confident that with more time there would have been a significant growth in reading development of the Emergent Reader.

After considering all of the implications that my research brings to mind, I have some additional thoughts or questions for myself and other teachers. First, what else can I as a teacher do to help students build their phonemic awareness outside of the classroom environment? It is important for students to feel good about their reading ability and be able to use it outside the classroom. If students feel inadequate about their reading ability it may carry over into other interests. Secondly, how can we as teachers involve parents at home to work on phonemic awareness skills to develop reading ability? It is evident that the cultural environment impacts student ability and parent involvement would be a key factor in developing reading ability.

Phonemic awareness is a key predictor to successful reading in the emergent reader. As Koutsoftas et al. (2009) state, literacy acquisition’s first stage is the development of letter-sound relationship. If teachers want their students to be successful in developing their reading ability, students must possess their phonemic awareness skills. All students must be considered whether it is an English Language learner, a student with learning disabilities, and a student affected by socioeconomic status. Whatever the circumstance may be, all students must be assessed for the necessary phonemic awareness. Students who lack these skills must have instruction or intervention that will incorporate the strategies needed to grasp phoneme awareness.

Along with implementing the instruction or intervention, teachers must be trained in their instruction to effectively and properly administer the techniques. Without proper training, incorrect administering of strategies may hinder student progress resulting in less student
success. With the combination of student instruction or intervention and proper teacher training effective phonemic awareness strategies will help students develop their reading ability.
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Phonemic Awareness

Reading Benchmark: Phonemic Awareness

Name: Cory, Date: 6/14/10, Score: 27/40, Benchmark: +33/40

Phoneme Segmentation
I the student that you're going to play a game with all the sounds in words. Show the child the three sounds in dime. Push a chip up for each sound you say - /d/ /i/ /m/. Ask the child to try it with the word. Read each of the following words and ask him/her to push up a chip for each sound. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. in (2)  
2. at (2)   
3. name (3) 
4. ship (3) 
5. sock (3)  
6. chin (3)  

Phoneme Deletion of Initial Sounds
I the child you will be playing a word game where the beginning sound of a word is left off. For example, / without /b/ is ed. Ask the child to say can without /c/. The answer is an. Read each word and tell the child the beginning sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say sun without the /s/ un
2. Say pig without the /p/ ig
3. Say mop without the /m/ op
4. Say neck without the /n/ eck
5. Say bat without the /b/ at
6. Say tape without the /t/ ape

Phoneme Deletion of Final Sounds
I the child you will be playing a word game where the final sound of a word is left off. For example, goat without /t/ is go. Ask the child to say meat without /t/. The answer is me. Read each word and tell the child the ending sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say rose without the /s/ row
2. Say train without the /n/ tray
3. Say group without the /p/ grew
4. Say seat without the /t/ sea
5. Say bake without the /l/ bay
6. Say inch without the /ch/ in
Let the Sounds Be Heard - Phonemic Awareness

Phoneme Deletion of First Sound in Consonant Blend
Tell the child to make new words by taking the first sound off of a consonant blend. For example, the word crow without /k/ is row. Ask the child to say still without /s/. The answer is till. Read each word and tell the student the beginning sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say clap without /k/
2. Say stop without /s/
3. Say trust without /t/
4. Say black without /b/
5. Say drip without /d/
6. Say smile without /s/

Phoneme Substitution
Tell the child you will be playing a different game with sounds of words. You are going to ask him/her to take off the first sound of a word and replace it with another sound. For example, replace the first sound in pain with /m/. The new word is mail. Ask the child to replace the first sound in top with /h/. The answer is hop. Read each word and tell the student the sound to replace and the sound to replace it with. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Replace the 1st sound in man with /k/
2. Replace the 1st sound in pig with /d/
3. Replace the 1st sound in sack with /t/
4. Replace the 1st sound in well with /f/
5. Replace the 1st sound in bed with /r/
6. Replace the 1st sound in shop with /ch/

Ability to Recognize Medial Vowel Sounds in Words
Tell the student that you're going to play a game with the middle sounds in words. Show the child the three sounds in dime. Push a chip up for each sound you say - /d/ /i/ /m/. Tell the child the sound in the middle is /i/. Ask the child to try it with the word hat. The answer is /a/. Read each of the following words and ask him/her to push up a chip for each sound and say the sound he/she hears in the middle of the word. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. cat /a/
2. hit /i/
3. shed /e/
4. not /o/
5. cup /u/
6. cape /a/
7. kite /i/
8. cute /u/
9. seed /e/
10. rope /o/
Let the Sounds Be Heard - Phonemic Awareness

Appendix A

Reading Benchmark: Phonemic Awareness

Mark __________________________ Date 10/4/10 Score 32/40
Benchmark = +33/40

Phoneme Segmentation

Ask the student that you're going to play a game with all the sounds in words. Show the child the three sounds in dime. Push a chip up for each sound you say - /d/ /i/ /m/. Ask the child to try it with the word sit. Read each of the following words and ask him/her to push up a chip for each sound. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. in (2) 2. at (2) 3. name (3) 4. ship (3) 5. sock (3) 6. chin (3) + 5/6

Phoneme Deletion of Initial Sounds

Ask the child you will be playing a word game where the beginning sound of a word is left off. For example, /t/ without /b/ is ed. Ask the child to say can without /c/. The answer is an. Read each word and tell the child the beginning sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say sun without the /s/ un 2. Say pig without the /p/ ig 3. Say mop without the /m/ op 4. Say neck without the /n/ eck 5. Say bat without the /b/ at 6. Say tape without the /t/ ape + 6/6

Phoneme Deletion of Final Sounds

Ask the child you will be playing a word game where the final sound of a word is left off. For example, goat without /t/ is go. Ask the child to say meat without /t/. The answer is me. Read each word and tell the student the ending sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

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Phoneme Deletion of First Sound in Consonant Blend
Tell the child to make new words by taking the first sound off of a consonant blend. For example, the word "crow" without /k/ is "row." Ask the child to say "still" without /s/. The answer is "till." Read each word and tell the student the beginning sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say clap without /k/ lap
2. Say stop without /s/ top
3. Say trust without /t/ rust
4. Say black without /b/ lack
5. Say drip without /d/ rip
6. Say smile without /s/ mile + 0/6

Phoneme Substitution
Tell the child you will be playing a different game with sounds of words. You are going to ask him/her to take off the first sound of a word and replace it with another sound. For example, replace the first sound in "pail" with /m/. The new word is "mail." Ask the child to replace the first sound in "top" with /h/. The answer is "hop." Read each word and tell the student the sound to replace and the sound to replace it with. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Replace the 1st sound in "man" with /k/ can
2. Replace the 1st sound in "pig" with /d/ dig
3. Replace the 1st sound in "sack" with /t/ tack
4. Replace the 1st sound in "well" with /f/ fell
5. Replace the 1st sound in "bed" with /r/ red
6. Replace the 1st sound in "shop" with /ch/ in + 0/6

Ability to Recognize Medial Vowel Sounds in Words
Tell the student that you're going to play a game with the middle sounds in words. Show the child the three sounds in "dime." Push a chip up for each sound you say - /d/ /i/ /m/. Tell the child the sound in the middle is /i/. Ask the child to try it with the word "hat." The answer is /al/. Read each of the following words and ask him/her to push up a chip for each sound and say the sound he/she hears in the middle of the word. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. cat /a/
2. hit /i/
3. shed /e/
4. not /o/
5. cup /u/
6. cape /a/
7. kite /i/
8. cute /u/
9. seed /e/
10. rope o/ + 10/10
Let the Sounds Be Heard - Phonemic Awareness

Reading Benchmark: Phonemic Awareness

Madison ______________________________ Date 6/14/10 Score + 32/40
Benchmark = +33/40

**Phoneme Segmentation**

I the student that you're going to play a game with all the sounds in words. Show the child the three ends in *dime*. Push a chip up for each sound you say - /d/ /i/ /m/. Ask the child to try it with the word *dime*. Read each of the following words and ask him/her to push up a chip for each sound. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. in (2) x
2. at (2) x
3. name (3) x
4. ship (3)
5. sock (3) x
6. chin (3)

**Phoneme Deletion of Initial Sounds**

I the child you will be playing a word game where the beginning sound of a word is left off. For example, *sun* without /s/ is *un*. Ask the child to say *can* without /c/. The answer is *an*. Read each word and tell the child the beginning sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say sun without the /s/ un
2. Say pig without the /p/ ig
3. Say mop without the /m/ op
4. Say neck without the /n/ eck
5. Say bat without the /b/ at
6. Say tape without the /t/ ape

**Phoneme Deletion of Final Sounds**

I the child you will be playing a word game where the final sound of a word is left off. For example, *goat* without /t/ is *go*. Ask the child to say *meat* without /t/. The answer is *me*. Read each word and tell the child the ending sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say rose without the /s/ row
2. Say train without the /n/ tray
3. Say group without the /p/ grew
4. Say seat without the /t/ sea
5. Say bake without the /k/ bay
6. Say inch without the /ch/ in

Score + 10/16 _ 10
Score + 4/16 _ 10
Let the Sounds Be Heard- Phonemic Awareness

**Phoneme Deletion of First Sound in Consonant Blend**
- Tell the child to make new words by taking the first sound off of a consonant blend. For example, the word crow without /k/ is row. Ask the child to say still without /s/. The answer is still. Read each word and tell the student the beginning sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say clap without /k/ lap
2. Say stop without /s/ top
3. Say trust without /t/ rust
4. Say black without /b/ lack
5. Say drip without /d/ rip
6. Say smile without /s/ mile

**Phoneme Substitution**
Tell the child you will be playing a different game with sounds of words. You are going to ask him/her to take off the first sound of a word and replace it with another sound. For example, replace the first sound in pail with /m/. The new word is mail. Ask the child to replace the first sound in top with /h/. The answer is hop. Read each word and tell the student the sound to replace and the sound to replace it with. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Replace the 1st sound in man with /k/ can
2. Replace the 1st sound in pig with /d/ dig
3. Replace the 1st sound in sack with /t/ tack
4. Replace the 1st sound in well with /f/ fell
5. Replace the 1st sound in bed with /r/ red
6. Replace the 1st sound in shop with /ch/ in

**Ability to Recognize Medial Vowel Sounds in Words**
Tell the student that you’re going to play a game with the middle sounds in words. Show the child the three sounds in dime. Push a chip up for each sound you say - /d/ /i/ /m/. Tell the child the sound in the middle is /i/. Ask the child to try it with the word hat. The answer is /a/. Read each of the following words and ask him/her to push up a chip for each sound and say the sound he/she hears in the middle of the word. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. cat /a/
2. hit /i/
3. shed /e/
4. not /o/
5. cup /u/
6. cape /a/
7. kite /i/
8. cute /u/
9. seed /e/
10. rope o/
Let the Sounds Be Heard - Phonemic Awareness

Reading Benchmark: Phonemic Awareness

Raleigh __________________________ Date 9/11/10 Score + 31/40 Benchmark = +33/40

Phoneme Segmentation

I the student that you're going to play a game with all the sounds in words. Show the child the three sounds in dime. Push a chip up for each sound you say - /d/ /i/ /m/. Ask the child to try it with the word. Read each of the following words and ask him/her to push up a chip for each sound. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. in (2) ______
2. at (2) ______
3. name (3) ______
4. ship (3) ______
5. sock (3) ______
6. chin (3) ______

Phoneme Deletion of Initial Sounds

I the child you will be playing a word game where the beginning sound of a word is left out. For example, /t/ without /b/ is ed. Ask the child to say can without /c/. The answer is an. Read each word and tell the d the beginning sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say sun without the /s/ un ______
2. Say pig without the /p/ ig ______
3. Say mop without the /m/ op ______
4. Say neck without the /n/ eck ______
5. Say bat without the /b/ at ______
6. Say tape without the /t/ ape + 4/6 ______

Phoneme Deletion of Final Sounds

I the child you will be playing a word game where the final sound of a word is left off. For example, goat without /t/ is go. Ask the child to say meat without /t/. The answer is me. Read each word and tell the dent the ending sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say rose without the /s/ row ______
2. Say train without the /n/ tray ______
3. Say group without the /p/ grew ______
4. Say seat without the /t/ sea ______
5. Say bake without the /k/ bay ______
6. Say inch without the /ch/ in + 0/6 ______
Let the Sounds Be Heard: Phonemic Awareness

**Phoneme Deletion of First Sound in Consonant Blend**

Tell the child to make new words by taking the first sound off of a consonant blend. For example, the word *crow* without /k/ is *row*. Ask the child to say *still* without /s/. The answer is *till*. Read each word and tell the student the beginning sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say clap without /k/ lap
2. Say stop without /s/ top
3. Say trust without /t/ rust
4. Say black without /b/ lack
5. Say drip without /d/ rip
6. Say smile without /s/ mile + 6/6

**Phoneme Substitution**

Tell the child you will be playing a different game with sounds of words. You are going to ask him/her to take off the first sound of a word and replace it with another sound. For example, replace the first sound in *pail* with /m/. The new word is *mail*. Ask the child to replace the first sound in *top* with /h/. The answer is *hop*. Read each word and tell the student the sound to replace and the sound to replace it with. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Replace the 1st sound in *man* with /k/ can
2. Replace the 1st sound in *pig* with /d/ dig
3. Replace the 1st sound in *sack* with /t/ tack
4. Replace the 1st sound in *well* with /f/ fell
5. Replace the 1st sound in *bed* with /r/ red + 6/6
6. Replace the 1st sound in *shop* with /ch/ in

**Ability to Recognize Medial Vowel Sounds in Words**

Tell the student that you’re going to play a game with the middle sounds in words. Show the child the three sounds in *dime*. Push a chip up for each sound you say - /d/ /i/ /m/. Tell the child the sound in the middle is /i/. Ask the child to try it with the word *hat*. The answer is /a/. Read each of the following words and ask him/her to push up a chip for each sound and say the sound he/she hears in the middle of the word. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. cat /a/
2. hit /i/
3. shed /e/
4. not /o/
5. cup /u/
6. cape /a/
7. kite /i/
8. cute /u/
9. seed /e/
10. rope /o/ + 7/10
Let the Sounds Be Heard - Phonemic Awareness

Reading Benchmark: Phonemic Awareness

Name: ___________________________ Date: 6/14/10
Score: 34/40
Benchmark: +33/40

Phoneme Segmentation
I the student that you're going to play a game with all the sounds in words. Show the child the three
ends in dime. Push a chip up for each sound you say - /d/ /i/ /m/. Ask the child to try it with the word
dime. Read each of the following words and ask him/her to push up a chip for each sound. Put an x on the
line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. in (2) [ ]
2. at (2) [ ]
3. name (3) [ ]
4. ship (3) [ ]
5. sock (3) [ ]
6. chin (3) [ ]
    + 5/6

Phoneme Deletion of Initial Sounds
I the child you will be playing a word game where the beginning sound of a word is left off. For example,
the word goat becomes go. Ask the child to say can without /c/. The answer is an. Read each word and tell the
child the beginning sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say sun without the /s/ un [ ]
2. Say pig without the /p/ ig [ ]
3. Say mop without the /m/ op [ ]
4. Say neck without the /n/ eck [ ]
5. Say bat without the /b/ at [ ]
6. Say tape without the /t/ ape [ ]
    + 6/6

Phoneme Deletion of Final Sounds
I the child you will be playing a word game where the final sound of a word is left off. For example, goat
becomes go. Ask the child to say meat without /t/. The answer is me. Read each word and tell the
child the ending sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say rose without the /s/ row [ ]
2. Say train without the /n/ tray [ ]
3. Say group without the /p/ grew [ ]
4. Say seat without the /t/ sea [ ]
5. Say bake without the /k/ bay [ ]
6. Say inch without the /ch/ in [ ]
    + 5/6
Let the Sounds Be Heard- Phonemic Awareness

**Phoneme Deletion of First Sound in Consonant Blend**
- Tell the child to make new words by taking the first sound off of a consonant blend. For example, the word crow without /k/ is row. Ask the child to say still without /s/. The answer is still. Read each word and tell the student the beginning sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say clap without /k/ lap
2. Say stop without /s/ top
3. Say trust without /t/ rust
4. Say black without /b/ lack
5. Say drip without /d/ rip
6. Say smile without /s/ mile
   
   + 4/6

**Phoneme Substitution**
- Tell the child you will be playing a different game with sounds of words. You are going to ask him/her to take off the first sound of a word and replace it with another sound. For example, replace the first sound in pail with /m/. The new word is mail. Ask the child to replace the first sound in top with /h/. The answer is hop. Read each word and tell the student the sound to replace and the sound to replace it with. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

   1. Replace the 1st sound in man with /k/ can
   2. Replace the 1st sound in pig with /d/ dig
   3. Replace the 1st sound in sack with /t/ tack
   4. Replace the 1st sound in well with /f/ fell
   5. Replace the 1st sound in bed with /r/ red
   6. Replace the 1st sound in shop with /ch/ in

   + 4/6

**Ability to Recognize Medial Vowel Sounds in Words**
- Tell the student that you're going to play a game with the middle sounds in words. Show the child the three sounds in dime. Push a chip up for each sound you say - /d/ /i/ /m/. Tell the child the sound in the middle is /i/. Ask the child to try it with the word hat. The answer is /a/. Read each of the following words and ask him/her to push up a chip for each sound and say the sound he/she hears in the middle of the word. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

   1. cat /a/
   2. hit /i/
   3. shed /e/
   4. not /o/
   5. cup /u/
   6. cape /a/
   7. kite /i/
   8. cute /u/
   9. seed /e/
   10. rope /a/

   + 10/10
Let the Sounds Be Heard- Phonemic Awareness

Reading Benchmark: Phonemic Awareness

ne Janie __________________________ Date 10/8/09 Score 57/40
Benchmark = +33/40

Phoneme Segmentation

I the student that you're going to play a game with all the sounds in words. Show the child the
ends in dime. Push a chip up for each sound you say - /d/ /i/ /m/. Ask the child to try it with the word
. Read each of the following words and ask him/her to push up a chip for each sound. Put an x on the
line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. in
2. at
3. name
4. ship
5. sock
6. chin

Phoneme Deletion of Initial Sounds

I the child you will be playing a word game where the beginning sound of a word is left off. For example,
without /b/ is ed. Ask the child to say can without /c/. The answer is an. Read each word and tell the
child the beginning sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say sun without the /s/
2. Say pig without the /p/
3. Say mop without the /m/
4. Say neck without the /n/
5. Say bat without the /b/
6. Say tape without the /t/

Phoneme Deletion of Final Sounds

I the child you will be playing a word game where the final sound of a word is left off. For example, goat
without /t/ is go. Ask the child to say meat without /t/. The answer is me. Read each word and tell the
child the ending sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say rose without the /s/
2. Say train without the /n/
3. Say group without the /p/
4. Say seat without the /t/
5. Say bake without the /k/
6. Say inch without the /ch/
Phoneme Deletion of First Sound in Consonant Blend

Tell the child to make new words by taking the first sound off of a consonant blend. For example, the word *crow* without /k/ is *row*. Ask the child to say *still* without /s/. The answer is *till*. Read each word and tell the student the beginning sound to leave off. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Say clap without /k/ lap
2. Say stop without /s/ top
3. Say trust without /t/ rust
4. Say black without /b/ lack
5. Say drip without /d/ rip
6. Say smile without /s/ mile

Phoneme Substitution

Tell the child you will be playing a different game with sounds of words. You are going to ask him/her to take off the first sound of a word and replace it with another sound. For example, replace the first sound in *pail* with /m/. The new word is *mail*. Ask the child to replace the first sound in *top* with /h/. The answer is *happ*. Read each word and tell the student the sound to replace and the sound to replace it with. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. Replace the 1st sound in man with /k/ can
2. Replace the 1st sound in pig with /d/ dig
3. Replace the 1st sound in sack with /t/ tack
4. Replace the 1st sound in well with /f/ fell
5. Replace the 1st sound in bed with /r/ red
6. Replace the 1st sound in shop with /ch/ in

Ability to Recognize Medial Vowel Sounds in Words

Tell the student that you're going to play a game with the middle sounds in words. Show the child the three sounds in *dime*. Push a chip up for each sound you say - /d/ /i/ /m/. Tell the child the sound in the middle is /i/. Ask the child to try it with the word *hat*. The answer is /a/. Read each of the following words and ask him/her to push up a chip for each sound and say the sound he/she hears in the middle of the word. Put an x on the line to the right if he/she does it correctly.

1. cat /a/
2. hit /i/
3. shed /e/
4. not /o/
5. cup /u/
6. cape /a/
7. kite /i/
8. cute /u/
9. seed /e/
10. rope /o/
Let the Sounds Be Heard - Phonemic Awareness

One-to-one Work (Appendix B)

Phonemic-Awareness Inventory

Student Name: Cory  Date: 6/17/10

Directions: Give this inventory orally to each student.

Level 1

Whole Word Discrimination
Are these words the same? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)
- fat - bat  red - rid  slip - slit
- dip - hip  nut - nut  grip - grip
- man - man  mat - map  flit - flip

Rhyming Words - Recognition
Do these words rhyme? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)
- happy - sappy  boy - toy  sun - fun
- sad - mad  girl - boy  play - game

Rhyming Words - Application
What word rhymes with . . . ? (Write child's responses on the lines.)
- man  can  old  -  try  by
- sun  fun  play  -  skip
- eat  -  book  look  -  scale

- = not correct response

Syllable Counting
How many syllables do you hear in the word . . . ? (Write child's responses on the lines and circle those that are correct.)
- ball  wagon  umbrella
- elephant  hippopotamus  orangutan


**Level 2**

**Syllable Segmentation**

*I’ll say a word, then you repeat it slowly.* (Give examples: cow—boy, ha—ppy, fu—nnv.)

Circle words to which child responds correctly.

- rainbow (rain—bow)
- doughnut (dough—nut)
- sidewalk (side—walk)
- paper (pa—per)
- basket (bas—ket)
- color (co—lor)
- scissors (sci—ssors)
- butterfly (bu—tter—fly)
- umbrella (um—bre—lla)

**Oral Synthesis—Blending Speech Sounds**

*Listen and tell me the word I said.* (Say each sound slowly. Circle words child identifies correctly.)

- n—o
- r—u—n
- t—e—n
- w—a—s
- c—a—k'e
- s—ay
- f—a—t
- c—u—t
- h—a—ve
- w—e—n—t
- m—e
- s—i—t
- m—o—p
- s—ai—d
- s—t—o—r—y

**Level 3**

**Approximation**

*Do you hear the /b/ sound at the beginning, middle, or end of _____?* (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

- big
- tab
- robot
- cabbage
- banana
- crib

**Phoneme Isolation**

*What sound do you hear _____?* (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First</th>
<th>Last</th>
<th>Middle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sun</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
<td>buff</td>
<td>tub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>candy</td>
<td>lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red</td>
<td>ten</td>
<td>pan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 Level 4

Segmentation

Repeat each word slowly so I can hear each separate sound, like c-a-t. (Say a word and have child repeat it slowly, separating each phoneme.)

- me
- so
- man
- you
- play
- old
- book
- skip
- scale

difficulty

5 Level 5

Phoneme Deletion

Say the word ______, but leave off the ______. (Repeat, asking child to delete beginning or ending sounds.)

- pop
- dip
- not
- cub
- fin
- can
- ten
- tab
- mop
- set

Phoneme Substitution

Replace the first sound in ______ with ______. What is the new word? (Repeat, asking child to substitute middle and ending sounds.) Pass if you don't know.

- pail
- mail
- log
- hog
- get
- pet
- cat
- Pat
- tub
- pop
- mop
- pig
- dig
- dice
- micc
- jump

- = passed
Phonemic-Awareness Inventory

Student Name: Mark                     Date: 10/17/10

Directions: Give this inventory orally to each student.

1. Level 1

Whole Word Discrimination
Are these words the same? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

- fat–bat
- dip–hip
- man–man

- red–rid
- nut–nut
- mat–map

- slip–slit
- grip–grip
- flit–flip

Rhyming Words—Recognition
Do these words rhyme? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

- happy–sappy
- sad–mad
- boy–toy
- girl–boy
- sun–fun
- play–game

Rhyming Words—Application
What word rhymes with . . . ? (Write child’s responses on the lines.)

- man + tan
- sun don’t know
- eat uncat
- old mold
- play say
- book lol
- try by
- skip don’t know
- scale don’t know
- didn’t try

Syllable Counting
How many syllables do you hear in the word . . . ? (Write child’s responses on the lines and circle those that are correct.)

- ball 1
- wagon 3
- umbrella 3
- orangutan 4
- elephant 2
- hippopotamus 5
2 Level 2

Syllable Segmentation
I’ll say a word, then you repeat it slowly. (Give examples: cow-boy, ha-ppy, fu-nny.
Circle words to which child responds correctly.)

- rainbow (rain–bow)
- doughnut (dough–nut)
- sidewalk (side–walk)
- paper (pa-per)
- basket (bas–ket)
- color (co–lor)
- scissors (sci–ssors)
- butterfly (bu–tter–fly)
- umbrella (um–bre–lla)

Oral Synthesis—Blending Speech Sounds
Listen and tell me the word I said. (Say each sound slowly. Circle words child identifies correctly.)

- n-o
- s-ay
- m-e
- r-u-n
- f-a-t
- s-i-t
- t-e-n
- c-u-t
- m-o-p
- w-a-s
- h-a-ve
- s-a-i-d
- c-a-k-e
- w-e-n-t
- st-o-r-y

3 Level 3

Approximation
Do you hear the /b/ sound at the beginning, middle, or end of ______? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

- big
- robot
- banana
- tab
- cabbage
- crib

Phoneme Isolation
What sound do you hear ______? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

- First
  - sun
  - foot
  - yes
  - red

- Last
  - water
  - buff
  - candy
  - ten

- Middle
  - feet
  - tub
  - lake
  - pan
4 Level 4

Segmentation

*Repeat each word slowly so I can hear each separate sound, like c-a-t. (Say a word and have child repeat it slowly, separating each phoneme.)*

- me
- so
- man
- you
- play
- old
- book
- skip
- scale

5 Level 5

Phoneme Deletion

*Say the word __________, but leave off the ________. (Repeat, asking child to delete beginning or ending sounds.)*

- pop
- can
- dip
- ten
- not
- tab
- cub
- mop
- fin
- set

Phoneme Substitution

*Replace the first sound in _______ with _______. What is the new word? (Repeat, asking child to substitute middle and ending sounds.)*

- pail
- mail
- log
- hog
- get
- get
- cat
- hat
- tub
- pub
- pop
- stop
- pig
- dig
- dice
- mice
- jump
- lump
Let the Sounds Be Heard- Phonemic Awareness

One-to-One Work
(Appendix B)

Phonemic-Awareness Inventory

Student Name: Bileigh Date: 6/18/10

Directions: Give this inventory orally to each student.

Level 1

Whole Word Discrimination
Are these words the same? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)
- fat-bat
- dip-hip
- man-man
- red-rid
- nut-nut
- mat-map
- slip-slit
- grip-grip
- flit-flip

Rhyming Words—Recognition
Do these words rhyme? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)
- happy-sappy
- sad-mad
- boy-toy
- girl-boy
- sun-fun
- play-game

Rhyming Words—Application
What word rhymes with . . . ? (Write child’s responses on the lines.)
- man fan
- sun un
- eat sleep
- old
- play clay
- book
- try fly
- skip hip
- scale nail

Syllable Counting
How many syllables do you hear in the word . . . ? (Write child’s responses on the lines and circle those that are correct.)
- ball 4
- wagon 3
- umbrella 5
- elephant 5
- hippopotamus 7
- orangutan 4
Level 2

Syllable Segmentation
I'll say a word, then you repeat it slowly. (Give examples: cow-boy, ha-ppy, fu-nn-y. Circle words to which child responds correctly.)

rainbow (rain-bow) paper (pa-per) scissors (sci-ssors)
doughnut (dough-nut) basket (bas-ket) butterfly (bu-tter-fly)
sidewalk (side-walk) color (co-lor) umbrella (um-bre-lla)

Oral Synthesis—Blending Speech Sounds
Listen and tell me the word I said. (Say each sound slowly. Circle words child identifies correctly.)

n-o r-u-n t-e-n w-a-s c-a-k-e
s-ay f-a-t c-u-t h-a-ve w-e-n-t
m-e s-i-t m-o-p s-a-i-d s-t-o-r-y

Level 3

Approximation
Do you hear the /b/ sound at the beginning, middle, or end of _____? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

big robot banana
tab cabbage crib

Phoneme Isolation
What sound do you hear _____? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

First
sun last
foot water
yes buff
red candy
ten lake

Middle
feet

Last
tub

Middle
lake

Last
pan
Level 4

Segmentation

Repeat each word slowly so I can hear each separate sound, like c-a-t. (Say a word and have child repeat it slowly, separating each phoneme.)

- me
- so
- man
- you
- play
- old
- book
- skip
- scale
- trouble
- will skip
- scale
- blends

Level 5

Phoneme Deletion

Say the word ______, but leave off the ______. (Repeat, asking child to delete beginning or ending sounds.)

- pop
- dip
- not
- cub
- fin
- can
- ten
- tab
- mop
- set

Phoneme Substitution

Replace the first sound in ______ with ______. What is the new word? (Repeat, asking child to substitute middle and ending sounds.)

- pail mail
- log hog
- get pet
- cat Pat
- tub passed
- pop mop
- pig dig
- dice mice
- jump dump
Phonemic Awareness Inventory

Student Name: Destiny  Date: 6/18/10

Directions: Give this inventory orally to each student.

Level 1

Whole Word Discrimination
Are these words the same? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)
- fat–bat
- dip–hip
- man–man
- red–rid
- nut–nut
- mat–map
- slip–slit
- grip–grip
- flit–flip

Rhyming Words—Recognition
Do these words rhyme? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)
- happy–sappy
- sad–mad
- boy–toy
- girl–boy
- sun–fun
- play–game

Rhyming Words—Application
What word rhymes with . . . ? (Write child’s responses on the lines.)
- man
- sun
- eat
- old
- play
- book
- try
- clay
- cool
- scale

Syllable Counting
How many syllables do you hear in the word . . . ? (Write child’s responses on the lines and circle those that are correct.)
- ball 4
- wagon 5
- umbrella 6
- elephant 10
- hippopotamus 10
- orangutan 10
Let the Sounds Be Heard - Phonemic Awareness

2 Level 2

Syllable Segmentation
I'll say a word, then you repeat it slowly. (Give examples: cow-boy, ha-ppy, fu-nny. Circle words to which child responds correctly.)

rainbow (rain-bow)    paper (pa-per)

scissors (sci-ssors)    butterfly (bu-tter-fly)

Oral Synthesis - Blending Speech Sounds
Listen and tell me the word I said. (Say each sound slowly. Circle words child identifies correctly.)

n-o    r-u-n

s-ay    f-a-t

m-e    t-e-n

w-a-s    c-a-k-e

h-a-ve    w-e-n-t

s-a-i-d    s-t-o-r-y

3 Level 3

Approximation
Do you hear the /b/ sound at the beginning, middle, or end of ______? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

big

robot

banana

tab

cabbage

crib

Phoneme Isolation
What sound do you hear ______? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

First
sun
foot
yes
red

Last
water
buff
candy
ten

Middle
feet
tub
lake
pan
Let the Sounds Be Heard - Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic-Awareness Inventory

Student Name: Jane
Date: 6/18/10

Directions: Give this inventory orally to each student.

Level 1

Whole Word Discrimination
Are these words the same? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

fat - bat

dip - hip

man - man

red - rid

nut - nut

mat - map

slip - slit

grip - grip

flip - flit

Rhyming Words - Recognition
Do these words rhyme? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

happy - sappy

sad - mad

boy - toy

girl - boy

sun - fun

play - game

Rhyming Words - Application
What word rhymes with . . . ? (Write child's responses on the lines.)

man - can - old - old - try - high

sun - fun - play - hay - skip - hip

eat - wheat - book - hook - scale - hale

Syllable Counting
How many syllables do you hear in the word . . . ? (Write child's responses on the lines and circle those that are correct.)

ball - 3

wagon - 2

umbrella - 3

elephant - 3

hippopotamus - 5

orangutan - 4
Let the Sounds Be Heard—Phonemic Awareness

2 Level 2

Syllable Segmentation
I’ll say a word, then you repeat it slowly. (Give examples: cow—boy, ha—ppy, fu—nniy. Circle words to which child responds correctly.)

rainbow (rain—bow) paper (pa—per) scissors (sci—ssors)
doughnut (dough—nut) basket (bas—ket) butterfly (bu—tter—fly)
sidewalk (side—walk) color (co—lor) umbrella (um—bre—lla)

Oral Synthesis—Blending Speech Sounds
Listen and tell me the word I said. (Say each sound slowly. Circle words child identifies correctly.)

n—o r—u—n t—e—n w—a—s c—a—k—e
s—a—y f—a—t h—a—ve w—e—n—t
m—e s—i—t m—o—p s—ai—d st—o—r—y

3 Level 3

Approximation
Do you hear the /b/ sound at the beginning, middle, or end of _____? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

big robot banana
tab cabbage crib

Phoneme Isolation
What sound do you hear _____? (Circle words child identifies correctly.)

First
sun
foot
yes
red

Last
water
buff
candy
ten

Middle
feet
tub
lake
pan
Level 4

Segmentation
Repeat each word slowly so I can hear each separate sound, like c-a-t. (Say a word and have child repeat it slowly, separating each phoneme.)

me  you  book
so  play  skip
man  old  scale

Level 5

Phoneme Deletion
Say the word _____ but leave off the ______. (Repeat, asking child to delete beginning or ending sounds.)

pop  dip  not  cub  fin
can  ten  tab  mop  set

Phoneme Substitution
Replace the first sound in ______ with ______. What is the new word? (Repeat, asking child to substitute middle and ending sounds.)

say  pass  f  stuck

pail  mail  log  hog  get  Det
cat  Rat  tub  cub  pop  mop
pig  dig  dice  mice  jump  Pump
Research Interview Questions

(Appendix C)

Date: ______________

Time: ______________

Name: ____________________________________________________________

1) Research states that phonemic awareness is one of the best predictor’s of reading success in an emergent reader?

Do you agree…if so why? If you don’t agree….why not?

2) Do you believe that intervention and direct instruction for students who lack phonemic awareness skills will be beneficial to the student’s reading ability?

If so why? If not……….why not?

3) What strategies would you suggest for a struggling reader who has no phonemic awareness skills?

4) What strategies would you suggest for a struggling reader who cannot recognize consonant blends in a word?

5) Do you feel teachers are adequately trained in how to instruct phonemic awareness strategies? If so….how? If not….how can they be?