Phonological Awareness Continuum

Phonological awareness is understanding that spoken language is comprised of discrete sounds. It implies sensitivity to any size unit of sound (Yopp, 2000- see *Resources* for Week 7). Children need to hear the sounds of oral language to develop phonological awareness. Children are usually better able to discriminate larger units of sound before smaller units. Children are usually able to <u>blend</u> units of sound before they are able to <u>segment</u> them. English phonemes are not identical with the phonemes of other languages or dialects of English. The HeadsUp! Reading phonological awareness continuum demonstrates nine types of activities:

1. **Rhyming**- finding words that share a common ending feature or sound combination.
    - Infants and toddlers begin to respond to rhyme in songs, nursery rhymes, stories, fingerplays and poems.
    - Preschool and kindergarten children can think of other words and nonsense syllables that rhyme with a given word, or make up their own rhymes. They can tell if two words rhyme or not.
2. **Alliteration**- finding words that share a common initial sound.
    - Infants and toddlers respond to songs, poems and games and nonsense talk with repeated initial sounds.
    - Preschool children can identify other words which begin with same sound (e.g. "Whose name begins like Sophie's name or Cindy's name?" – The emphasis here is on the sound rather than the letter name). They can sing songs which manipulate initial sounds like the "Name Game" (Banana, Fana, Fo Fana) and "Willaby Wallaby Woo."
3. **Sentence Segmenting**- identifying the individual words that compose a sentence.
    - Preschool and Kindergarten children can identify separate words in a sentence. They can take a word away from a sentence (as in game songs where gestures are substituted for words: "*My hat, it has three corners…*;" next round goes: "*My ___, it has three corners…,*" etc.). Kindergarten children can count the words in a sentence.
4. **Syllable Blending**- combining the parts (syllables) of words to form one word. Children are distinguishing units of sound.
    - Preschool and kindergarten children can combine words to make compound words (class-room, base-ball) and syllables to make whole words. (pen-cil, moth-er).
5. **Syllable Segmenting-** identifying the units of sounds that make up one word.
    - Preschool and kindergarten children can clap the syllables of their names (as in the game shown in the video: Hickety Pickety Bumble Bee).
6. **Onset-rime Blending**- being able to take the onset and rime and put them together. The onset is the beginning sound or sound cluster of the word. It may be composed of more than one phoneme. The rime is the part of the word that comes after the

initial onset (e.g. In the word *stop*, *St* is the onset and *op* is the rime; other examples are b-oat, br-ake, r-ed).

- Kindergarten children can listen to initial and ending sounds said by the teacher and combine them to form a word.

7. Onset-rime Segmenting- breaking a word down into its onset and rime.

- Kindergarten and primary children can break words apart, as in "t-ape" in the video.

8. **Phoneme Blending-** combining the phonemes of a word into a word. Phonemes are the smallest units of sound in the language. English is generally considered to have 44 phonemes.

- Kindergarten and primary children can listen to the separate sounds of the word and state what the word is. In the video, the girls say "Nicholas" and "Maxwell" after their teacher pronounces each sound separately.

9. **Phoneme Segmenting**- breaking words down into phonemes. This involves listening to the whole word and identifying which sounds are in the word or how many sounds are in the word.

- Preschool children may be able to identify beginning and ending phonemes. "Tell me a name that begins with the sound /p/."
- Kindergarten and primary children can break words down by pushing counters into boxes for the number of sounds that they hear. The children in the video are first-graders pushing counters into squares for the phonemes of "rug."