EDUCATING PARENTS OF PRESCHOOLERS
ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

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Abstract

Research in early reading development indicates that phonological awareness is a key predictor of future reading achievement. Children’s awareness of the sounds within spoken language, particularly the awareness that words comprise one or more sounds, has been shown to have a direct relationship with success in beginning to read. Unfortunately, some children enter kindergarten in School District #20 Kootenay-Columbia lacking the experiences with language that lead to the development of phonological awareness. This project presents a 5-week parent education and training course containing current, evidence-based, information about phonological awareness development in preschool children, ages 3-5. Additionally, a validated screening tool (Get Ready to Read) is included in the training to provide parents a way to identify risk factors for early reading development difficulties, and to effectively communicate with teachers. The course aims to equip parents with knowledge that will help prepare their children to learn to read and to enhance parent-teacher relationships, since knowledgeable parents are better able to communicate with their preschoolers’ teachers. Moreover, parents’ education in early reading skills is valuable support for their young readers, making possible an easier transition into formal reading instruction.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Learning to read is important to a child’s future success in school (Cunningham, & Stanovich, 1997). In the early elementary years of formal education, reading difficulties are common among children and predict later learning problems (Astrom, Wadsworth, & DeFries, 2007). Hernandez (2011) noted that children who are not reading at grade level by third grade are four times less likely to graduate on time than their peers who are reading at grade level. In the field of education the terms early reading skills and early reading abilities are often used interchangeably. Early reading skills (from birth to age 5) include knowledge and abilities related to the alphabet, phonological awareness, symbolic representation and communication (Rohde, 2015).

Early childhood is an important time in a child’s development and is the period with the most rapid rate of growth in all developmental areas (intellectual, physical, social, and emotional) (Moodie, Daneri, Goldhagen, Halle, Green, & LaMonte, 2014). Literacy, which includes reading, begins to develop long before a child enters formal education. The foundations for early literacy are in learning language, social, and motor skills before kindergarten entry. According to Clay (2001), when children enter kindergarten they have already developed a system for processing information for reading that is not print based but is based in oral language, visual representations, story comprehension, and daily life activities.
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The development of this processing system is based on their experiences in early life; the richer these experiences are, the more developed their processing system will be. Moreover, children’s emergent literacy skill development depends on access to literacy experiences and to individuals from whom they can learn (Connor, Morrison, & Slominsk, 2006). As children begin formal education their processing system at that point is applied to learning to decode and process print for reading.

Phonological awareness is the ability to detect, identify, and manipulate the sound units in language. It is a skill that bridges spoken and written language by equipping children with tools to interpret the alphabetic code. Children can recognize and manipulate the sounds in oral language in syllables (group of letters with one vowel in a word that make one sound), onset-rimes (onset is the initial sound in a word; rime is the ending sound), and phonemes (single letter sounds in a word). Phonological awareness begins to develop in oral language at three years of age with the development of syllable awareness; onset-rimes and specific phoneme knowledge develop closer to five years of age. More complex phonological awareness, especially in written language, develops last, between five and six years of age (Carson, & Bayetto, 2018).

Phonological awareness is a strong predictor of future reading success and is considered key to early literacy skill development (DeBaryshe & Gorecki, 2007). An example of children’s early phonological awareness is their ability to
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recognize and produce rhyming words. Through learning to rhyme, children’s literacy skills shift from focusing on the meaning of words (morphology) to attending to the sounds within the words (phonology). While phonological awareness comes naturally for some children through their experiences with oral language, others need to be specifically taught. When phonological awareness is taught in early childhood, children have an easier time learning other components of reading such as decoding and fluency (Anthony & Francis, 2005).

Purpose

In School District #20, Kootenay-Columbia (SD20) children present with a wide range of early reading preparedness as they enter kindergarten. For those who struggle, early intervention is available district wide via the Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI;2009). LLI, which focuses on children who are not meeting grade-level expectations in reading, is used in SD20 in primary grades, usually grades 1 and 2. Evidence shows that using the LLI develops literacy skills of children in grades K-2 (Ransford-Kaldon, et al., 2010). By the beginning of kindergarten children may have already missed opportunities for learning foundational reading skills. Preventative efforts before kindergarten that focus on identifying and developing early reading skills, notably phonological awareness, could have long lasting effects on children’s future education and help them progress more successfully through school (Wackerle-Hollman, Schmitt, Bradfield, Rodriguez, & McConnell, 2015).
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As an early childhood teacher and parent of a preschooler, I have informed concerns regarding early intervention for literacy and for LLI in SD20. LLI requires specifically trained teachers, small groups of children and regular teaching sessions. Unfortunately, valid implementation of LLI becomes difficult when children do not come to school regularly or when many students do not meet grade expectations. I also believe that parents are a valuable but often under-used teaching resource in the early years. Therefore, to address the intervention challenges I have observed for early literacy in SD20, I developed a parent education program, Phonological Awareness: An Important Early Reading Skill (PA:IRS). PA:IRS aims to provide evidence-based education sessions to parents of preschool children who will attend SD20. PA:IRS focuses on phonological development and includes accompanying material and resources.

Parent Training

In early childhood, parents spend a lot of time with their children. The closest bond that young children have is with their parent(s). Therefore, parents are important resources for promoting early reading learning in the preschool years. Providing parents with integral information, guidance, structure and encouragement, will help to ensure their positive involvement (Crosby, Rasinski, Padak, & Yildirim, 2015). Additionally, the interactions between parent and child may become increasingly positive as parents build their understanding and confidence in working with their children on early reading skills (Levy, Hall,
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Preece, 2018). Creating positive relationships between parent and child in early reading can have long lasting educational benefits (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008). Parents who are more involved and aware of their children’s learning may be more likely to ask questions of educators and be involved in the school community (McKenna, & Millen, 2013).

The importance of parental involvement in their school aged children’s academic achievement is widely supported in research. However, as I discovered in a search of the literature, there is limited research examining the relationship between parental involvement and early reading skills in the preschool years. I found only four studies that examined the relationship between parental involvement and preschool children’s pre-reading skills (Arnold et al., 2008); three of those had methodological flaws such as limited assessment methods for parental involvement and teachers rating/analyzing both parental involvement and child skills. The fourth study found a strong relationship between the frequency of parental involvement and receptive vocabulary skill (Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004). Fantuzzo et al. measured child outcomes in skill assessments and parental involvement was measured via parent self-report regarding communication frequency and engagement in activities with the school.

Parents who are well informed about their children’s reading skills, especially phonological awareness, would possibly be better able to advocate for their children and get them early intervention when needed (McKenna, & Millen,
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2013). The National Early Literacy Panel (NELP, 2008) conducted a review of 32 studies examining the impact of parent-led early reading interventions that focused on strategies to promote early literacy skills for their children. Of these studies, two focused on developing the key early literacy predictor, phonological awareness. Hence, a unique contribution to current practice would be teaching parents of preschoolers in SD20 specific strategies to develop and/or improve phonological awareness in their preschoolers with the intended result being enhanced reading readiness.

Screening for Early Reading Difficulties

Valid and reliable information about a child’s reading skills at the beginning of kindergarten could be beneficial for teachers as they would be better able to direct instruction (Rathbun, & Zhang, 2016). Screening tools can be effective for identifying children’s difficulties in early reading (VanDerHeyden, Snyder, Broussard, & Ramsdell, 2008). Not all children in SD20 schools receive screening by the end of kindergarten and there are wait times for early intervention. A solution may be the use of a valid screening tool like Get Ready To Read (GRTR) which can be administered by parents and can reliably indicate preschool children’s level of early reading skills (Molfese, Molfese, Modglin, Walker, & Neamon, 2004). GRTR focuses on phonological skills, is easy to administer and interpret results. Because GRTR is known to teachers in SD20, the
results are likely to be accepted by them at kindergarten entry. The GRTR screening tool will be provided to parents within PA:IRS.

**Guiding Question**

The development of early reading skills is a topic that piques my interest as I have observed my own 4-year-old son in his development. As I work in schools across my district as a Teacher Teaching on Call (TTOC), I cannot help but notice the number of children in the primary grades who lack early reading skills. I observe many students needing intervention and I wonder about possible preventative measures that could occur before a child starts school, or at least in kindergarten. Perhaps if teachers had more information about each child’s pre-reading or reading abilities at the beginning of the school year, they could identify children at risk earlier, and prescribe the LLI earlier. Perhaps teachers could act more quickly on teaching foundational early reading skills to at-risk children. Perhaps there would be a long-term difference for every child in SD20.

These hypotheses led me to the guiding questions of my project: What would be useful course content for parents of preschoolers in a program concerning early reading skills? What strategies would best motivate parents to learn how to develop early pre-reading skills in their children? In what ways can parents help to identify risks in their own pre-school children?
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PA:IRS Overview

The product of this project is a parent training course called PA:IRS, (Phonological Awareness: An Important Early Reading Skill), provided in Power Point (please see Appendix). The goal of PA:IRS is to provide integral information and evidence-based strategies to parents so they are able to promote phonological awareness, an evidence-based predictor of reading readiness, in their preschoolers, ages 3-5 years. I prepared a five-week teaching package that includes specific information, training tools, and strategies about early phonological awareness development. The information is based on current evidence and is directed to parents of preschool/pre-kindergarten children, to help them prepare their children for kindergarten. The sessions are interactive, intended for groups. In each session, parents will be taught about one specific area of phonological awareness and will be provided with strategies to identify skill weaknesses, activities to promote the skill, and suggestions for materials to use to teach their child at home. Additionally, parents will learn to use the GRTR screening tool to reliably identify risk for reading difficulties in their children. Finally, parents will learn strategies for communicating with teachers.

PA:IRS is a five-session parent course with each session lasting 1.5 - 2 hours. Each session includes an introduction to the targeted skill, an activity to practice the skill, time to share ideas and experiences with other parents, as well as time for questions for the facilitator. Parents will learn the phonological skills
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of rhyming, segmenting, blending and alliteration and strategies to develop these skills in their young children.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to examine integral evidence to gain foundational understanding regarding the importance of developing pre-reading skills as prevention of later reading difficulties for preschool children. Particular focus is on: (a) phonological awareness as a primary risk factor, (b) description of a valid screening tool that identifies risk for early reading difficulties, and (c) parents’ roles in the development of their children’s pre-reading skills to prevent future problems. The synthesis of this review justified the creation of a parent training course in SD20 for developing phonological awareness in preschool children.

Only peer reviewed articles were included in the literature review. These include studies that describe early risks to reading skill development, especially phonological awareness as a key predictor of early reading difficulties. Secondly, evidence is presented regarding the contribution of early screening tools to the identification of early risk, with specific attention on the effectiveness of Get Ready to Read. Finally, a review of evidence that addresses the contribution of parent training to enhanced development of early pre-reading skills in children is presented.
Early Risk Factors

Early risk factors refer to aspects in early childhood that may put a child at greater likelihood of reading difficulty. When children are at risk for reading difficulties they are not necessarily destined to have low reading achievement, but their progress warrants close monitoring, and they perhaps will need intervention. The greater the number of risk factors that a child demonstrates increases the likelihood that they will encounter difficulties in reading (Sabates & Dex, 2012). A recent longitudinal study examined frequency of book reading by parents to their children throughout early childhood and identified low frequency as a risk factor for reading difficulty (Taylor, Zubrick, & Christensen, 2016). Taylor et. al (2016) emphasized the importance of evidence-based interventions for parent-child book reading in early childhood and the impact this has on the child’s future reading achievement. Home life accounts for a number of risk factors for early reading difficulties but also creates opportunity for valuable interventions and learning opportunities when parents are active participants (Hamilton et al. 2016).

Phonological Awareness

One crucial pre-reading skill is phonological awareness. Difficulties in the skills that contribute to phonological awareness may predict future reading difficulties (Gellert & Elbro, 2017). Phonological awareness, that is, the ability to identify and manipulate parts and sounds of language, has an important relationship with early reading ability and is useful to predict later reading
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abilities (Corriveau et al. 2010). A deficit in auditory processing, the intellectual process of interpreting sound as language, may lead to a deficit in phonological awareness and ultimately to difficulties in early reading (Boets, Vandermosten, Poelmans, Luts, Wouters, & Ghesquiere, 2010). According to Gellert (2017) identification of, and early intervention for, deficits in auditory processing and phonological awareness, before formal literacy instruction begins, can prevent future reading difficulties. Early prevention measures may help a child avoid setbacks in learning as well as raise their motivation for learning.

Measurement of changes in phonological awareness in children is possible (Vloedgraven & Verhoeven, 2007). Ongoing monitoring of phonological awareness is valuable because a lack of development may indicate an underlying issue if an intervention does not affect results (DeBaryshe & Gorecki, 2007). Vloedgraven & Verhoeven (2007) showed that as a child’s reading abilities increase, the validity of screening and monitoring phonological awareness decreases. The significance of this is that early screening is important in the early childhood years before formal education begins.

A cross-sectional and longitudinal study assessed auditory processing, phonological awareness, pre-reading and reading skills, and general abilities in a group of 88 preschool and early primary students (Corriveau, 2010). A strong correlation between auditory processing and early reading skills was observed. Furthermore, relationships between rise time, defined as “the rate of change in the
amplitude envelope onsets that correspond to each syllable in the speech stream” (pg. 371) and rhyme awareness (the ability to recognize and identify rhyme in language) were observed (Corriveau, 2010). The value of measuring rhyme ability as an indicator of future literacy achievement is highlighted. Corriveau (2010) asserts that “Auditory processing influences reading acquisition through its effects on a child’s ability to extract phonological information from the speech stream” (pg. 380). The correlation between auditory processing and reading acquisition has been a topic of debate in other studies (Hood, & Conlon, 2004; Marshall et al. 2001; Richardson et al. 2004). However, a disability in auditory processing is likely to influence the ability to differentiate between sounds in phonological awareness.

Phonological awareness is important to pre-reading development that occurs in early childhood. Batson-Manuson (2017) explored how preschool phonological awareness in the spring prior to kindergarten predicted future first-grade reading skills 2 years later for 149 preschoolers. They found a significant relationship between phonological awareness in preschool and first grade reading ability. The skills inherent to phonological awareness (i.e., rhyming, the vowel sounds in the emphasized syllables match but the beginning sounds do not; alliteration, the repetition of the initial sound in words; blending, combining individual sounds to make up a word; and segmenting, dissecting the sounds in a word into single sounds or syllables) may be reliable for identifying risk for
reading difficulties in early primary grades (Carson, 2017). Furthermore, there are a number of studies indicating that interventions that focus on phonological awareness increase reading achievement if they occur before third grade (Frijters, Tsujimoto, Boada, Gottwalk, Hill, Jacobson, Gruen, 2018; Grimm, Solari, McIntyre, & Denton, 2018; Inoue, Georgiou, Parrila, & Kirby, 2018). Training adults to promote these skills and to identify difficulties in phonological awareness may be valuable to the future reading success and development of children with delays in pre-reading skills in early childhood.

**Screening Tools**

Preschool screening is effective to provide a better understanding of a child’s potential early reading development. Early screening for risks to reading development, that is, screening before formal education begins, may be difficult to implement if the focus is on undeveloped reading skills rather than pre-reading skills.

Dynamic screening, which is measuring learning potential rather than assessing only the child’s current ability, provides teachers and educators with information specific to the child and can direct instruction. Bridges (2011) investigated dynamic screening of phonological awareness in a kindergarten population and found that it predicted reading achievement of the kindergarten children at the end of the school year. Screening information can lead to a Response to Intervention (RTI) model of instruction. Catts (2009) states, “Despite
the promise of RTI to improve the early identification of Reading Disability (RD), numerous challenges remain. A major challenge is the development of universal screening tools that can accurately identify an initial pool of children at risk” (pg. 163). There is still a need for the development of reliable and valid early screening tools to identify children at risk for reading difficulties.

In a longitudinal study, Missall et al. (2007) examined the early reading skills of 143 children from early preschool until the end of kindergarten. Findings indicated that administration of the Early Literacy Individual Growth and Development Indicators (EL-IGDI: Roseth, Missall & McConnell, 2012), a screening tool used in preschool, was predictive of reading achievement at the end of kindergarten. Further investigation of the EL-IGDI indicated that focusing on early literacy skills in preschool can result in higher reading achievement later. Missall et. al. claimed, “changes in the EL-IGDIs predicted large changes in later early reading skills.” This suggests that any attempt to increase a student’s early literacy skills with respect to language, rhyming, and alliteration should result in positive shifts in that student’s later reading skills” (pg. 446). Therefore, the importance of pre-reading skills, or those that develop before the commencement of formal education is clear. Early screening tools are valuable.

Early screening tools are beneficial for all students with reading difficulties, not only those who have learning disabilities. Marston, et al., (2007) stated, “The literature clearly describes poor outcomes for students who do not
read with proficiency, whether or not these students have an identified learning disability” (pg. 113). Literacy skills are foundational in education and all students benefit from having deficiencies identified early in their education. Marston et. al. (2007) conducted a case study using three early literacy measures as screening tools to monitor progress: letter-sound correspondence, onset phoneme identification, and phoneme segmentation. These were administered every 4-6 months. Findings indicated that all three predicted future reading achievement. Marston et. al. (2007) further claimed “Early literacy assessment within a problem-solving framework holds promise for improving overall student achievement and reducing the number of students with significant reading problems” (pg. 113). Assessment of literacy skills is beneficial for all students in the education system. It allows for identification of learning disabilities and also leads to development of reading skills in other students in the learning environment who have not been screened.

Early detection of children who are at risk of reading difficulties can provide educators with better insight and the ability to predict future difficulties in reading. In a longitudinal study of 200 Finnish children from birth to school age Lyttinen (2006) concluded that difficulties in phonological awareness, naming speed, and letter knowledge were indicators of children at risk for future reading difficulties. Another interesting finding of this study indicated that early detection is not always possible, as some children exhibit first signs of being at risk late in
their education. These children exhibited the same characteristics as the younger students but later in their education. Another longitudinal study that included 261 Chinese children over a 6-year span (3-8 years of age) similarly concluded that phonological awareness, rapid naming and morphological awareness were early predictors of reading achievement Lei (2011). Overall, these studies highlight the importance of early assessment of early literacy skills to identify children at risk of reading difficulties, and particularly of phonological awareness.

A screening tool that accurately identifies children with potential reading difficulties is the Revised Get Ready to Read! (GRTR-R: Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2009). Farrington and Lonigan (2015) examined the reliability of the GRTR-R in a study of 1,351 children. The proportion of accurate measurement (using Item Response Theory (IRT) analysis) for the GRTR-R in indicating preschool aged children’s pre-reading skills was approximately 72%. These results indicate that the GRTR-R can reliably identify children who are at risk for developing difficulties in reading (Farrington & Lonigan, 2015). It has the greatest level of precision when assessing children of average or below average reading ability and is therefore effective at identifying children in need of early intervention. A further benefit is that administering the GRTR-R can be performed by individuals without specialized training, making it easily accessible.
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Parental Involvement

For the purpose of this paper, parental involvement refers to activities which parents can use to contribute to their child’s future reading success by developing pre-reading skills in their children, specifically phonological awareness, in all environments.

A longitudinal study conducted over 3 years examined the effects of parental involvement in early literacy and found that parents had a substantial impact on pre-reading development (Crosby, Rasinski, Padak & Yildirim, 2015). The children of parents who regularly implemented the suggested lessons made positive gains in their reading achievement. Reading achievement was measured through changes from pre-test to post-test assessments which were administered by the classroom teacher and provided a fluency score based on the number of words correct per minute (WCPM: number of words that the child read correctly divided by the number of minutes). Additionally, parental attitude improved because they viewed the lessons as valuable to their child’s reading development.

Moreover, the study examined the sustainability of parental involvement over two years and found that the number of parents participating increased and that they progressively implemented more lessons with their children. Crosby et al. findings suggest that such a program is sustainable since parental involvement increases, resulting in increased reading achievement for their children.
Parents are more likely to become involved in their children’s learning when they perceive themselves as having the skills and knowledge to do so (Pillinger, & Wood, 2014). Moreover, they will be involved when opportunities are presented to them directly. Pillinger & Wood identified a correlation between positive parental attitude towards reading and a positive attitude toward reading by the child. Parents in this study were provided with modeling, instruction and reinforcement around educational topics that created a belief that the activities were important and beneficial for their child’s reading development. Teaching parents strategies that were developmentally appropriate for their children led to positive attitudes, and achievable expectations.

Parents are highly invested in their child’s education and academic achievement (McKenna, & Millen, 2013). Teaching parents the skills to be involved in their child’s reading development therefore has many benefits. Parent’s involvement provides children with many learning opportunities in a number of different settings (Woods, Kashinath, & Goldstein, 2004). Children may benefit from more instructional time in the classroom since they will not be removed for intervention time. Other benefits may include cost effectiveness, time and accessibility convenience, and transferable knowledge for other children in the family who are developing pre-reading skills.
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Gaps for SD20

The most significant predictive skills of future reading abilities are early development of auditory processing and phonological awareness. Though there is considerable historic attention to reading skill development for school aged children, in SD20 early foundational reading development and its connection to the classroom are not well attended to, nor is pre-reading development in early childhood. Parents’ understanding of foundational phonological awareness (i.e. rhyme, alliteration, blending and segmenting) may help in early detection of reading difficulties, prevention strategies, and early interventions. Within SD20 schools there appears to be a need for early intervention for kindergarten students learning to read. Parents in SD20 are an important resource so providing them with integral knowledge about their own children’s development would be advantageous. Classroom teachers and early intervention teachers would be better informed on the specific needs of each student if they were provided with valid individualized information on each child’s phonological awareness. Phonological awareness development benefits all early learners, not just those who are struggling (Anthony & Francis, 2005).
Chapter 3

Project Overview and Rationale

Evidence supports the importance of phonological awareness development in early childhood for optimum reading skills as formal education begins. When parents of preschool children were provided information about strategies to enhance the literacy environment at home, their children showed greater gains in phonological awareness than those of parents without the information (Nicklas & Schneider, 2017). PA:IRS consists of five evidence-based parent education sessions presented in power point. All recommended resources and material lists are provided for each session with instructions for their initial presentation and use in practice. Adult learning theory is considered to optimize parents’ motivation and enjoyment in learning. Parents of preschoolers (ages 3-5 years) will learn how to develop phonological awareness, a key predictor of reading readiness and an essential element in the development of early pre-reading skills.

Adult Learning

Different learning styles of adults were an important consideration in designing the PA:IRS education sessions. The learning styles considered were visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (Rogowsky et al. 2015). Visual learners prefer information presented visually; through reading, watching videos or looking at diagrams/images. Auditory learners prefer information presented orally or recordings, they listen to learn. Finally, kinesthetic learners prefer doing, and
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benefit from movement and action. Most adults benefit from a presentation of material using a combination of these styles (Barry & Egan, 2018). Additionally, there is evidence that a social learning approach may be the most effective for learning. A social learning approach provides learners with opportunities to collaborate with other learners, share ideas and discuss what they have learned (Davis, 2013). PA:IRS considers these adult learning issues in its presentation. PA:IRS education sessions will be a community project facilitated by an instructor with a bachelor’s degree in education and with a combination of training and experience in early literacy.

PA:IRS Overview

Summary of The Sessions

Week 1. Introduction and Risk Factors.

Goals. To give parents an understanding of the impact they can have on their children’s pre-reading skill development and to teach them basic strategies to develop these skills in their children.

1. Presentation and Discussion

   a. Early childhood development

   b. Early reading skills

2. Materials and Resources
Week 2. Phonological Awareness: Part A

Goals. To make parents comfortable and confident using specific strategies (rhyme and alliteration) with their children at home.

1. Group Discussion and Practice
   a. Phonological awareness is a foundation skill to reading
   b. Rhyme
   c. Alliteration

2. Materials and Resources
   a. Rhyming games
      http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/rhyming_games
   b. Alliteration http://www.readingrockets.org/reading-tips/alliteration
Week 3. Phonological Awareness: Part B

Goals. To make parents comfortable and confident in using new strategies (blending and segmenting) with their children at home.

1. Group Discussion and Practice
   a. Segmenting
   b. Blending
   c. Culminating activity and resource

2. Materials and Resources
   a. Blending and segmenting games
     http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/blending_games
   b. Shining Stars Culminating activity booklet

Week 4. Screening

Goals. To teach use of the screening tool, GRTR, and how to interpret the results.

1. Discussion
   a. How to use the screening tool
   b. What the results mean

2. Materials and Resources
   a. Learning Styles assessment sheet and scoring guide:
     https://thinktank.arizona.edu/sites/thinktank.arizona.edu/files/webs
Week 5. Review and Questions

**Goals.** To teach parents how to share information about their child’s early reading development with teachers and to develop positive parent-teacher relationships.

1. Discussion
   a. What now?
   b. How to use these sessions to help your child in their entry into formal education

2. Materials and Resources
   a. The development of phonological awareness skills
      http://www.readingrockets.org/article/development-phonological-skills
b. Parent Resources http://www.readingrockets.org/audience/parents

http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/phonologicalphonemic

ic http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/advocate

The PA:IRS Course

PA:IRS will enroll a minimum of 10 parent participants and a maximum of 14. This will allow for a vibrant interactive learning environment with opportunity for open discussion, sharing of ideas and a level of comfort for all participants. Parents will be from the SD20 catchment area and have children who are ages 3 to 5 years. Parents will be recruited through two local community organizations, Columbia Basin Alliance of Literacy (CBAL) and Trail Family Individual Resource Centre Society (FAIR). Both of these organizations provide funding for literacy programs for young families and have spaces available to accommodate hosting a program like PA:IRS.

Each week parents will be taught a specific strategy, given time to practice, collaborate with other parents to actively work together for a common goal, ask questions, and observe relevant materials they could use with their children. Parents will be supplied with pen/pencils, a folder that contains paper for taking notes as well as the different checklists, forms and information packages that will be used in the upcoming sessions.

The education sessions will occur weekly to ensure the information stays viable as ongoing learning. The sessions will last between 1.5 and 2 hours to
provide enough time for review, presentation of a new strategy, practice using related activities, group interaction, and questions. Participants will use their folders to take and store notes throughout each session and to note questions. Each session will incorporate adult learning theory to engage every type of learner and to create a learning community, encouraging collaboration among parents. Sessions 2-5 will begin with time to review information from the previous week and to discuss practice issues at home during the previous week. Review is important for refresher as the sessions build upon one another and parents’ busy lives may prevent them from reviewing on their own. New information for each session will be introduced with an engaging component to gain interest, a ‘hook’, to ensure participants become actively involved.

**Session objectives.** By week five parents will:

1. Understand and identify risk factors for reading difficulty
2. Describe/Define Phonological Awareness and related skills:
   a. Rhyme,
   b. Alliteration,
   c. Segmenting,
   d. Blending
3. Know how to use the Screening Tool, Get Ready to Read
4. Understand how to use and share the information as practiced, in everyday situations, with their preschool children and
5. Have confidence to share information about their child’s skills with their teachers.

**Session one.** The first session will draw parents into the topic of phonological awareness. The provided material will demonstrate the impact of early childhood experiences, i.e. social interactions, literacy activities, programs, etc., on reading development. The hook for this session is a video the parents will view (8 minutes) that demonstrates interactions between a parent and child and highlights strategies that they will learn. Parents will discuss the video with one another (10 minutes). The initial session is very important to get parent ‘buy-in’ to the project and future sessions. The purpose of the video is for PA:IRS parents to develop interest in the topic and become dedicated to attending and participating. PA:IRS parents will observe how to use strategies to help their children develop phonological awareness (30 minutes). They will have time to discuss content (30 minutes). The aim is for parents to understand the steps to reading development, that is, from oral language to reading and writing.

**Session two.** Session two will begin with a review of phonological awareness. Two components of phonological awareness, rhyme and alliteration, will be defined and discussed (15 minutes). The group will participate in an activity to practice rhyme, learn each other’s names and encourage working together (20 minutes). Strategies about components of phonological awareness will be introduced. The strategy of using a puppet will be introduced and steps to
creating a puppet profile are explored (20 minutes). Puppets will be used to teach songs and activities in a fun and engaging way to preschoolers. The facilitator will demonstrate interactive activities using different methods to help the parents understand rhyme and alliteration (15 minutes). There will be time to practice the activities and use the puppet in a group (15 minutes). A question time at the end will allow parents time to ask questions about the activity (10 minutes). The goal is, through group practice, to make parents comfortable and confident in the use of strategies with their children at home.

**Session three.** Session three will begin with a review of the first two components, rhyme and alliteration, of phonological awareness introduced in the last session (5 minutes). The group will play a game that provides practice using sounds (oral language skills) to make words which will introduce the new components of phonological awareness, blending and segmenting (10 minutes). Parents will learn the definitions of blending and segmenting as well as examples of each (10 minutes). Using their puppet from session 2, parents will explore a number of games and activities (20 minutes). Finally, the group will complete a culminating activity (50 minutes) that combines all the strategies learned so far in the 3 sessions. The activity is a whole group exploration using a package created by the National Institute for Literacy for parents of preschool children (Goldman, & Adler, 2007). The group will explore the package together step by step. Parents will discuss the strategies they observe being used in the package.
**Session four.** Session four will begin with a definition and explanation of screening. Parents will complete an assessment of preferred snack foods, salty versus sweet snack foods (5 minutes). The group will discuss the activity and how it is being used as a screening tool (5 minutes) and what the results are from the group. This activity will provide parents with an understanding of screening and how this applies to Get Ready to Read (GRTR: Whitehurst, & Lonigan, 2001). Parents will learn about GRTR through an online interactive demonstration of the tool. Exploring GRTR will include the administration protocol (10 minutes), hands-on time (20 minutes), discussion surrounding components of GRTR (10 minutes), and analysis of phonological awareness components of that are addressed (10 minutes). Parents will use GRTR in this time, ideally using their own computers, but paper and pencil practice will be an alternative. Additionally, parents will administer a mock GRTR amongst one another as practice for future use with a child (15 minutes). At the end of the class there will be a structured discussion time (15 minutes) to address the following: (a) what it was like to administer GRTR and follow the guidelines; (b) share with each other the challenges and benefits of using GRTR; (c) discuss the meaning of the results for a child; and (d) discuss how to share the results with a teacher upon school entry. At the end of the session parents will be asked to bring next time, books, games, or materials from home, library, or online that they think are valuable resources for other parents to know about.
Session five. Session five will begin with a comprehensive review of the previous four sessions; early childhood and early reading development, phonological awareness (rhyme, alliteration, blending, and segmenting), and Get Ready to Read (10 minutes). The group will complete an activity where parents share what they have found valuable in the course (15 minutes). Parents will have time to reflect and analyze how their interactions with their children have changed and progressed (10 minutes) and share with one another (5 minutes). Furthermore, parents will have time to share resources they may have discovered at home, the library, or on the internet (45 minutes). Finally, the group will discuss next steps in the development of their children’s early reading skills (15 minutes). Parents will learn strategies to develop parent-teacher communication and how to share concerns about their child’s reading development.

Rationale

When parents are trained in strategies to promote their child’s learning in the area of reading, they report reduced stress, greater self-satisfaction in their parenting and goal achievement (Gerber, Sharry, & Streek, 2016). Therefore, parent training is not only beneficial for developing children’s reading skills, but it is also beneficial for parents. Through engaging in meaningful reading-based activities at home, parents will develop a more positive attitude towards reading development and even find enjoyment in learning (Neumann & Neumann, 2009).
Limitations and Future Directions

PA:IRS has not yet been piloted and is therefore untested. As PA:IRS is tested in real time in the future, alterations may be necessary.

A space large enough for 15 adults (14 participants and 1 facilitator) to move around freely but also to sit comfortably will be required and has not yet been identified. The potential facility will require internet access, a projector, and a screen to present the PowerPoint. Computers provided for participants would be valuable but not necessary for full participation. Access to computers will allow for more hands-on experience using the screening tool, but experience can still occur within the group if individual computers are not available.

There are challenges to implementing a community education project. Primary challenges include recruitment, committed attendance, funding and a venue. Recruitment presents an obstacle in appropriately advertising with clarity regarding the intentions and learning outcomes of the program. Parents need to see value in the PA:IRS information before they will enroll. Contacting parents directly is a challenge as some children are in childcare (both public and private), some are at home, and some are with other family. Identifying the best method to reach this diverse population will be a future goal. Contacting families enrolled in the upcoming kindergarten year may be a strategy for enrollment, but confidentiality rules could be prohibitive. Collaboration with SD20 to facilitate communication with families in the district may be a solution.
Funding for PA:IRS will be a necessary requirement. Funding is needed for renting space and services, facilitator costs, advertising, refreshments, and other miscellaneous expenses. Community organizations (CBAL and FAIR) that fund literacy-based programs need to be approached with the PA:IRS proposal in hopes to receive funding.

A challenge for implementing PA:IRS in SD20 is its geography; it contains several different geographical areas, and people cannot travel easily, especially in the winter. An important decision will be in which community or communities to hold PA:IRS. This will require dissemination of information and then surveys reaching out to potentially interested parents.

A suitable venue with computer/Wi-Fi access for participants will allow parents to learn how to use GRTR since it requires online interaction. A local college campus venue would ensure computer access for all participants (e.g., Trail and Castlegar). Procuring space for PA:IRS at colleges in SD20 will need to be a priority endeavor.

There are currently several literacy-based programs in the community that focus on children’s literacy development, but there are none that focus on educating parents. The existing programs help to develop phonological awareness through teaching songs and reading stories to young children and in some, parents are required to stay with their child and participate. Parents therefore indirectly learn skills to develop phonological awareness. Additionally, the community
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offers a one-time course to parents intermittently, but there are no information sessions focused on early literacy and that highlight phonological awareness. Therefore, there exists challenge and opportunity to directly educate parents on the value of early literacy in collaboration with these existing established programs. PA:IRS intends to fill the gap.

Conclusion

Research shows the importance of the early years in a child’s life and notably the impact that phonological awareness development has on reading success (Carson, 2017). PA:IRS, and the materials provided, aim to expose parents to new ways of thinking about their child’s early reading development, especially pre-reading phonological awareness skills. The goal of PA:IRS is to enhance parents’ understanding of preschool pre-reading development and to instill motivation to read, sing, and talk with their children because they will learn to appreciate the impact of their efforts. This project will be valuable to the communities of SD20 because PA:IRS will better prepare our children for learning to read.
Chapter 4

Conclusions and Reflection

My questions were: What would be useful course content for parents of preschoolers in a program concerning early reading skills? What strategies would best motivate parents to learn how to develop early pre-reading skills? In what ways can parents help to identify risks in their own pre-school children?

To address these questions I researched phonological awareness, early reading skills, parental involvement, adult learning theory, screening tools and early risk factors. To address the gap in SD20 for parental training in phonological awareness I created a parent training course that I call PA:IRS. PA:IRS is designed to meet the pre-reading development needs of students entering kindergarten in SD20 through educating parents about phonological awareness development in their preschool aged children.

Summary of Conclusions

Early pre-reading skills are important to the development of reading in formal education. I hope that PA:IRS will be beneficial to parents, teachers and early childhood caregivers as it may be used to justify instructional choices, early interventions and to direct learning goals. PA:IRS is designed for and focuses on the needs of the students and families in SD20, but it could be useful in other communities that have a need for parent training in phonological awareness.
One of the goals of PA:IRS is to equip parents with knowledge to help prepare their children to learn to read. Communication between parents and teachers regarding children’s reading readiness would be valuable at the beginning of kindergarten. Screening information would be valuable to teachers for them to meet reading needs early and to ease the transition into formal reading instruction. Currently in SD20 there is a lack of such information for kindergarten teachers. A basic form is completed at kindergarten registration and there is a half day school-based orientation where all the parents meet with the kindergarten teachers. My project shows that further development in this area would be beneficial, especially to discover exactly what teachers want to know about their students at the beginning of kindergarten.

PA:IRS explains to parents components of phonological awareness (rhyme, alliteration, segmentation and blending) and how to use Get Ready to Read. The information provided in PA:IRS will indicate a child’s status is in early reading development skills

PA:IRS is an unpiloted project and there are challenges in SD20 to address in order to move forward and implement it in the community. First, it would be important to ensure that the information from parents is in a format that is simple and useful for teachers. One way of addressing this challenge is through meeting with teachers to develop a standard form to be used across the district for parents
to complete. The form would provide teachers with additional information specific to each child beyond what the screening tool provides.

Secondly, it will be important to remove barriers to attending PA:IRS, so a survey to parents of preschoolers for planning purposes will be necessary, to determine interest concerning community, facility, day and time for the weekly sessions to be held needs to be gathered to ensure optimal attendance.

**Learnings and Understandings**

Through the development of this project, my own practice has been influenced both professionally and personally in my teaching and parenting. I have learned more about the impact my interactions with young children have and the importance of phonological awareness in the preschool years. As a teacher teaching on call, I have the opportunity to work in a variety of roles in the school district. This past school year I have worked several weeks in early intervention and I have been able to have meaningful discussions about early reading development with classroom teachers. My own learning has also been influential as I was able to expand on the lessons left for me to teach to the students, but also really impacted my ability to plan upcoming lessons. I found that I was able to quickly and easily expand on learning in the middle of a lesson when I discovered that the students were struggling. Through my research on phonological awareness, I was able to identify areas to work on (e.g., rhyming) and make it fun for the students. The students that I worked with asked to play rhyming games
and sing the rhyming songs as they believed they were a reward at the end rather than reinforcement of their learning.

In my personal life, as a parent of a preschool aged child, I was able to have meaningful conversations regarding learning and development with other parents. It has led to discussions about reading at home with your child and the entry into formal education. Every child has different experiences at home and entry into the education system can be very different for each one. I am very curious about making an easier transition for children and parents. Furthermore, through my discussions with other parents about local community programs for preschool age children I have learned what is important to them. Parents that I talked to value an element of learning in the program but also a fun experience that their child wants to participate in and continue attending. Community programs are designed with these concerns in mind and I am more aware of what the goals are in terms of development and learning. The programs consist of singing songs, reading books together, playtime and snacks which indicates that they are developing early reading skills. Through talking with the library staff who implement many of these programs, the goal is exposure to reading activities and developing a love of reading. These programs support the development of early reading skills, primarily phonological awareness, without the parents’ knowledge. Educating parents about phonological awareness would be powerful to make them aware of how these programs help to develop early reading skills in
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preschool aged children. There appears to be opportunity for connection between home, school and community to better prepare children for formal education and reading development.

Through the development of PA:IRS, I have learned much about the importance of the preschool years in the development of early reading skills and the fundamental role that parents have in that development. This was always something I believed and valued in raising my own child; but my research really instilled a new appreciation for the role we have as parents. The growth and development that occurs in children in the first five years of life is remarkable. This time period prepares children for a lifetime of learning, and developing early reading skills helps prepare them for future reading achievement. I really want to inform and educate parents of children aged 3 to 5 in School District 20: Kootenay Columbia about the important role they have in their children’s lives. Through PA:IRS I hope that teachers and schools will be provided with more information to develop early reading skills and later on develop their reading. Parents want to do what is best for their children, but life can get busy and without a good foundational understanding of the importance of reading to our children, talking, playing, singing, and interacting with our children, these things can be forgotten or overlooked. When parents understand what phonological awareness is, how to develop it, how to screen for difficulties and how to inform teachers then I believe that they will be more likely to prioritize these things in
their children’s schedules. My goal is to create a community that supports our children in their early years to better prepare them for formal education and their reading achievement. The goal is to have a community that supports its children at home, school and in public programs to ensure success for all.

Through the process of researching and creating PA:IRS, I learned a great deal about the importance of phonological awareness in the development of early reading skills in preschool aged children. This process reinforced my belief that the early years in a child’s life are important to the development of pre-reading skills and parents play a significant role in the development of these skills. I created PA:IRS as a 5-week parent training course with the goal of teaching parents the importance of phonological awareness, how they can develop early reading skills, how to use a screening tool and finally how to interpret the results and share them with their child’s teacher. Training parents in all of these areas will prepare them to be knowledgeable in their child’s development of early reading skills and intentional in their interactions through reading, singing, playing and communicating.
References


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Appendix

Information Sessions

Phonological Awareness: An important early reading skill (PA:IRS)

Required resources:
• A duo tang, pen and pencil for each participant
• Blank hole punched lined paper for note taking
• Hole punched handouts
  Session 1. ELORS, GRTR Checklist
  Session 3. Shining Stars booklet
  Session 4. Learning Styles assessment sheet and scoring guide, GRTR screening tool answer sheet
  Session 5. Blank paper for activity
• A board or poster paper for writing group ideas on
• Computers with internet access

Snacks for Session 5. Sweet and Salty theme from Session 4 Screening tool demonstration
A brief overview of what the information session will look like and what will be discussed in each session.

Important to highlight the different topics and how they all come together.
Session One
Introduction and Risk Factors

- Early childhood development
  Language development starts even before a child is out of their mother’s womb.

- Early reading skills
  The skills required for reading begin to develop in infancy. Even before a child is speaking, early reading skills are developed through listening to oral language.

Even in the womb, a fetus is able to hear the rhythm of language. This is the earliest language development that occurs.

In infancy, children are mimicking language, and are calmed when spoken to.

In the toddler years, children are able to understand language and starting to explore speaking themselves.

All of these stages are building the skills necessary for early reading.

DISCUSSION OPPORTUNITY: What have you noticed about your own child(ren)’s language development?
Parents in this video are using strategies to develop the early reading skills of their young children. They can be seen playing games that develop phonological awareness. In the upcoming sessions, we will be learning these strategies, playing games, and learning a screening tool. Plus much more!

https://youtu.be/BL7w6YLiHEs
Oral language develops early. GENERALLY:

- Children say their first words between 12 and 18 months of age.
- They start to use complex sentences between the age of 4 to 4 1/2 years.
- By the time they start kindergarten, children know most of the basics of their language, so that they can communicate easily with someone who speaks as they do.

Reading and Writing develop parallel to one another.

Writing requires fine motor skills but the elements of reading and writing development are otherwise comparable.

Reading and Writing require:

- Oral language skills and phonological awareness
- Motivation to learn and appreciation for literate forms
- Print awareness and letter knowledge
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Two Risk Factors for Reading Difficulty

- Lack of book reading in early childhood

- Phonological awareness: the ability to hear sounds that make up words in language.
  - Will be discussed in detail in weeks 2 and 3.

Reading to children is very important to the development of early reading skills. Reading to children in infancy is important and has long lasting benefits when made part of a routine.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and work with sounds in spoken language.
Phonological awareness is the foundation for learning to read.
Some kids pick it up naturally but others need to be taught.
The Value of Early Detection

- Identifying difficulties in early reading skills:
  - can prevent difficulties in reading in primary grades
  - provides children with a better attitude towards reading and overall motivation to read
  - avoids setback in reading acquisition once formal education begins


This is why this information set is valuable in these early years and before kindergarten starts.
Some of the early reading skills that indicate readiness for reading. Think about your child and ask yourself if they are able to do most of these things. Ability to do these skills is a great indicator that your child is ready to start reading. If your child is not able to do these things then there are many ways to encourage development of these which we will discuss further in this session.
These are some of the more obvious signs that a child might be struggling with phonological awareness. Phonological awareness develops naturally in many children but in other children it needs to be taught. There are many great activities and strategies to help develop phonological awareness in young children. All children benefit from practice with the skills making up phonological awareness which will be discussed further in the upcoming sessions.

Some Signs to look for that might indicate a difficulty in Phonological Awareness

- Has a difficult time learning nursery rhymes
- Not enjoying rhyming stories or songs
- Difficulty counting out syllables that make up words
- A hard time noticing sound repetition and/or alliteration
- Frustrated with reading tasks
The ELORS (Early Literacy Observation and Rating Scale) is a rating scale that is used in a number of domains of learning included early literacy. It can be used to indicate if there is a concern regarding a child’s early reading skills. The scale looks at some basic skills for reading and also includes any observational notes to supplement the questions.

Results from this rating scale can be used to focus activities to work on areas of difficulty (for example, learning letter sounds). The rating scale can be done by parents or teachers and is a helpful tool in identifying areas of need of development.

The ELORS can be done over a span of time (example, a week) to best identify where the child is at and what areas require growth.
Discuss why these skills might be beneficial to your child and their pre-reading skills.

Questions to ask and guide discussion:

When is a good time in your schedule to read with your children?

Does your child like to ask questions in a story? Does this frustrate you or do you encourage this?

Does your child like to tell you stories? Do they have a good imagination?
Suggestions/Strategies for Reading with Your Child Continued

Discuss why these skills might be beneficial to your child and their pre-reading skills.

Questions to ask and guide discussion:

Do you have a library card?

Do you enjoy reading to your child or do you find it a challenge/chores?
Suggestions/Strategies for Reading with Your Child Continued
Discuss why these skills might be beneficial to your child and their pre-reading skills.

Questions to ask and guide discussion:

Do your children have any favourite books? Do you have one from your childhood?

Does your child recognize text yet?
Get up and move! Find someone to:

Share with a partner a strategy that you already do at home with your child.

Choose one or more of the strategies from the list that you will try and implement into your week with your child.

A challenge for the week. Encourage parents to try at least one of them, especially working reading into their routine if they don’t already.
Activity: Home Literacy Environment Checklist

What appears to be important? (Access to books, different types of books, alphabet based activities, someone to: read to them, interact with them, ask questions, teach songs and rhymes, encourage them and take them to libraries or book stores, be an example of through reading themselves, showing enjoyment in reading and books, and working with them to grow in reading skills)

Complete the checklist for themselves and challenge themselves to improving the home literacy environment at their own home.
Questions

» Any questions from today?
» Any areas you are interested in learning more about?

Guiding Questions/Prompts

What was something you found interesting from today’s session? Something you didn’t know?
Do these changes feel overwhelming or possible to implement in your life?
Encourage a few different parents to quickly share with the group about what they tried and how it went. If there doesn’t seem to be interest in sharing as a group then small groups can be broken up and sharing can happen in a smaller scale.
We started talking about phonological awareness last week but this week we will go further into what exactly it is and why it’s so important in the development of early reading skills.
Phonological awareness is a skill that most children pick up on their own but some children need to be taught.

Phonological awareness develops in a rich language environment through stories, songs, rhymes, games, conversation, etc.

When teaching phonological awareness, the simplest skill to teach is rhyme.
The goal of this activity is to learn each other’s names, work together and start thinking about rhyme which we will be learning about this session!

Game Instructions:
Have everyone sit or stand in a circle so that you have clear visibility of everyone. Choose someone to start.
They begin by stating their name and then making a rhyme. (For example, a woman named Mary might say "My name is Mary and I'm red as a cherry").
The next person in line must repeat the 1st players' rhyme and then add their own. (So let's say the next person is a man named Ray. He might say "This is Mary, red as a cherry" pointing to Mary and then add "My name is Ray and I don't eat hay").
The next person would then repeat both Mary and Ray's rhymes and then add their own.
This continues around the circle until everyone has gone.

Two skills of phonological awareness that we will discuss today are:

- Rhyme
- Alliteration

Who can define Rhyme? Give an example?
Words that sound the same but have a different beginning sound. Example: Tree and Bee
Hey, diddle, diddle. The cat and the fiddle. The **cow jumped over the moon**. The little dog laughed. To see such sport. And the dish ran away with the **spoon**.

Who can define Alliteration? Give an example?
The beginning sounds are the same in a pair (or greater set) of words. Example: Blue Butterfly, or Sally sat slowly.

http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/rhyming_games
http://www.readingrockets.org/reading-tips/alliteration
Creating a puppet is a fun way for your child to learn phonological awareness. Have fun being creative. It is also fun to just use your hand as your puppet as you will never lose it and can use it for learning at any spare moment (in line at the zoo, waiting for a movie to start, etc.).
Discuss how a story can really help a child to get excited about a puppet. It is important to build a relationship with the puppet so that your child enjoys time with it. When your child is having fun and being silly then they won’t even realize that they are learning. We will discuss the strategies and games that you can use with your new puppet in this session and session 3.

**Steps to creating**

- Decide what kind of animal or object your puppet is. (ex. Talking airplane if that’s what your child would love)
- Give your puppet a name. Something that is easy to rhyme with or is funny is great!
- Develop puppets personality. (silly, grumpy, serious, sleepy, etc.)
- Build a backstory for your puppet (how did this puppet come to live with you)
- Start having fun exploring phonological awareness with your new puppet friend!
An example of a made up profile for a sock puppet named Tilly. I chose the name Tilly because it rhymes with Silly and is also fun for practicing alliteration (which we will discuss in a couple slides).
Rhyme

- The Oxford Dictionary defines rhyme as “correspondence of sound between words or the endings of words, especially when these are used at the ends of lines of poetry”
- A large number of children’s songs and books incorporate rhyme into them. A great way to practice rhyme is to play rhyming games, read books with rhyme and sing songs that have rhyming in them.
- Through practice, your child will begin to recognize and identify rhyme in everyday life.

Rhyming Games: Creating your own games while in the car or waiting in an office can be a lot of fun. It is as simple as your child giving you a word and saying a word (or as many as you can) that rhymes with it. Take turns with coming up with words and see how many you can come up with.

Rhyming Books: There are a number of popular children’s books that incorporate rhyme (Ex. Dr. Seuss books, Nursery Rhyme books, Each Peach Pear Plum by Janet and Allan Ahlberg, The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson, etc.). Reading these books is great on its own but a further extension is leaving out the last rhyming word and seeing if your child can complete it on their own (Ex. Humpty Dumpty sat on the WALL, Humpty Dumpty had a gre...).

Rhyming Songs: Down by the Bay is a fun and silly song that practices rhyming. There are many verses that can be looked up (ex. Have you ever seen a BEAR sitting in a CHAIR) or you can make up your own (Have you ever seen a(n)________, EATING/WEARING/etc. a(n)_________.)
Other great songs: I’m a Little Teapot, Willoughby Wallaby Woo, Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

Discuss how rhyming is identifying the ending sound of words.

Silly Tilly is having a hard time rhyme. If she tells you a word then can you give her one that rhymes? Bear (response – chair), Lake (response- take), etc.
Emphasize that the beginning sound doesn’t need to be the same letter in the word but instead the same sound. Some letters that make the same sounds are:

- F and Ph
- K and C
- R and Wr (example, write)
- N and Kn (ex. Knew)
- S and C (circle)

Discuss how alliteration is identifying the beginning sound of the word.

Discuss how alliteration and rhyme are different (beginning sound versus ending sound) and how they are similar (both identifying the sounds in a word).

Oh no! Silly Tilly can only say words that start with one letter. What letter is she stuck on when she says, “Two turtles tasted ten tortillas”? Do this again with many different letters and sentences.
Encourage creativity and practice. It may feel silly but this is the best way to learn and to remember.
Instructor should circulate and join in games and discussions.

Activity

In a small group of 3–4 people:

› Practice a song: Are there any rhyming songs that you know and could teach to others?

› Practice a game: Create your own game or practice one that we discussed. Use rhyme or alliteration.

› Practice finishing sentences while reading. Role play as a group. Take turns being the adult reading and the child. Practicing this skill will help you to naturally use it when reading to your own child.
Share & Questions

- Does anyone have anything from the activity time that they would like to share? A fun song? A creative game? A revelation or realization?

- Questions about phonological awareness? Rhyme? Alliteration?

Record shared ideas on a board or poster board. Encourage others to write down too so they have some ideas to look back on.
Session Three
Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to hear sounds that make up words in language. We discussed two skills of phonological awareness last week. What were they?

Two other skills of phonological awareness are:
- Segmenting
- Blending

Ask: “Who can remember what the other two skills of phonological awareness that we discussed last week were?”
Response: “Rhyme and Alliteration”
Ask for examples of each and if anyone was able to use them in their interactions with their children in the past week.
Make sure they identify that Rhyme was looking at the ending sounds of words and Alliteration was the beginning sounds of words (repeated in a sentence or phrase).

http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/blending_games
This is another activity to encourage working together as well as listening to the sounds that make up the words (and in this case creating new words).

Hint: Try saying them to yourself and then try listening to someone else saying them.
Listen as I read out a phrase.
We will do 9 of them together.
I will repeat it a few times.

Call out the phrase if you think you know what I am saying.

Say the bold words one phrase at a time. Repeat it a few times. Wait for an answer before moving onto next phrase. Practices oral language as parents have to listen and try to decipher the phrase.

**Dew Wino Hue** = Do we know you?
**Easel Aid Ease Man** = He’s a lady’s man.
**Know Sayer** = Nose Hair.
**Ease Ace Life Ox** = He’s a sly fox.
**Eye Pillow Fizz Sigh** = Apple of his eye.
**Eight Wean Gull Any Size** = A twinkle in his eye.
**Stirring Beak He Knee** = String bikini.
**Of Lions Quarrel** = A flying squirrel.
**Dawned Rink Hand Arrive** = Don’t drink and drive.

How can Silly Tilly be used? (Silly Tilly is talking really silly! She can say the words while we try to figure out what the phrase is)
Segmenting

- The Oxford Dictionary defines segment as “divide (something) into separate parts or sections.”

- In phonological awareness, when we are talking about segmenting we are looking at breaking the sounds of a word into pieces or syllables.
- Ex, banana is ba-na-na.

- A helpful strategy for doing this is to clap along as we say the words. So, banana would have three claps as we say the different pieces or syllables.

Count the syllables in these words:

Say: Cupcake (cup....cake = 2)

Say: Surprise (sur....prise = 2)

Say: Basketball (bas....ket....ball = 3)

Say: Agreement (uh....gree....ment = 3)

Silly Tilly can tell us the words.
Blending

- The Oxford Dictionary defines blending as “the action of mixing or combining things together.”
- Blending is the combination of individual sounds to make up a word.
- Blending can be thought of as the reverse of segmenting. Blending works to combine sounds rather than dissect them.
- Ex., If I give you the sounds pic and nic. What word does that make?

Other examples to do orally and see if parents can guess:

Say the sound that the letter(s) making and pause for about a second between sounds:

- r….ay….n (rain)
- s….p….e….n….t (spent)
- s…uh….n….f….l….ow…..er (sunflower)
- k…uh…m….p….l….e….k….sh….uh…..n (complexion)

Silly Tilly ate some taffy and is now talking really slowly. She can say the parts and the child can put them together to form the word.
Activity: A Boat Name Lucky

- The National Institute for Literacy created a package for parents of preschool aged children. The goal of this package is to provide parents with ideas on how to prepare their children for reading.

- We will go through this package together, starting by reading the story together. As we go through, think about what strategies are being used to prepare children for early reading.
Read through the story together. At the end of the page, stop, and discuss what they noticed. (Lucy is modeling reading. She is using correct book orientation, identifying text, etc.)
Read through the story together. At the end of the page, stop, and discuss what they noticed:

Asking questions about the story as they read

Playing phonological awareness games – rhyming

Alphabet identification and practicing writing.
Read through the story together. At the end of the page, stop, and discuss what they noticed:

Practicing beginning sounds

Teaching and discussing new words
The story, ‘Anna’s Sails’ can be read to your child. There are suggested questions provided to give you an idea of just how many questions can be asked from a short story like this one. Categories are ‘Talk about the story’, ‘Talk about the words and sounds’ and ‘Talk about new words’

Can you identify where phonological awareness is discussed in these questions? Sounds, rhyme, deletion of sound,

How do these questions prepare young children for getting ready to read? (Phonological awareness: rhyme, alliteration, blending, and segmenting, new vocabulary, talking about text, discussion, etc.)
A checklist for yourself when reading to your child.

What do we notice about this checklist? What skills are they looking at?

Beginning sounds, rhyme, new vocabulary, letter and print recognition, child interest, asking questions, discussing text, and practicing writing
Questions

- Any questions from today?

- Anything to share?

Question and sharing time

Lead with a couple questions if there is a lull. For example:

“What strategy will you use when reading to your child this week?”

“Do you allow your child to discuss the story as you read it or does it bother you if they interrupt?”
Session Four: Screening

- Get Ready to Read (GRTR) is an online screening tool. It is not a test but a tool to provide a sense of where the child is in being ready to read.

- It consists of 20 questions and is designed to be given to 4 year olds.

- Designed to indicate how a child’s pre-reading skills are developing. Skills are identified as weak, strong or somewhere in between.

- The tool is designed to be used to measure a child’s progress throughout a year and can be used up to 3 times.

We are going to do a screening tool to identify what your preferred snack type is. Answer questions 1 through 9 and total your score. For your sweet choices you get 0 points and for your salty choices you get 1 point. You could have a total of 9 points or as little as 0 points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Sweet</th>
<th>Salty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pretzels (1) or dried mango (0)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Salted Peanuts (1) or Peanut M&amp;Ms (0)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chocolate chips (0) or Tortilla Chips (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Potato chips (1) or Gummy Worms (0)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Donuts (0) or Bagels (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Crackers (1) or Cookies (0)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Toast with Jam (0) or Toast with Butter (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Jelly Beans (0) or Goldfish Crackers (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Granola Bar (0) or Cheese (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total up your score.

0-4 points: You prefer sweet snack foods
5-9 points: You prefer salty snack foods

We used this as a screening tool to determine what was the preferred snack foods.

Who can think of a limiting factor of this test? (Answer: Could change based on appetite, mood, day, etc.)
This was just for fun but gives us an idea of how a test can be used to determine something about a group of people.

Now I know more about you and I know what kind of snacks to bring for our final session next week! (Group preferred salty or sweet?)
Encourage a discussion surrounding proper administration of a screening tool.

Why would some of these steps be important? (want child to do the best of their ability)
Here are some problems that you may run into when administering the screening tool. Responses or Solutions are listed. Keep the tool consistent and use your judgment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Response/Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child asks for help</td>
<td>Say: “Try to do it yourself.” You can repeat the question but don’t offer more help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child wants to stop</td>
<td>Say: “We have just a few more. Let’s try to finish.” Take a break if the child needs to and continue with the next unanswered question. If the child is not able to start again in a short time then restarted the screening tool a few days later.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child answers the question verbally and doesn’t point or click</td>
<td>Say: “Can you show me? Put your finger on it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child asks if they got the correct answer</td>
<td>Give a vague answer: “You’re doing a really good job.” Respond the same way whether the answer is right or wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child points to more than one picture or changes an answer.</td>
<td>Say: “Can you pick just one?” Choose the child’s final answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child is rushing or pointing at the same square every</td>
<td>Say: “Take your time. Look at all the pictures before you decide. If the child seems to be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions 1 and 2

What is question 1 looking for? (recognition of book orientation)

What is question 2 looking for? (print or text recognition)
Questions 3 and 4

What is question 3 looking for? (recognizing letters)

What is question 4 looking for? (recognizing letters, word, text)
Questions 5 and 6

What is question 5 looking for? (word, letter, text recognition)

What is question 6 looking for? (letter identification of R)
Questions 7 and 8

What is question 7 looking for? (Letter G recognition)

What is question 8 looking for? (Sound and letter identification of S)
Questions 9 and 10

What is question 9 looking for? (sound and letter recognition of T)

What is question 10 looking for? (sound and letter recognition of B)
Questions 11 and 12
Questions 13 and 14
Questions 15 and 16

What is question 15 looking for? (beginning sound identification)

What is question 16 looking for? (rhyme)
Questions 17 and 18

What is question 17 looking for? (blending)

What is question 18 looking for? (blending)
Questions 19 and 20

What is question 19 looking for? (blending)

What is question 20 looking for? (segmenting in that it is breaking the word apart but could also be called deletion)
Encourage your child and give them positive feedback for completing the screening tool regardless of how they did on the questions. They are to feel successful for completing the task even if it was frustrating and difficult for them.

After the screening tool is complete, it is helpful to write down any observations you may have noticed as the child was completing the screening tool. It could be that they were quick or slow to answer, showed signs of frustration, had a nervous reaction, etc.
When sharing results with a teacher, it is best to set up a scheduled time with them rather than doing it at drop off or pick up. This will provide each of you with the time needed to fully discuss any observations you made, the results of the questions and any concerns you have.

The Results

- The results provide information on what the child can do and what they still need to learn.
- The screening tool does not provide an overwhelming amount of information but provides a good sense of a child’s strengths and weaknesses.
- Results can be used to develop intervention strategies to develop skills that need further development.
- Sharing results with teachers, caregivers and other adults in your child’s life will help support their reading development.

Get Ready to Read! www.GetReadytoRead.org
Bring the results with you

A copy of the results can be printed out online or you can keep track of the score on your own with this sheet.
Questions

› Any questions surrounding the Get Ready to Read Screening Tool?
Encourage parents to bring something to share with the group. This will provide parents with a number of resources as well as provide them with the opportunity to show what they have learned and share with others in the group.

For Next Week

› Please bring a resource that you have had success with or that is of great interest to your child.
› The goal is to build a toolkit for everyone here of resources to use with your child.
› It could be a favourite book, activity, song or game. It could be something that you created or something from your own childhood even.
› Think about what early reading skills the resource focuses on as helps develop.
Session Five
Conclusion

- Review
- What now? How to help your child as they enter formal education. What to tell their teacher. How to remain involved in their learning

The development of phonological awareness skills:
http://www.readingrockets.org/article/development-phonological-skills

Parent Resources:
http://www.readingrockets.org/audience/parents
http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/phonologicalphonemic
http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/advocate
Review Game

- Write on a piece of paper the most valuable thing you learned or the biggest thing you are taking away from this course.
- Crumble it up into a ball and throw it to someone. Continue throwing the balls.
- After 1 minute we will stop and everyone will open a ball and read what it says.

Time for snacks! Sweet and Salty snacks from our screening tool last session.
Phonological Awareness

- Rhyme
- Alliteration
- Blending
- Segmenting

Don’t forget about Silly Tilly. How can we use her when we are developing our skills in phonological awareness?

To share with the entire group: Mention 2 more advanced skills of phonological awareness:

Sound Matching: Matching sounds between words.

For example, it might be identifying what words from a list have the same beginning or ending sounds.

Which word has the same ending sound as dress? Bus...rope...pot? Answer: Bus

Deleting of Sounds: Taking a sound out of a word to make a new word. Can be beginning sound, ending sound or even a sound in the middle of the word.

Examples:

- Hat - /h/ = at (Removed the beginning sound)
- Plate - /t/ = play (Removed a sound from the middle of the word)
- Cried - /d/ = cry (Removed the ending sound)
Activity

Wonky Donkey Book and Video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDeQT9zCvi4

› A time to share resources that you have discovered

› Break into small groups and share what resource(s) you brought and why

› We will have whole group time to highlight some of the resources and create a list for everyone to have.

Share the Wonky Donkey and how it has fun with language and is a lot of fun for children and adults!

Reading Rockets has some online games that can be shared as a group: http://www.getreadytoread.org/skill-building-activities/online-games
Sharing your results and concerns with your child’s teacher

- ELORS
- Reading Rockets Checklist
- GRTR Screening Tool Results

Say, ‘Having a discussion surrounding your child’s early reading development can be an intimidating thing to do but everyone here now has a strong foundational understanding of early reading skills and the knowledge to have this conversation with confidence!”

“You now have resources to bring into the teacher for them to go over. You can provide them with the ELORS, the reading rockets checklist and the results from the Get Ready to Read screening tool”

Bring up any concerns that you have. Maybe your child struggles with blending sounds. Informing your child’s teacher that this is an area of concern will allow them to focus some of their lesson time on addressing this. Your child will likely enjoy learning it in the classroom setting and making a game of it as well.
Building a Teacher–Parent Relationship

1. Introduce yourself early – face to face
2. Establish open communication – email, phone calls
3. Share your concerns
4. Encourage your child’s teacher when you see improvements

Discussion surrounding developing a relationship with a teacher. Communication is key!
How have your interactions between you and your child changed over the course of these information sessions?

Are interactions between parent and child more intention surrounding early reading skills?

A great opportunity for mingle time for parents.

Provide drinks and snacks at this time to encourage conversation and relationship building.