Phonological & Phonemic Awareness

PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

What are Phono & Phonemic Awareness?

Phonological Awareness develops first; hearing parts of words, like rhyming parts or syllables. **Phonemic Awareness** is the ability to recognize and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words. Phonemic awareness is foundational to reading and writing.

Why is Phonemic Awareness Important?

When students can hear all the sounds in words, they can blend sounds together to read words and segment or pull them apart to spell words. Phonemic Awareness is one of the best predictors of later reading success.

Goal by the End of Kindergarten

Kindergarteners will build strong listening and word-play skills that prepare them for reading!

- Hear and work with individual sounds in simple words like cat, sun, and dog
- Isolate and change the first, middle, and last sounds to make new words (cat→pat →pan→pun)
- Clap, count, and pronounce syllables in multi-syllable words (pen-cil, ba-na-na)
- Blend sounds to say whole words (/sh/-/ĭ/-/p/=ship)
- Recognize rhyme (words that sound the same at the middle and end) and recognize alliteration (words begin with the same sound)
- Identify and match beginning, middle and ending sounds in words
- Manipulate compound words (snowman without snow) and manipulate syllables (um-brel-la)
- Know all 44 speech sounds and begin to understand how those sounds feel in their mouths using tools like the sound wall
- Practice segmenting, or pulling words apart into individual sounds and syllables (/ch-/ĭ/-/p/)

By the End of First Grade

First graders build strong listening and sound manipulation skills! They will:

- Hear and work with 3–4+ sounds in words like frog or sand
- Blend sounds to read words and segment them to spell
- Change sounds to make new words (map → nap)
- Delete parts of words (say sunset without sun=set)
- Clap, count, and change syllables in longer words
- Say and explore how speech sounds are made in the mouth. (Looking in the mirror is a great tool!)

By the End of Second Grade

Second graders become sound experts! They will:

- Hear and work with 3–5+ sounds in words, including consonantblends like spring or crisp
- Change, add, or remove sounds to make new words
- Blend and break apart multi-syllable words
- Say, analyze, and understand how speech sounds are made
- Listen closely to tell the difference between similar sounds

These skills keep building the foundation for strong reading and spelling.