



What is Phonological Awareness?

What is it?

- **Phonological Awareness** is the overarching skill that refers to the knowledge and awareness of spoken sounds, or phonemes, and words.¹ It is an early predictor of reading success as children understand that every written word is represented by a phoneme.²
- Each letter in the alphabet can be represented by sounds, or phonemes.
- Phonological Awareness includes different levels, beginning with the larger unit of “words” progressing to smaller units such as “syllables, onset-rime, and phonemes”³
- Phonological Awareness includes the ability to:
 - Segmenting sounds or syllables in a word (e.g., *bat* → “b-a-t”)
 - Blending sounds or syllables to create a word (e.g., “b-a-t” → *bat*)
- **Phonemic Awareness** stems from phonological awareness, and it includes the manipulation of sounds in a word,⁴ such as:
 - Replacing (i.e., substitution) sounds to create a new word
 - Taking away (i.e., deletion) sounds to create a new word
 - Adding (i.e., addition) sounds, such as suffixes or prefixes, to produce new words
- Children with dyslexia or reading/language difficulties, “have been found to have problems with identifying the separate speech sounds within a word and/or learning how letters represent those sounds, a key factor in their reading difficulties” (*International Dyslexia Association [IDA], 2012*).⁵

The Role of the Speech-Language Therapist

- The speech-language therapist plays a vital, direct role in literacy, which is rooted in knowledge and understanding of phonology. The speech-language pathologist has extensive, specialized knowledge diagnosing and treating “atypical” versus “typical” language development.⁶
- “Speech language pathologists have critical phonological knowledge that can inform word-reading assessment and intervention...” (Hogan, 2018).⁷
- The speech-language therapist addresses the following:
 - Assess and treat phonological disorders
 - Teach skills like sound segmentation, blending, and phonemic awareness skills
 - Collaborate with teachers on reinforcing their goals in the classroom

¹ Academy in Manayunk (2022), *Pathways to Proficient Reading*. AIM Institute for Learning and Research.

² Academy in Manayunk (2022), *Pathways to Proficient Reading*. AIM Institute for Learning and Research.

³ Academy in Manayunk (2022), *Pathways to Proficient Reading*. AIM Institute for Learning and Research.

⁴ Academy in Manayunk (2022), *Pathways to Proficient Reading*. AIM Institute for Learning and Research.

⁵ International Dyslexia Association (IDA). *Just the Facts...Information provided by the International Dyslexia Association. 2012.*

⁶ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2001). *Roles and responsibilities of speech-language pathologists with respect to reading and writing in children and adolescents* [Position Statement]. Available from www.asha.org/policy.

⁷ Hogan, Tiffany (2018). *Five Ways Speech-Language Pathologists can positively impact children with dyslexia*. MGH Institute of Health Professionals. https://doi.org/10.1044/2018_LSHSS-DYSLC-18-0102.

Intervention and Instruction in the Classroom

- The speech-language therapist can support these phonological awareness skills outside of the classroom, in addition to the specialized instruction received in the classroom.
- If your child has goals specific to phonological awareness, they may target various patterns of sound-letter combinations.
- Intervention for the sound-letter based skills, such as phonological awareness, require multisensory approaches⁸
 - Blocks to visually display change of sounds
 - Mirrors to see the change of mouth shapes associated with specific sounds
- The speech-language therapist can collaborate closely with the interprofessional team (i.e., reading specialist, teachers) to determine the most necessary skills that can be supported individually.

If you're interested in Speech-Language services at AIM for your child, please contact supportservices@aimpa.org

⁸ International Dyslexia Association (IDA). *Just the Facts...Information provided by the International Dyslexia Association. 2012.*