

St. Peter's Preschool Newsletter



March 2025

From the Director's Chair – by Rita Dai Wang

21-Day Read Aloud Challenge: Happy Read Across America Day on Sunday 3/2! Join us in a 21-Day Read Aloud Challenge! The goal is to read together for 15 minutes every day for 21 days. Be on the lookout for a Sign-up Genius to be a Mystery Reader!

Charcuterie Night: This event has been rescheduled to Thursday 3/13. You can come alone, with your spouse to make it a date night, or bring a friend! We hope you will come join us! RSVP by 3/6 at <https://forms.gle/YH7bqvu53yuY5pTWA>

Goodies With Grandparents: We are looking forward to having all our grandparents come for Goodies with Grandparents on 3/20 and 3/21! Keep an eye out for the invite coming soon!

Ernesto's Restaurant Night: We are hosting a restaurant night at Ernesto's on Tuesday 4/1. The address is 10040 Baltimore National Pike Ellicott City, MD 21042 (in the Enchanted Forest shopping center where Safeway is). Anyone who dines in or gets carryout between 11am-9pm will generate a portion of their check towards our school. I always look forward to this great excuse to not have to cook dinner 😊 Check them out at <https://www.ernestosfinemexicanfoodmd.com/>

Phonemic Awareness: Everyone knows the importance of reading aloud to kids, but did you know that phonological and phonemic awareness is the first step in helping kids learn to read for themselves? I've included an article below describing these critical skills and how you can help develop them in your kids.

Dates to Remember

- 3/1-21 21-Day Read Aloud Challenge
- 3/3-7 Spirit Week
- 3/3 Jump Bunch – 4's
- 3/5 Ash Wednesday "Ashes to Go" by Fr. Derek at 9:30
- 3/6 Police Officer visit – 2's
- 3/10 Police Officer visit – 3's/4's
- 3/13 Charcuterie Night
- 3/14 Teacher Work Day – no school
- 3/20 Goodies w/Grandparents – 2's/4's
- 3/21 Goodies w/Grandparents – 3's
- 4/1 Ernesto's Restaurant Night

Happy Birthday!



- 3/11 Eleanor
- 3/18 Bennett
- 3/23 Aiden O.
- 3/24 Bridget
- 3/27 Fr. Derek
- 3/28 Ms. Jen
- 3/29 Ellie R.
- 3/29 Julie
- 3/31 Sabrina



Monday 3/3 - Sports Team/College Day

Tuesday 3/4 - Super Hero/Princess Day

Wednesday 3/5 - Favorite Color/St. Peter's T-shirt Day

Thursday 3/6 - Pajama Day

Friday 3/7 - Crazy Hair/Crazy Socks Day



Shared Control: Choices within Limits

Are you going to bed now, or would you like to wait 15 mins?

Would you like to wear your coat or carry it?

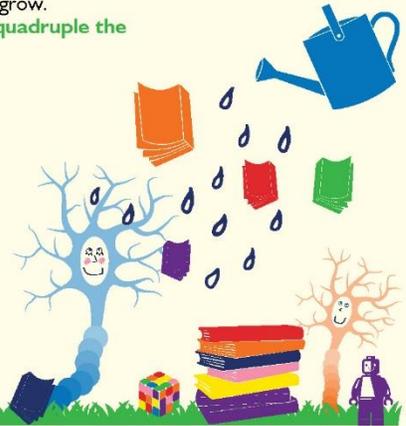
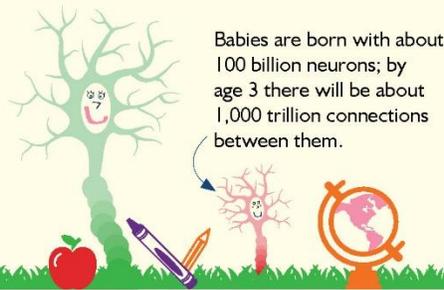
Are you going to put your pajamas on first, or brush your teeth first?

Do you want to wear your blue shirt today, or your green shirt?

Parents, it's up to you!

The first few years of life are critical in your child's brain development. Make the most of this window. *If you wait, it's too late.*

- Your baby's brain is making literally **trillions of connections during the first few years**, the fastest it will ever grow.
- Children are rapidly learning language. They often **quadruple the number of words they know** between ages 1-2.
- Babies learn best through interactions. **There is no substitute for YOU.**

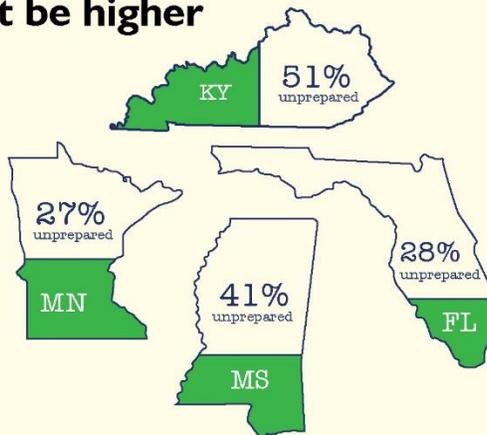


The stakes could not be higher

Dodge the word gap

Some children will hear 30 million fewer words than their peers before age 4. Studies have shown **the number of words a child knows when entering kindergarten is predictive of future learning success.**

Hart and Risley 2003

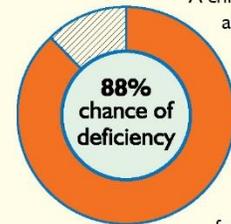


Get ready to learn

Too many children in the U.S. are **not prepared to learn when they enter kindergarten.** Studies show that those who fall behind are likely to stay that way.

Kentucky.com | FloridaEarlyLearning.com | Education.state.mn.us | kidscount.ssrc.msstate.edu | Shonkoff and Phillips 2000 | Carnegie Foundation 1991

Avoid the slippery slope



A child not reading at grade level by the end of first grade has an **88% chance of not reading at grade level** by the end of fourth grade.

Those not reading proficiently by third grade are **four times more likely to drop out of school.**



Juel 1988 | Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012

Light up your child's brain!



Read aloud 15 MINUTES every day from birth to:

- Grow vocabulary and knowledge
- Bond and provide enriching engagement
- Foster a love of books and learning

You are your child's first and most important teacher.

Read Aloud every day, from birth, for **at least 15 MINUTES** and light up your child's brain.



If you wait, it's too late.



Every child. Every parent. Every day.

Graphic by Jemma Kendle

Phonemic Awareness: A Simple Guide for Parents

Research shows that for children to become enthusiastic, fluent readers, they need a firm grasp of phonics and the alphabetic code. That's where phonological and phonemic awareness — the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds in words — come into play.

Having said that, we understand that it can sometimes be hard to know where to begin. And as a parent, you may or may not have even heard the term “phonemic awareness” before.

Good news! We're here to break down the concepts of phonological and phonemic awareness and show you how you can use them to encourage a love of reading in your child.

What is Phonemic Awareness?

As we mentioned above, phonemic awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate [sounds](#). Put another way, it's a concept that deals with how we understand the function of sounds, specifically, phonemes.

A “phoneme” is the smallest possible unit of sound in a language. Every word we use is made up of a combination of phonemes. These sounds blend together to form words.

The easiest way to understand phonemic awareness as a concept is by playing around with words yourself (and with your child, but we'll get to that part later.)

If you take a simple word like “ball” and change the beginning sound from a /b/ to a /t/ sound, you get a different word — tall — with a completely different meaning.

Phonemic Awareness Vs. Phonological Awareness

Phonological and phonemic awareness have a good bit of overlap, which can make the two ideas confusing! We're here to simplify them and show you how these technical terms are actually fun, important parts of your child's reading journey.

Phonological awareness is an umbrella term that includes different [skills](#) your child will encounter while on their journey to becoming an enthusiastic, engaged reader. These are:

- Segmentation
- Rhyming
- Blending syllables

Really, phonological awareness is all about groups of sounds and how they relate to each other. Combining and playing with multiple syllables, or even the amount of words in a sentence, is the meat and potatoes of phonological awareness.

Phonemic awareness, by contrast, focuses on single sounds — or phonemes. The same skills can be used to engage your child’s phonemic awareness.

From a practical standpoint, the fact that phonological and phonemic tasks are so closely related means you can utilize the same blending and sound-swapping exercises; if you’d like your child to focus on phonemic awareness specifically, simply use the exercises with individual sounds.

Maybe you’re thinking to yourself: well, that’s about as clear as mud. We hear you!

For the sake of your child’s learning, don’t sweat over working on these phonological and phonemic skills as individual, separate components. The distinction is mostly academic. Our examples will help you work both at once.

Singing nursery rhymes or silly songs is a great place to start! This will build your child’s phonological and phonemic awareness skills by allowing them to play with and manipulate sounds and words.

Why Is Phonemic Awareness Important?

Phonemic awareness is one of the first skills your child will need in their toolbelt for reading, which, of course, is an important part of [learning](#). It’s also one of the first steps to building their confidence with sounds (and, later, words!).

Phonemic awareness is an effective tool for helping your child become an engaged, self-motivated reader in the future. A child with a healthy foundation of phonemic awareness stands the best chance to read with fluency and for fun!

Jumping straight into matching up sounds with letter forms may seem like the obvious first step. Your instincts are on the right track; that’s an important part of helping your child learn to read!

But another way to help your child with phonemic awareness is to focus on listening skills — such as isolating individual sounds, blending them together, and *then* moving sounds around to create new words — will help your emerging reader get to their end goal.

As you’re working with your child, keep in mind that phonemes may take a while for kids to grasp. That’s okay! You can relax knowing that phonemic awareness will come with time and exposure.

How To Encourage Phonological And Phonemic Awareness

You’ve probably realized by now that when it comes to helping your child develop a love of [reading](#), phonemic awareness is important. But that doesn’t mean it has to be boring or difficult!

The good news is that phonemic and phonological awareness practice can be incorporated into your family’s [busy lifestyle](#) while allowing you to help your child build their reading confidence and bond with you at the same time.

The best way to build up your child’s awareness of sounds in words is to play easy and fun games together. Light-hearted and entertaining activities will keep your little one happy, calm, and excited to learn (without really knowing they’re learning in the first place!).

Hearing Rhymes

This one is probably part of your routine family life already. You may not have realized it, but by [singing](#) along to nursery rhymes with your child, you're already engaging their phonological awareness!

Exposure to rhymes is the easiest and first step to your child learning to manipulate sounds. And who doesn't love an old-fashioned sing-along in the middle of afternoon traffic or Sunday morning chores?

If you want to focus on your child's phonemic awareness skills more specifically, you can encourage them to make rhymes by only the beginning sound in a word.

For example, you could start with the word "rat." Your child might reply with the word "hat." On and on you can go together!

Differentiating Rhymes

Helping your child distinguish what words do or don't rhyme is an important introduction to a more advanced phonological concept — how changing the letter of a word also changes the sound and meaning.

For this exercise, play a rhyme game. You'll say three words, two of which rhyme and one that does not. Make sure you play up the silliness so your child understands that you made a mistake (one that they will be confident to fix!).

For example, you could say "cat," "bat," and "dot." Then ask your child to pick out the word that doesn't rhyme. Once they gain enough confidence, try and see if they can do it back to you.

Producing Rhymes

To help your little one learn to make their own rhymes, try saying a sentence and asking them to finish it with a word that rhymes. For example: In my bag, I have a ____ (rag).

You can play up the fun in this activity by seeing which one of you can come up with the silliest rhymes. And since you're mainly focusing on listening skills for this activity, the words you come up with don't even have to be real!

Recognizing Sounds

As adults, we take it for granted, but recognizing the beginning and ending sounds of words is really important for emerging readers!

Try saying three words that begin or end with the same sound and asking your child what sound they share. For example: I-I-leg, I-I-lamb, I-I-lint.

You can also change it up by inserting a word that does not belong in the sound group and have your child yell out which word is wrong.

Using the same example, you could say "leg," "lamb," "lint," "mud." once your child hears the wrong sound, they have to shout it out! How many times can your child catch you?

Creating And Associating Sounds

This is where the old I-Spy game comes in handy. Start by saying, “I spy with my little eye something that starts with an /r/ sound.”

Have your child answer with something around you that begins with that sound. And while you’re playing, remember that at this stage, you’re focusing mostly on sounds, not the traditional letter name.

Make sure to give lots of praise and cheers when your child gets it right!

Blending Sounds

This one can be a lot of fun with the right twist! For example, pretend you’re a robot who has come to Earth and is trying to learn the English language. Ask your child for help with a certain word in robot-speak.

Break down the sounds in a word and tell your child you don’t know what the word is. Ask them to repeat it in robot talk (example: /c/a/t/), and then ask them what word you are saying.

This will help them practice blending different phonemes together to create a single word with a single meaning.

Phonemic Awareness: The Takeaway

Phonemic awareness is an important first step on your child’s journey toward a lifetime [love of reading](#), writing, and learning!

Remember: Your child’s ability to hear, identify, and manipulate phonemes (sounds) all make up their phonemic awareness. The more your child is able to [play around](#) with rhymes and break apart sounds the stronger their phonemic awareness will become!

And while it’s crucial to introduce your child to phonemic awareness concepts early in their life, it’s much more important to do it in a way that doesn’t stress them (or you!) out.

All in all, we encourage you to keep it simple: play phonemic and phonological awareness games for a few minutes as you go about your day. The more fun you have with it the more your child will as well.

If your child ever seems overwhelmed by what they’re learning, feel free to take a break. Confidence comes with time and practice.

After all, there’s no pressure for them to read Shakespeare any time soon. We know that sound by sound, word by word, with one success following another, your child will soon be on the road to reading Macbeth and other literary delights!