

Title

Teaching Phonemic Awareness and Phonics (Grades PreK-3)

Target Audience

This course is intended for pre-service and in-service teachers of grades PreK-3.

Prerequisites

We recommend that learners become familiar with the related content in the PBS TeacherLine course “RDLA 150: An Introduction to Underlying Principles and Research for Effective Literacy Instruction (Grades K–8).”

Course Description

This course is designed to give educators research-based concepts and instructional practices for teaching phonemic awareness and phonics to elementary students to increase their knowledge of sound/symbol relationships. Learners will study the stages of literacy development and will practice assessing the performance of developing readers. They will reflect upon the interconnectedness of oral language, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, and written language, as well as the role of each in implementing an integrated and balanced language arts program. As a final task, learners will design a plan of instructional activities that develop each area covered in the course: phonemic and phonological awareness, letter-sound correspondence, and phonograms.

Instructor/Facilitator

See instructor/facilitator sheet

Credits

To be determined by college or university

Goals

At the end of this course, learners will have an understanding of:

- The provision oral language has for the foundation of phonological awareness.
- Concepts and instructional practices related to phonological awareness and phonemic awareness.
- Assessing student demonstration of phonological awareness and phonemic awareness.
- Stages of literacy development.

Learner Outcomes

Learners completing this course will be able to:

- Evaluate the performance of developing readers and identify appropriate instructional goals.
- Reflect upon the interconnectedness of oral language, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, and written language, as well as the role of each in implementing an integrated and balanced language arts program.

- Analyze students' writing samples to determine the students' knowledge of letter-sound correspondence.
- Design a plan of instructional activities that develop each area covered in the course: phonemic and phonological awareness, letter-sound correspondence, and phonograms.
- Incorporate the use of literature in phonics and phonemic awareness lessons.

Outline of Content and Assignments

Each session includes readings, videos, interactive activities, journal reflections, and discussion questions. Work through the sessions in order. The end of each session contains a self-assessment. Each session will provide opportunities to plan and complete the four parts of the final project. The final project is designed for learners who are currently teaching. If learners are not currently in the classroom, they may complete three alternative projects, which are offered at the end of Sessions 2, 4, and 6 and are based on topics learned in the preceding sessions.

This course is aligned with ISTE standards, NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts, and NCTE standards. Key concepts are presented through readings, videos, interactives, journal reflections, and discussion forums with the purpose of improving content knowledge, teaching pedagogy, and enhancing student achievement. Assignments will draw upon their knowledge of classroom practice and may include interaction with students.

This course is divided into six sessions:

- Session 1: Language and Literacy Development
- Session 2: Phonemic Awareness
- Session 3: Letter Identification and Letter-Sound Correspondence
- Session 4: Common Phonograms
- Session 5: Connecting Instruction of Phonemic Awareness and Phonics to Reading
- Session 6: Transforming Your Practice

Session 1: Language and Literacy Development

The learner will:

- Define professional goals and expectations for this course.
- Explain prior knowledge about the most effective methods for supporting young students' literacy development in your online journal.
- Reflect on language acquisition and compare and contrast factors that make learning to read more difficult than learning to speak.
- Debate whether explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics should be required in all preschool and Kindergarten classes
- Discuss a child's development relative to the "Continuum of Children's Development in Early Reading and Writing" and the role of oral language in implementing an integrated and balanced language arts program.
- Synthesize your learning about oral language and literacy by writing a letter to parents about the importance of oral language in a balanced literacy program. (Final Project Part 1)

Read

- Language Development from Age 4 to 5
- Language Development from Age 5 to 6
- "Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children" A Joint Position Statement of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
"Continuum of Children's Development in Early Reading and Writing"
This document presents a continuum of children's development in early reading and writing

from, “Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children.”

Complete activities and assignments

- View the video, “Acquiring Language,” which illustrates how a PreK child learns to speak.
- View the video, “The Child’s Brain,” which explains the purpose of “motherese” and demonstrates what happens to the brain as it acquires language, speech, and reading.
- Complete Session 1 Self-Assessment.
- Complete Final Project Part 1: Letter to Parents

Write in online journal

- Respond to Prior Knowledge and Expectations prompts
- After viewing the “Acquiring Language” and “The Child’s Brain” videos, describe their beliefs about oral language and literacy development. They will provide at least two specific experiences that have shaped their beliefs and explain how the video either confirmed or changed their perspective.

Participate in online discussion

- Introduce themselves in the Virtual Café
- Either defend or refute the following argument:
 - Virtually all human beings learn to speak without being taught. Yet, we all need to be taught how to read. Since phonemic awareness and phonics are critical skills in learning to read, explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics should be required in all PreK and kindergarten classes.
- Observe the child’s language skills in the video “Acquiring Language” and respond to the following questions:
 - Where is the child’s development relative to the “Continuum of Children’s Development in Early Reading and Writing”?
 - What oral and written language activities would you plan for the child if you were his PreK teacher in a balanced literacy classroom?

Session 2: Phonemic Awareness

The learners will:

- Use the course readings to discuss the challenges in teaching phonological and phonemic awareness in a balanced literacy program in PreK–3 classrooms.
- Apply working definitions of phonological awareness and phonemic awareness, derived from course readings, to discuss the appropriateness of instructional activities and how to create instructional activities for students with diverse needs.
- Identify a phonemic awareness activity to use with a student and reflect on how it will meet his/her individual learning needs.
- Evaluate the performance of developing readers and identify appropriate instructional goals.
- Research Web sites and evaluate one site and its suggested activities for parents to support young learners in one of the phases described in the IRA/NAEYC position statement. (Alternative Project 1).

Read

- “Phonemic Awareness Instruction”
This article presents definitions and processes that constitute phonological and phonemic awareness.
- “Phonemic Awareness Helps Beginning Readers Break the Code”
The authors of this reading remind us that phonological awareness precedes knowledge of phonics and suggest several activities that further phonological and phonemic awareness.
- “ABC’s of Phonemic Awareness”
- “Phonemic Awareness in Young Children”



- “Recommended Preschool Activities: Phonological Awareness”
- Teaching Reading in Kindergarten

Complete activities and assignments

- Complete the Identify Student Knowledge interactive to choose one of the following skills: phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, or phonics. The choice should describe the skill a student would need to possess in order to answer the question or follow the direction presented.
- Explore the Decoding Activity interactive from Misunderstood Minds to understand what it might be like for students who struggle to recognize phonemes.
- View the video, “Assessing Phonological and Phonemic Awareness,” in which a teacher assesses the phonemic awareness of kindergarten students.
- View the video on phonemic awareness with Dr. Margarita Calderón, from the PBS documentary, *Becoming Bilingual*.
- Complete the Conduct an Assessment Assignment to determine the level of linguistic development indicated by the four students in the video. This analysis will help prepare learners for the final project.
- Complete Session 2 Self-Assessment.
- If learners choose to do the alternative projects rather than the final project, complete: Alternative Project 1: Web Search. Conduct a web search for appropriate literacy activities and evaluate them for effectiveness and appropriateness for a specific grade level.

Write in online journal

- Think about a student with whom you have worked who has struggled with phonemic awareness. Review the activities from “Phonemic Awareness in Young Children” and choose one that you think might be appropriate to use with the student. Write about why you have chosen this activity to use with your student and how you think it will meet his/her individual learning needs.
- Drawing from the readings and discussions, reflect on ways that developmentally appropriate practices impact instructional decisions for teaching phonemic awareness to specific groups of students.

Participate in online discussion

- Discuss the challenges they see in teaching phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, and phonics to young students.

Session 3: Letter Identification and Letter-Sound Correspondence

The learners will:

- Use course readings about research on systematic approaches to phonics instruction to discuss the difference between *synthetic* and *analytic* phonics instruction. Describe conditions under which one approach may be more appropriate than the other.
- Given examples of instructional strategies designed to teach letter-sound correspondence, evaluate their effectiveness in teaching students and reflect on the characteristics of students who would be best served by the activities.
- Describe how you plan to integrate an interactive game in your literacy instruction for a specific student.
- Research and discuss what type of adaptations you might need to make when teaching phonics to ELL students or to students with limited cognitive ability.
- Explain and demonstrate the difference between the terms “phonemic awareness” and “phonics” in a fact sheet. (Final Project Part 2)

Read

- “Everything You Wanted to Know about Phonics (But Were Afraid to Ask)”
Stahl and his colleagues clear up many misconceptions about teaching letter-sound correspondence.
- “What We Know about How to Teach Phonics”
The authors of this article have been providing teachers with practical and well-researched advice about how to teach phonics for years. As they read, learners should think about how they might incorporate these instructional ideas into their teachings.

Complete activities and assignments

- View the video, “Teaching Phonological Awareness,” of first-grade students learning letter-sound correspondence. This video has two parts that highlight phonics instruction. In the first part, there is a “Morning-Message Activity.” The second part documents a “Word-Family Activity.”
- Explore and play suggested interactive games while thinking about a specific student with whom you have worked. As you play, think about whether the game would meet his or her needs.
- Complete an activity by reading scenarios of two different students. Then discuss how phonics instruction might differ for these hypothetical students. Think about what type of adaptations they might need to make when teaching phonics to ELL students or to students with limited cognitive ability.
- Complete Session 3 Self-Assessment
- Complete Final Project Part 2

Write in online journal

- Choose one of the activities from the video and discuss why it would be more effective than the others for their students. Learners that do not currently teach should choose a grade level with which they have experience or a grade level that they would like to teach.
- Reflect on the interactive game exploration. Respond to the following: Which game do you think would best meet your student’s needs? Describe in one paragraph how you plan to integrate this game in your literacy instruction for this student.

Participate in online discussion

- Discuss the factors that influence choice about how much and what kind of phonics instruction a student needs.

Session 4: Common Phonograms

The learners will:

- Use the course readings about phonograms and how to teach phonics to reflect on and explain the benefits of including phonograms in an effective phonics program.
- Design a phonics lesson plan for students with individual needs.
- Assess and provide feedback on two lesson plans in the discussion board.
- Design an instructional lesson to teach a specific phonogram(s) (Alternative Project 2).

Read

- “Phonics and Word Recognition Accuracy”
An effective phonics program includes the use of phonograms, also known as *rimes* or *word families*, as a method for quick identification of word chunks. This component of word recognition is described in this article.
- “A Decoding Program for Poor Readers-And the Rest of the Class, Too!”
This reading describes an exceptional program that focuses on teaching phonograms.
- “The Timing and Teaching of Word Families”
Learners have been reading and thinking about why phonograms, or word families, are important in an effective phonics program. It is also important to consider *how* and *when* to

teach them, which is the topic of this article.

Complete activities and assignments

- Phonics Lesson Plan for Students with Individual Needs Assignment
- Complete Session 4 Self-Assessment. (not required)
- If learners chose to do the alternative projects rather than the final project, they will now complete Alternative Project 2: Designing a One-Day Lesson Plan on Phonograms.

Write in online journal

- Answer the following questions:
 - How might you use the list of common phonograms in “Phonics and Word Recognition Accuracy” in your instruction?
 - How will you integrate the phonograms into both reading and writing instruction?

Participate in online discussion

- Post their lesson plan from Phonics Lesson Plan for Students with Individual Needs assignment and describe how their lesson plan serves the needs of students with diverse learning styles. Attach lesson plan to the post.

Session 5: Connecting Instruction of Phonemic Awareness and Phonics to Reading

The learners will:

- Predict the challenges to maintaining the balance between phonemic awareness instruction and reading for comprehension.
- Debate about which is better for beginner readers: part-to-whole instruction or whole-to-part instruction.
- Discuss the characteristics that would make a book or a Language Experience chart a good choice for teaching phonograms with word families.
- Implement an interactive game with students and reflect on the experience. (Final Project Part 3)

Read

- “Alphabetics”
In this article, the National Reading Panel addresses the question, “Does instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics improve reading?”
- “Beginning Reading” from LD Online
- “Phonics and Word Recognition Instruction in Early Reading Programs: Guidelines for Accessibility”
- “Whole to Part Phonics Instruction: Building on What Children Know to Help Them Know More”
This article presents many approaches to teaching phonics.
- "Technology and the Building Blocks for Teaching Students to Read: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics"
- " The Internet and the Early Childhood Classroom" from PBS Teachers

Complete activities and assignments

- View the video, “Teaching Initial Consonants,” in which a teacher and first grade students are engaged in whole-to-part phonics instruction using a Language Experience song chart to focus on initial sounds. The lesson objective is to help students discover that the similar sounds (phonemes) they hear at the beginning of words are represented by similar letters (graphemes).
- View the second part of the video, “Teaching Phonograms with Word Families,” which focuses on teaching word families.
- Complete Session 5 Self-Assessment.
- Complete Final Project Part 3

Write in online journal

- Discuss the challenges in implementing a balanced literacy approach by reflecting on the following question:
 - Given the importance of a strong phonics component in your literacy program, what problems do you foresee in maintaining a balance between phonemic awareness instruction and reading for comprehension?

Participate in online discussion

- Post their opinions to the following question:
 - Which is better for beginning readers: part-to-whole instruction or whole-to-part instruction? Use examples from your teaching experiences and/or professional reading to support your response.
- Incorporate their thoughts about the video in the discussion. Use the following conversation points:
 - How did the teacher support (scaffold) the students' learning?
 - What are five characteristics that would make a book or a Language Experience chart a good choice for teaching this lesson?

Session 6: Transforming Your Practice

The learners will:

- Design and evaluate a lesson plan that synthesizes the concepts of phonemic awareness and phonological awareness. (Final Project Part 4)
- Using the criteria that Moustafa gives in “Whole to Part Phonics Instruction: Building on What Children Know to Help Them Know More” for selecting children's books and language experience charts for phonics instruction, compile a list of books that satisfy the criteria and activities for each book that would be appropriate for teaching a phonological pattern. (Alternative Project 3)
- Assess your learning in this course by comparing your prior knowledge and acquired knowledge in your online journal.
- Analyze the learning experience in this course by reflecting about your professional goals and expectations.

Complete activities and assignments

- Reread “Whole-to-Part Phonics Instruction: Building on What Children Know to Help Them Know More
- Complete Final Project: Part 4

Final Project: Implementing Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Theory and Strategies

As learners complete each session in the course they will learn different concepts, theories and strategies for teaching phonemic awareness and phonics to young students. For the final project learners will demonstrate their understanding of the research and have an opportunity to share their creative ideas about how to implement the theory into practice.

Part 1: Parent Letter [To be completed during Session 1]

Imagine it is the beginning of the school year and you want to write a letter to the parents of your students in your real or fictitious PreK, kindergarten, first, second, or third grade class. Your letter should be thoughtfully crafted and clearly written for parents. It should also clearly reflect what you learned in the readings in this session of the course. The body of your letter should be no more than two pages long. Standards may appear, as a third page, but your explanation of the standards must be in the body of the letter itself. Your letter must:

1. Explain to parents the importance of oral language in a balanced literacy program.

2. Include suggestions for how parents can develop their children's oral language skills.
3. List and explain, in your own words, your state's standards related to phonemic awareness and phonics.

Part 2: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Fact Sheet [To be completed during Session 3]

Imagine you are working with a student teacher and he or she has confessed that they do not really understand the difference between phonemic awareness and phonics. Use the course readings to create a one-page fact sheet in a word processing document for your student teacher explaining the difference between the terms. Your fact sheet must include the following:

1. A definition of the terms "phonemic awareness" and "phonics" in your own words.
2. An example or illustration that clearly demonstrates the difference between the two concepts.
3. A description of an activity or mini-lesson for each term (one paragraph for each description.)
4. 3-4 suggested resources (online and/or print-based) for teaching phonemic awareness and phonics.

Part 3: Implementing Technology in your Instruction [To be completed during Session 5]

Choose an interactive game that develops phonics skills that you can implement with a student. You may wish to use one of the suggested games from Session 3 or explore PBS resources for a different game on PBS Kids (<http://pbskids.org/findit/>).

Once you have chosen an interactive game, try using the interactive with one or more students. As you work with the student(s) write notes about the experience.

Next, use your notes to write a reflection paper (one to two pages) in a word processing document about your experience using the interactive with students. Make sure your reflection paper includes the following:

1. The title and URL for the game and a brief description of how to play.
2. A rationale (one paragraph) for why you chose this interactive.
3. A description of what happened as the student(s) played the game and how you interacted with the student(s) to promote phonics learning. If you worked with different students, comment on students' differing abilities to play the interactive game.
4. A summary of how this experience will shape your future instruction for the student(s).
5. An evaluation of how you think the interactive helped develop student's phonics skills and what, if anything, technology added to the experience.

Part 4: Design a Five-Day Lesson Plan [To be completed during Session 6]

Create a five-day lesson plan with the goal of developing phonics skills appropriate for the grade level and developmental stage of students you identify as the participants in this series of lessons. Include reading and writing activities that address appropriate phonemic awareness and phonological awareness, as well as skills needed to develop reading fluency, reading comprehension, and writing. The activities must be original and may not include those presented in the readings of this course, and they must be based on scientific research.

Follow these guidelines as you design your five-day lesson plan. Use the lesson plan template as a guide for your work. Your lesson plan should include:

- A plan for gradual release of responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student.
- The main components of a lesson plan: goals, objectives, prerequisites, materials, lesson description, lesson procedures, and assessment.

In your lesson plan be sure to:

- Identify your **goals**-the state or local content and technology standards and benchmarks that your lesson will address.
- Provide a description of the student population you are addressing, including diverse students and students with diverse learning styles.
- Identify your student learning and performance **objectives** for the lesson.
- Identify any **prerequisites** that students will need before they take part in this lesson.
- Identify the **materials** required for the lesson-include student and teacher resources, as well as any advance preparation for the teacher.
- Provide specific references to course readings and other media that support your instructional goals and the needs of your students.
- Include a full list of resources and a general explanation of how the resources are needed to reach instructional goals.
- When relevant, add to the project by including prior knowledge, work experiences, references, Web sites, resources, etc., giving credit as appropriate.
- Write a brief **description** of the lesson that provides a general overview for another teacher who is interested in this lesson.
- Create the **lesson procedures**-a detailed, step-by-step description of how to carry out the lesson. Pretend you are writing this description for another teacher who wants to use your lesson. Include the following components:
 1. **Introduction**-how you will introduce the goals and objectives and let students know what is expected of them
 2. **Main activity**- the focus of the lesson and how the teacher facilitates the learning experience
 3. **Conclusion**-how you will provide closure for students and provide feedback
- Describe the **assessment** you will use to evaluate students' learning.
- Activities that develop the students' independent use of the phonemic awareness skill or the phonics skill.
- A process for monitoring student progress.
- Modifications that address diverse learners such as ELL students and students who have learning disabilities or language deficiencies.

Teach your lesson to a class or group of students. Afterwards, write a reflection paper (one to two pages) in a word processing document answering the following questions:

- How did your students respond to this lesson and what observations did you make about student engagement and student outcomes after teaching the lesson?
- How did this lesson address the needs of your highest achieving students? Your lowest achieving students? Your adequately achieving students?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Was this lesson successful in leading your students to independent use of phonemic awareness and phonics skills?

Alternative Project 3: Linking Phonics Instruction to Reading

If learners chose to do the alternative projects in lieu of the final project, they will complete Alternative Project 3: Linking Phonics Instruction to Reading.

Write in online journal

- Reflect on the following questions:
 - What have you learned and what skills have you acquired from the course?
 - Identify the essential ideas and strategies you gained from this course and how you plan to incorporate them into your current or future classroom.
 - How does this learning experience compare with your goals and expectations?

- Were there any professional goals you were unable to achieve? Why?
- How do you plan to address these areas of professional development in the future?

Participate in online discussions

- Discuss your favorite quote about teaching phonemic awareness and phonics. Say goodbye to your fellow learners.

Schedule

It will take you approximately 45 hours to complete this course. Each session should take approximately 6-7 hours. If you find yourself spending several hours more than this in any given session, please contact your facilitator to make sure this is necessary to complete the given assignments.

Requirements

Learners are expected to:

- Complete all assignments.
- Maintain an online journal.
- Participate and actively engage in discussions with fellow learners while contributing to the social construction of knowledge.
- Be self-directed and self-motivated.
- Ask for assistance when they need it.

Materials (hardware, software, plug-ins)

Technical Requirements

- Word processor
- Internet service provider
- E-mail
- PBS TeacherLine plug-in requirements

Academic Dishonesty Policy

To be inserted by university institution only

Evaluation

This course can be taken for graduate credit on a pass/fail basis, or for a letter grade and graduate credit. See graduate credit details pertaining to specific graduate credit institutions.

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