



Slideshow

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Phonological Awareness: A Sequential Approach

Portales a Aprender Leer Project, Nebraska • June 2007

Topic: Preschool Language and Literacy

Practice: Teach Phonological Awareness

Highlights

- An explanation of one program's approach to sequencing skills and teaching along a developmental continuum
- How to use a developmental scope and sequence to guide lesson planning and individualize instruction
- Importance of monitoring progress, identifying individual skill levels, and basing instruction on what children know and are ready to learn next
- How to use the model-lead-test instructional sequence
- Importance of tracking skill mastery on a daily basis
- Value of grouping children for instruction and regrouping as needed to address changing skill levels

About the Site

Portales a Aprender Leer Project

Lincoln, Nebraska

Demographics:

- Migrant Hispanic families
- Predominantly Spanish-speaking students
- Over 90% qualified for free or reduced lunch

Site Highlights:

- Emergent literacy model demonstration site for migrant Hispanic families
- Developmental scope and sequence of phonological awareness skills guides lesson planning and differentiated instruction
- Explicit supplemental program to build language and pre-reading skills
- Mastery-oriented approach using an explicit “model-lead-test” instructional sequence, including immediate error correction
- Student grouping and regrouping based on changing skill levels, with lower performing children receiving more instructional opportunities in smaller groups that could lead to one-to-one instruction
- Ongoing professional development activities
- On-site coaching with continual observation to ensure practices are implemented with a high degree of fidelity

Full Transcript

Phonological Awareness: A Sequential Approach

Portales a Aprender Leer Project

Dr. J. Ron Nelson is associate professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and principal investigator for the Portales Early Reading First Partnership between the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the South Sioux City Public School District. Hear him talk about the program’s goals and approach to planning and teaching along a developmental sequence.

Slide #1: Identify Key Elements and Activities

Portales a Aprender Leer (Portals to Reading) is an emergent literacy model demonstration program for migrant Hispanic Spanish-speaking children and their families. Take a look at the key elements that guide this mastery-oriented program.

Audio:

We take a unique approach here of integrating our core program with the supplemental instruction that is more direct, more explicit than most people in preschool settings are used to. And I think just in our moving along philosophically, people need to understand that we're not doing this really intense, direct instruction six hours a day. We do it very strategically for short periods of time.

Slide #2: Supplement the Core Program

This program uses the supplemental pre-reading program, Stepping Stones to Literacy, in addition to its core language program. Listen to Dr. Nelson, the developer, talk about why the program made this decision.

Audio:

The reason we use supplements is we do it very strategically—is because core programs, regardless of the level, and especially at the preschool level, are built on a spiral curriculum framework, which essentially means that, as teachers go across the year they revisit topics over and over again in ever more complex ways. And what happens with that is, if you can kind of visualize it, is kids who are at risk or have skill deficits, the spiral is, in many cases, over their head—spiraling around above them and they never can hook into that spiral curriculum and benefit fully from it.

And that spiral curriculum is really very broad. It includes a lot of different skills. Some...they're all very important, but not all of them have been identified as being critical to achieving certain learning outcomes.

The instruction is very varied, and in many cases it is unstructured, which also poses a problem for at-risk populations. So if you take our supplemental programs, then if you take Stepping Stones to Literacy—these programs are very strategic in the skills that they implement. And that means that the skills have been chosen specifically because in the research it's been identified that these skills lead to critical child outcomes. So, for example, in Stepping Stones, phonological awareness is a real strategic target because that skill, pre-reading skill, has been identified as a precursor to acquisition of reading skills.

Letter names is another target we have in Stepping Stones. And that has been identified because knowledge of letter names has also been found to be a good predictor of reading acquisition.

Slide #3: Sequential Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness begins with introducing children to the concept of listening carefully for specific sounds and then progressing to listening comprehension. The developmental sequence organizes skills in a way that helps teachers plan lessons and individualize instruction. Listen as Dr. Nelson explains the organization of the scope and sequence.

Audio:

What we did was really lay out a very strategic scope and sequence across time starting out with large environmental sounds to get children attuned to attending to sound structures they're going to hear and then moving in to phonological awareness. And then eventually into phonemic awareness, with that scope and sequence organized in a linear way in which we start with easier tasks. Even, you know, for example, in phonemic awareness—if we're doing phoneme segmentation, we're going to start with initial sounds and then we're going to follow that with initial and final sounds. And then we'll follow that with initial, medial, and final sounds.

So that's done strategically because it's easier for children to master initial sounds followed by final, followed by medial. And so what we do is we build mastery in a strategic way in each of those phonemic tasks.

If you look across the top it says, "Instructional Activity," followed by the numbers 1 through 25. In essence, those are lessons. Lessons 1 through 25 and then the X means that, if you look down from 1, for example, the Sounds in Isolation, the X indicates that that instructional activity is used in Lesson 1. And then that proceeds until the last X and that is the last lesson that that activity is going to be presented in.

Slide #4: Plan Lessons

Teachers work together to plan phonological awareness lessons. Reflecting and talking about what they have learned consolidates their knowledge. Teachers understand that children come to the classroom at different skill levels so they plan lesson content and teaching strategies on what the children know and are ready to learn next.

Audio:

As children start our program, they come at all different skill levels. And what we really try to achieve by the end of the year is that they're all at the same skill level. And we do that by using

strategic grouping of instruction. So our instruction in the supplemental programs are [is] more efficient and more powerful for kids.

We also increase instruction time, which means that we may add additional instructional time for the groups of children who are farther behind than we would like to see them. And then we also do some individualized interventions in some cases, if necessary.

We follow a “model-lead-test” sequence, which really in the simplest way is, the teacher takes a turn, which we call “my turn.” And then we do an “our turn,” which is the teacher and children respond. And then the kids respond and then...so it’s “my turn,” “our turn,” “your turn.” And we use that kind of language where we go through the lessons with kids.

Slide #5: Use the Model-Lead-Test Sequence

Portales teachers use a “model-lead-test” instructional approach. In these lessons, the teacher models the skill, leads by asking the children to do it together with the teacher, and tests mastery by asking the children to practice the skill independently. Error correction is immediate. If a learning error is made, the teacher repeats the sequence.

Audio:

Our approach addressing lower-performing children really is about being very strategic in what you teach in a developmental continuum and how you teach it. You know, with consistent controlled formats and very strategic sequence of skills across time, which allows children to master the prerequisite skills to the more complex ones they’ll encounter as they move up.

So, for example, a prerequisite skill for phonemic awareness is being able to generate and identify rhymes, being able to segment syllables and so forth. Children need to master those before we start asking them to identify and segment and blend sounds—phonemes.

There’s progress monitoring going on and we use several layers of that. One being, in both of these programs, have tracking mechanisms for looking at whether children are mastering the skills and the concepts over time as well as within lessons and then teachers adjust their pacing both within lessons as well as across lessons to ensure the children master the skills and make substantive gains.

Slide #6: Focus the Child's Attention

"A phonemic task is, by definition, something that can be done in the dark."

—Ron Nelson

Sometimes teachers in their excitement to combine fun and learning, use props or materials that can distract some children rather than support their learning. Helping children develop attention skills gives them the ability to focus on the language concept being taught through lessons or incidental learning moments.

Audio:

I think there's this notion that everything that's done with young children has to be done with animals, and you know, very stimulating props. And what I think people need to understand is that, in a lot of ways, those become distracters to the child to focus in on what actually they're supposed to be learning.

We really are very, very strategic in this if we really think about what we're teaching. For example, identification, initial sounds identification. We don't want to have any stimuli that's going to distract from learning that.

One of the things teachers need to keep in mind is to be thoughtful about what the child outcome is they're trying to achieve. And what are the stimuli necessary to achieve that and what are distracting stimuli that potentially some children in the group are going to attend to rather than what they want them to attend to.

Slide #7: Improve Instruction for All Children

Students are grouped for instruction and regrouped as needed to address changing skill levels. Children in the lower-performing group are provided with more instructional opportunities by changing the size of the group. Some children may receive one-to-one instruction. The teacher doesn't move forward until all children have mastered the skill. If necessary, the lesson is re-taught immediately.

Audio:

We group for instruction. We make sure that we allocate sufficient time so that we can complete lessons. We don't like to stop midway through lessons. We follow the instructional activities and lessons in sequence and we do a lot of ensuring mastery as we go through the lesson.

So, for example, if we finish a lesson and the teacher feels the group is not comfortable or has not mastered that, then they'll re-teach that lesson.

Slide #8: Know that Children are Learning

Portales students have shown consistently high outcomes on all language assessments. Children are leaving the program well prepared for kindergarten. In fact, some kindergarten teachers have told the preschool staff that they are being challenged to adapt their program to reflect the increasing skill levels of the Portales kids!

Audio:

It is just so critical for people to think through what exactly is the continuum of skills that we want to apply and we've been talking about phonological awareness, but we've also been doing that in oral language development. And then we know that's effective because we are continually monitoring students' progress and we really have a clear picture all the way along whether children are making progress.

And then I think the one last thing, and probably, actually the most important is: each of these supplemental programs requires teachers to track children. And that involves tracking children that haven't mastered by sort of re-teaching lessons. So if they're not progressing in lessons, it's a clear cue that something has to change in the instruction to achieve a successful outcome by the end of the year.