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The Sandpaper Letter

Montessori of Greenwich
Bay Volume 5 • Issue 2
January/February 2010



The New Year Brings a New School and New Growth!!!

The Phonological Awareness Curriculum

An early literacy component

Researchers now know that children who can hear the sounds in words learn to read more easily than children who do not. Understanding this concept of “phonological awareness” is the first of several conceptual leaps that a child has to make on the way to learning to read effectively.

While many children who are exposed to rich language at home and at school grasp the initial concept of phonological awareness naturally, other children do not. Experts agree that children do better when teachers have a systematic plan for teaching these skills rather than relying on “teachable moments”, which are used effectively in many other areas of learning. Phonological awareness is the first step in a continuum through which children progress in learning to read:

1. Hearing sounds (phonological awareness)
2. Understanding that letters represent sounds (alphabetical principle)

3. Blending letter sounds to make words
4. Recognizing familiar word patterns
5. Building fluency
6. Constructing meaning from text.

The phonological awareness continuum is like a stairway that children move along as they progress from a limited to a deeper understanding of how sounds of words work. The steps are progressive for most children, but not all. Some children hop ahead to master complex skills only to have to return to grasp some seemingly easier ones. The steps of the continuum include:

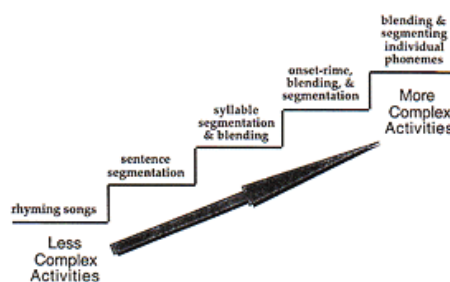


Figure 1. A continuum of complexity of phonological awareness activities.

Activities for the learning continuum:

1. **Listening:** Bringing children’s attention to the sounds of words:

Being in tune to environmental sounds, reverse or substitute words with rhymes and familiar phrases, listening to specific sounds in a story, following a series of verbal directions and the Montessori silence game.

2. **Rhyming:** Focusing on sounds at the end of words that sound the same: Rhyming chants, songs, poems, text and stories.
3. **Alliteration:** Focusing on the sounds at the beginning of words that are the same: Reciting poems, rhymes, songs with repeating initial sounds, grouping objects by beginning sounds, calling attention and playing games that call attention to similar beginning sounds.
4. **Sentence Segmenting:** This comes after children have organized sounds into categories (rhyme and alliteration) and focus on bringing to children’s attention that words are separate. Children can count/clap the number of words in sentences, select meaningful sentences from books, cut words from sentence strips.

5. **Syllable Blending and Segmenting:** Having children count and clap syllables in words help them hear the separate sounds.
6. **Onset-Rime:** Dividing one syllable words by their initial consonant sound and all their other sounds: Ex. c...at, b...at.
7. **Phoneme Blending** (blending together individual sounds) **Segmenting** (breaking down words into individual sounds) **Manipulation** (replacing individual sounds in a word, Ex. m...it, to m...at.

We have work in the classroom that incorporates learning these concepts and will also introduce more listening and alliteration games.

3285 South County Trail

Beginning Monday, February 1st, school will be at our new address. There will be a slight change in session times and are as follows:

Before care: 7:40 – 9:00*

Morning: 9:00 – 12:00

Lunch: 12:00 – 12:40

Afternoon: 12:40 – 3:00

After care: 3:00 – 5:00*

*Please see me if you are interested in B/A care

Entering the parking lot:

As you drive in the lot, turn right and stay right. Drive to the end and turn left so you will be in front of the building. You will see a teacher at the Montessori entrance to greet your child.

Drop off Procedures:

Morning drop off is at the Montessori entrance and begins at 8:50 instead of 8:40 due to the toddler session start time. A teacher will be at the drop off area until approximately 9:00. Children will be greeted and led to the classroom through the Montessori front door. If you arrive after 9:00, please park and bring your child in through the

center vestibule door. The Montessori entrance door will be locked as school will have started so using this entrance will disturb the classroom. Once inside, your child can then go to their cubby independently.

Pick up Procedures:

We may have your child ready at the front entrance for pickup. If we are still in the play yard, park your car and walk to the back left side of the building to the gate of the play yard. All children have to be signed out in compliance with DCYF regulations. We will ask for a password for each child so if someone other than parents are picking up we can verify that they are on the Release information form. We may also require a picture of others authorized to release your child to. Pick up from lunch will be inside the classroom. Sessions end promptly so if you are late, please enter through the front vestibule so as not to disturb the current session. Your child will be waiting in the cubby area.

Fire Drills:

The state is now requiring at least 15 fire drills during the school year. We will provide more detailed information on this in February.

Enrollment changes:

If you would like to add a lunch, morning or afternoon session for your child beginning in February, please let us know. We are also adding an afternoon session on Monday or Wednesday. You are welcome to change/add your child to this session or use it as a drop-in. We will need a 24 hour notice and at least three children to run the session.

Welcome New Staff

We will have an early childhood credentialed teacher begin with us in February. Valeria Pecchia will be in the classroom a few days in January so the children can become familiar

with her. She will be helping in both the toddler and 3-5 year old classrooms. Valeria has a BS in Management and Elementary Education and is currently pursuing her Masters in social work. She has over ten years experience in early childhood education including five year as a lead Kindergarten teacher and a year in a Reggio Emilio preschool. She is excited to become part of our growing community and we are happy to have her join us. We are happy to still have Vanessa with us to!

BrightStars

Montessori of Greenwich Bay is among the first in RI and the only program in East Greenwich to be recognized for its commitment to providing high-quality care and education by BrightStars- RI's new quality rating and improvement system.

Twenty other programs across the state gathered for Starry, Starry Night, an event celebrating and saluting the first group child care and education programs that have joined BrightStars. More than 100 community leaders were in attendance including special guest RI Education Commissioner Deborah Gist.

Press release: "BrightStars raises the bar for early childhood programs in RI", said Tammy Camillo, BrightStars Director. "Montessori of Greenwich Bay's participation is a sign that they are a leader in a statewide effort to invest in high-quality early childhood care and education".

Programs enrolled in BrightStars are assessed across many standard and criteria in the following quality domains: 1) child's daily experience, 2) teaching and learning, 3) staff ratio/group size, 4) family communication and engagement, 5)

staff qualifications, and 6) program management. We are setting goals to provide the highest possible care and education for your child. We are eligible to participate in BrightStars in the new space six months after we receive our DCYF license.

Classroom News

Chinese

We plan to continue offering Chinese lessons in the new year. Please let us know if your child would like to continue or start.. The session runs for ten weeks session and is currently on Mondays from 12:20-1:00. Morning children stayed for lunch for a nominal fee then participate in the lessons If you would like your child to participate and this time is inconvenient, please let us know so we can work out a time that will accommodate all who are interested.

Continent Study Wrap up

Sun Bear Organization

We are finishing up our continent study of Asia this month and will learn about a new continent in February. A focus has been the bears of Asia. They have a unique crescent shape that looks like a sun or moon. For our global outreach we will donate money to the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation. I explained to the children that some people in Asia keep the bears in cages and use their bile for medicine when they could use plants. I will give the children little containers to take home and collect loose change. In mid January they can bring the coins to school to sort and count then make a donation from the children



Asian Art

We will bring in a local artist to do a final Asia art project with the children in January.

SORICO

The Southern RI Collaborative will be here the morning of Monday, February 8th to do their annual screening for our children. The free service, sponsored by the RI Dept. of Ed. does a very base line developmental screening for 3-5 year olds and includes Visual Motor/ Adaptive Skills, Language/Cognition, as well as Gross Motor, Speech, Vision and Hearing. If there are signs of delay, the collaborative can provide the necessary resources. I will give you the exact time in Feb. and you are welcome to bring your child for the screening if they don't attend on Mondays.

Parent Resource Group Meeting

The Parent Resource Group will meet on Wednesday, February 10th from 6:50 – 8:00. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. It will be the first meeting in our new building. We will talk about the logistics of the new space, upcoming events and curriculum, how parents can help/be involved as well as go over the Parent Surveys from the fall. There will also be a presentation on something from the Montessori curriculum.

January Curriculum

In January we will celebrate winter. Although it can be very cold, we will talk about all of the things it brings like ice, snow and animal tracks. Curriculum includes:

- New Year's Resolutions/Peace
- Penguins
- Polar Animals
- Global giving (Sun Bear project)
- Mammals
- Conifers (evergreens)
- Artist study- Mondrian
- Snow Flake Bentley
- Animals and tracks
- Martin Luther King

- Moon Phase Chart
- Ice Experiment
- Time
- Sun, Stars, Constellations
- Asia art activity

This month's science discrimination/classification work : Hot/cold

February Curriculum

We will celebrate our new space and take time to teach the children how things work. The children are excited about Valentine's Day in February so we include them with our work this month. Curriculum includes:

- Ground Hog's Day
- Pink Tower Project
- Chinese New Year
- Our human heart
- Valentine's Day
- President's Day
- Money
- Olympics/Tallying
- Gold, Silver, Bronze
- Colors/Mixing
- Picasso's Blue Period
- Amphibians
- Dental Month
- New Continent study

Please note: There may changes to above listed curriculum.

"Save the Earth" tip



Idle Time: Do you ever wonder if you should leave your car running or turn it off if you are waiting for someone or something? Leave it running if you will be less than a minute. Otherwise its more efficient to turn the engine off and start it again when you're ready to go.