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"How does explicit phonemic awareness instruction in a 6th-grade classroom, influence students reading fluency and comprehension?"

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How does explicit phonemic awareness instruction in a 6th-grade classroom,
influence students reading fluency and comprehension?

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in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if using phonemic awareness lessons could help students with reading comprehension and fluency. This action research study was conducted in a rural 6th-grade classroom with a total of 38 students. The classroom is in west-central Minnesota. The student participants were two sections that included the entire 6th grade. The research entailed whole group lessons; which involved games, syllable instruction and explicit instruction on listening to the sounds in words and noticing the patterns that sounds and spellings have in words. Small group lessons were also implemented where students rotated in the classroom to stations set up with phonemic awareness assignments. The students were also given tools and resources to use independently to decode and attack new words. Data was collected with the STAR Renaissance assessment tools. Students were assessed for comprehension three times a year, and fluency throughout the year. A comprehensive phonemic awareness assessment was given to students to determine students that had a gap in this foundational reading skill.

Keywords: phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, reading continuum.

The Science of Reading (SOR) has led many teachers to reexamine their teaching strategies and revamp many routines in their classrooms. This shift back to phonics compared to balanced literacy is believed to make up for the gaps in reading comprehension seen in many American classrooms today. As the Science of Reading, also called the Reading Continuum was studied, evidence pointed to the fact that the lack of phonemic awareness is a catalyst for the gap in reading skills for many students. This skill, which was largely practiced in preschool and primary grades, was the ability to hear each sound in a word. It does not include letters, but instead, a student demonstrated that they isolated sounds in words, blended the sounds to create words, segmented the sounds to individual phonemes, and manipulated sounds to create new words or rhyming words. Words become manageable and fun when students' brains were flexible enough to play with sounds. Some students' brains pick up on reading more naturally. They seem to have a natural reading brain, and they picked up on reading with ease. Other students, however, cannot easily make the connections in their brain and must be taught explicitly the 44 sounds in the English language or the sounds of their native language, in order to become fluent readers who comprehend text.

Phonemic awareness was not just for beginning readers. All students can easily find it in rhyme and rhythm activities and the skill can be honed as students' brains develop and grow. Each student can learn this skill. Unfortunately, American teachers are stuck in a position to move ahead with the whole class instead of offering individual instruction for students who need phonemic awareness to strengthen and guide their future reading.

Many factors play into why students are not at grade level in reading. Students need to be consistently assessed on their phonemic awareness skills. Many teachers are unaware of this gap

and leave students feeling inadequate as readers which in turn may cause them to give up on reading.

This research followed 6th-grade students who are not at grade level. Specific phonemic awareness interventions were administered during the semester to see how student reading comprehension improved. The STAR Renaissance assessment, which is already administered to these students, determined the students' success by comparing the Fall, Winter, and Spring assessments.

Reading fluency was tracked with the STAR Renaissance fluency test that is taken naturally in the classroom setting. Syllables, alliteration, rhyming, and phonemic awareness were taught with the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) student-centered activities and used as interventions and as follow-up assessments to see how well the students completed the task and when appropriate an oral examination was given to solidify student understanding.

The Pennington Publishing free online tool (Appendix D) was used to gather baseline data on each student's phonemic awareness efficiency in the areas of; rhyming, syllable awareness, phoneme isolation, and phoneme blending.

Data were collected by using the Pennington assessment. Evidence-based intervention activities from the Florida Center for Reading Research (Appendix C) were used as educational tools to teach phonological awareness. As time passed students gained skills in phonemic awareness and completed the tasks quicker than previous attempts. Data was analyzed by looking to see if the anticipated outcomes of students decreasing the time it takes to complete a task was an indicator that their phonemic awareness abilities were strengthened and a faster response time in completing tasks was shown. Data was collected on reading comprehension scores.

The data also analyzed and compared average 6th-grade students using the National Oral Reading Fluency Norms of Hasbrouck & Tindal (2006), (Appendix A) standards for reading fluency scores. These scores gave the normal range of children reading words per minute based on age and were the control scores for the oral reading fluency that the students completed regularly. According to the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR), “phonological awareness is typically achieved by fourth grade. If a student has not yet learned to decode words, then some phonemic awareness instruction in conjunction with phonics (to reinforce the alphabetic principle) may be needed” (FCRR). Based on this information phonemic awareness activities were used as games, testing, and observation. (Appendices B)

Theoretical Framework

Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the individual sounds, or phonemes, in spoken words. It is an important skill for developing reading proficiency because it helps individuals to decode words and understand the relationships between sounds and letters. Phonemic awareness helps reading comprehension in several ways. First, it allows readers to accurately and efficiently decode words, by recognizing the sounds that correspond to each letter or group of letters. This helps readers to read more fluently and with greater accuracy, which supports comprehension.

Second, phonemic awareness helps readers to understand the structure of words and sentences. By recognizing the individual sounds in words, readers can identify patterns, such as rhyming words, prefixes, and suffixes. Readers can also identify sentences and differentiate between sounds, words, sentences, and paragraphs when hearing spoken text. This understanding

of word structure supports comprehension by helping readers to recognize and interpret unfamiliar words and to identify essential information in sentences and paragraphs.

Finally, phonemic awareness helps readers to develop vocabulary, as they learn to recognize and differentiate between similar-sounding words. This supports comprehension by enabling readers to understand the nuances of language and to comprehend more complex texts. This is critical in 6th grade as the text complexity increases and students are expected to read for meaning and understanding. Overall, phonemic awareness is a foundational skill for reading fluency and comprehension, and its development is critical for success in reading and writing. It is a skill that continues to develop in readers especially if it is taught explicitly in the classroom.

Review of Literature

As research on teaching children to read becomes more and more clear, authors Jane Ashby, David Kilpatrick, Louisa Moats, and others have agreed that phonemic awareness is often a skill missing for students who struggle to be at grade level in reading fluency, and comprehension. (Ashby, 2022; U.S. Dept of Ed., 2012). This paper discussed recent literature on the topic of how explicit phonemic awareness instruction in the 6th-grade classroom influences students reading fluency and comprehension. A look at recent literature and examining current research authors' theories are explained, as well as, defining the terms of the Reading Continuum, phonological awareness, and phonemic awareness.

The Reading Continuum

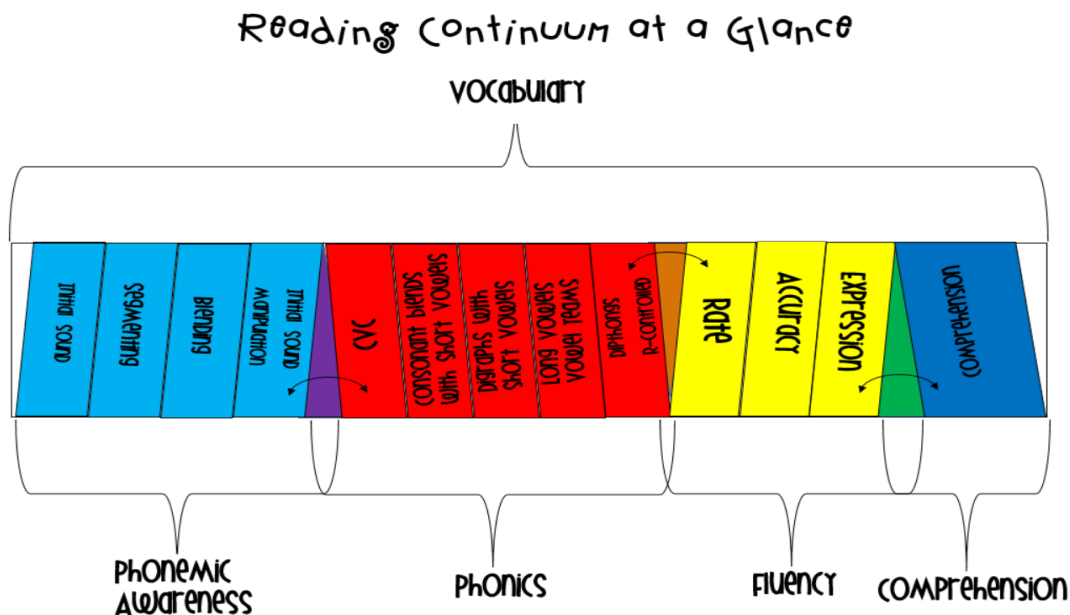
To explicitly teach phonemic awareness, a teacher needs to understand the terms associated with the Reading Continuum (PRESS, 2018). The Reading Continuum is a method of teaching reading that flows from one area to another and yet can be flexible for the student to go

back and forth on the continuum to strengthen skills, gain a deeper understanding, and become a more proficient reader. A teacher, Mary Spaulding, created the included graphic Figure 1. The color-coded areas defined each of the five areas of the Reading Continuum; phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (marys@stma.k12.mn.us).

Each of the five areas also have sections that developed the area further. Phonemic awareness is detailed with sections on initial sounds, segmenting, blending, and manipulating. Phonics is detailed with consonant, vowel, consonant, CVC words; digraphs, the /ch/, /th/, /sh/ sounds; consonant blends, sl, cr, st, and the wide range of two consonants that come together to build words; long vowels and vowel teams; diphthongs and r-controlled vowels. Fluency comprises rate, accuracy, and expression. Comprehension is understanding the meaning of the text. Vocabulary is built as students are exposed to words.

Figure 1

Reading Continuum at a Glance



This paper focused on phonemic awareness and how this skill influenced fluency and comprehension which complete the reading continuum. To dive deeper into phonemic awareness a comparison to phonological awareness is necessary.

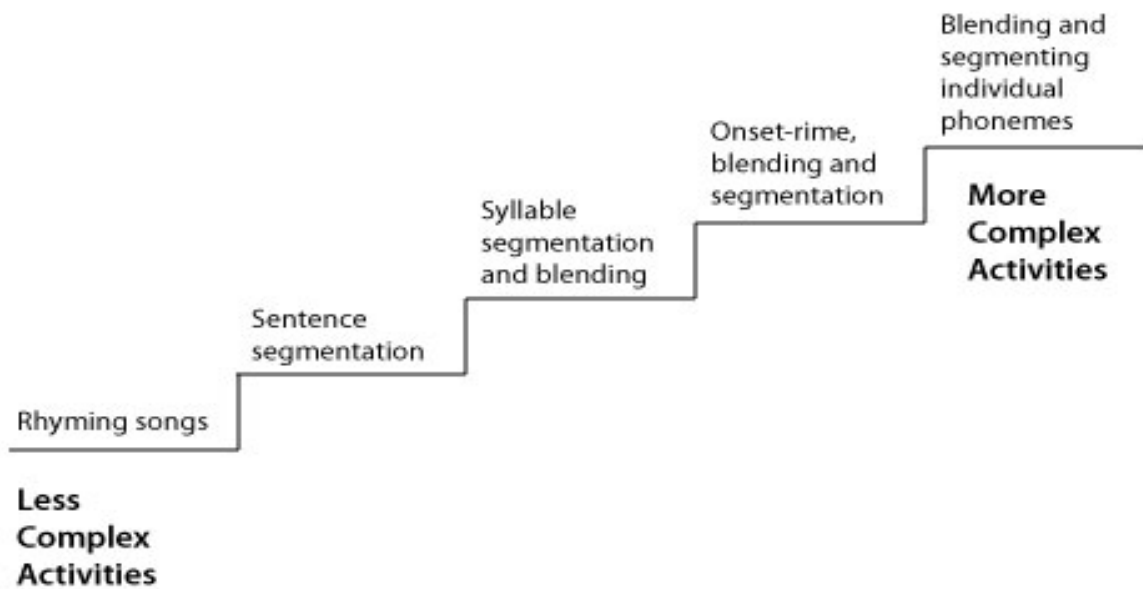
Phonological Awareness

The chart Figure 3 outlines the steps of phonological awareness (PRESS, 2022; Chard, 2022). These steps were easily adapted to lessons in the classroom. Students started with step one rhymes, changing the first sound in a word, and making comparisons. Step two in the model helped students hear words in sentences by counting the words and creating sentences. Step three divides words into syllables. Students can clap the syllables and listen for the seven different types of syllables in words. The seven syllable types included: open syllables, closed syllables, silent-e (also called magic e), r-controlled vowels, vowel teams, diphthongs, and consonant le. To help students continue gaining comfort with the language, step four is onset and rime. It is taught by blending and segmenting sounds or units of sound in words and helps students differentiate the sounds in words. The final step in phonological awareness is phonemic awareness. Phonemes are the smallest unit of a word and are the individual sounds that students

Figure 2

Phonological Awareness Steps to Define and Distinguish from Phonemic Awareness

<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/phonological-awareness-instructional-and-assessment-guidelines>



can hear, blend, and break apart. When students gain this skill, words become tools they can use. (Torgeson, 2002; Baker, 2018; Chard, 2022).

As Figure 2 showed, less complex tools included rhyming songs. As students continued on the steps they were guided in hearing sentences by counting the number of words in sentences. When that was mastered students determined individual words and the separate syllables in each word. Words were also broken into separate syllables in each word. Words were also broken into parts; the beginning of a word; the onset and the end of a word; rime. The final and most complex aspect of phonological awareness is phonemic awareness. It was differentiated by blending and segmenting each individual sound or phoneme in a word. Because words are spoken fast some students fail to hear each sound and heard the word as one unit instead of each of its individual sounds. When this happens students have difficulty in spelling because it becomes a task of memorization instead of using the phonics code to decode each sound and apply the spelling of the sound to the word.

One more look at phonological awareness is to think of it as development steps. Steps 1-6c are steps in phonological awareness. Phonemic awareness is the steps in parentheses 4 - 6c.

1. Word awareness and alliteration.
2. Rhyming,
3. Syllable awareness,
- (4. Isolating sounds,
- 5a. Blending sounds,
- 5b. Segmenting sounds,
- 6a. Deleting sounds,
- 6b. Adding sounds,
- 6c. Substituting sounds)

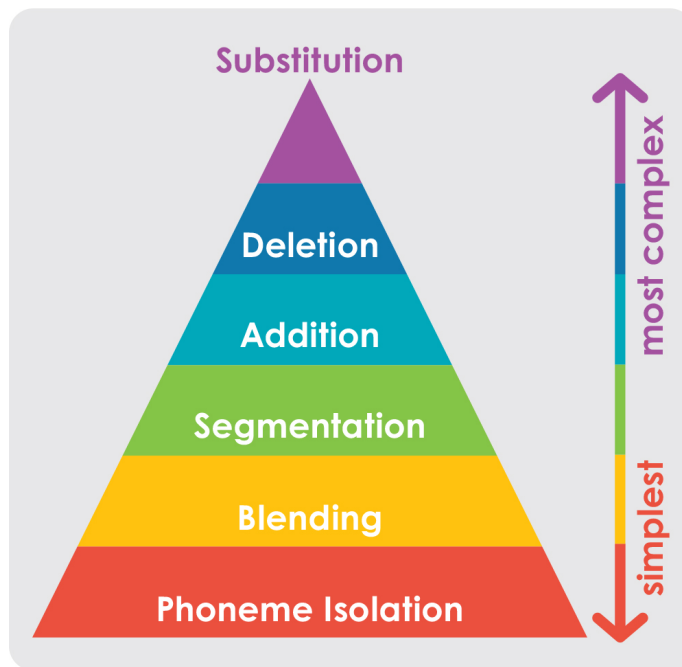
(www.pdxreading.com 2022).

Phonemic Awareness

Figure 3

Directionality of Phonemic Awareness

https://www.reallygreatreading.com/sites/default/files/pa-skill-pyramid_difficulty_2.jpg



Defining and looking closer at phonemic awareness, this triangle chart showed the directionality of phonemic awareness (Powers, 2022). This is where students heard or repeated a word from a teacher such as cat, and segmented that word to:

1. Hear each sound or phoneme.
2. Change it and create new words. The

The emphasis here is that the word is spoken and heard, not using letters or words. Students understand that nothing is on paper or in text. It is hearing the sounds in words and recognizing that words have sounds.

3. Phoneme isolation is taking the first, middle, or final sound and separating it from the word to recognize its sounds. In *cat*, the /c/ sound is emphasized and it can be described as the first sound or the beginning sound. Continuing to use the word *cat* there are three sounds /c/, /a/, /t/. /c/ is the beginning sound, /a/ is the middle sound, and /t/ is the final sound. Helping students understand this concept then helps them to change the sounds to create new words. When letters, also named graphemes, are introduced the instruction changes to phonics.
4. Phoneme blending is the ability to hear the sounds and blend them to make a word.
5. Phoneme segmenting is speaking a word and breaking it into each phoneme or sound in the word.
6. Phoneme addition is changing a word by adding a sound, for example, using the word *lap* and adding /c/ to form the word *clap*.
7. Phoneme deletion is changing a word by deleting a sound, for example, using the word *goat* and deleting /g/ to form the word *oat*.

Burkins and Yates (2021) have current research on phonemic awareness that indicates when students understand the simple forms of speech and phonemes, this understanding guides them into developing larger speech patterns, words, sentences, and paragraphs, and as that develops students can apply the knowledge to read fluently and to comprehend the text.

The Reading Brain

The reading brain has been penned because many children learn to read quickly and easily. Any experienced elementary teacher and most parents find that their children learn the

names of the letters, and the sounds of the letters with ease. They are able to put the sounds together and figure out the meaning of the words. Thus they are able to build from their own background knowledge and vocabulary to become successful readers.

However, there are many students that struggle with reading and deciphering the code to make words meaningful and comprehensible.

The human brain was never designed to read, and unlike areas dedicated to language and music, there is no “reading center” of the brain and no identifiable “reading genes” in human cells. Humans invented reading and writing just a little over 5,000 years ago, essentially rewiring existing brain structures dedicated to vision and language into a specialized circuit to quickly scan visual symbols and turn them into meaning.

Put simply, the neural circuit for reading often called the reading brain combines processes used for vision in the *cortex* (to see written letters and words), hearing in the *auditory cortex* (to hear the sounds and rhythms letters and words make and connect them to the written words), and language in the *left hemisphere* (to comprehend the meaning of written letters and words). (Korbey, 2022)

Holly Korbey (2022) also states that phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension are the areas of most struggle for students with dyslexia. A test, RAN/RAS test (Rapid Automatized Naming/Rapid Alternating Stimulus), is available online to assess students and is an opportunity for teachers to give explicit instruction to students for a baseline at the beginning of the school year. Another free online assessment created by Mark Pennington, a Reading Specialist, is conducive to whole classroom assessment. This assessment guides teachers to

understand the following elements of phonemic awareness for each student in the classroom.

Rhyming Awareness, Alphabetic Awareness, Syllable Awareness and Syllable Manipulation, Phonemic Isolation, Phonemic Blending, and Phonemic Segmentation (Pennington 2017).

Natural readers vs. struggling readers.

It is very well documented that many students struggle to learn to read (Duran, 2022; Kilpatrick, 2015; Korbey, 2015; Moats, 1995, 2012, 2020). Some students come to school reading and pick it up naturally without much instruction. The gap between the two has caused many teachers to pause and wonder what is happening. Given the same instruction but one student flourishes and the other diminishes. This is an ongoing, worldwide issue that has been studied for decades (Duran, 2022).

David Kilpatrick (2015) says 25% of all readers struggle to gain grade-level reading skills. When students fall behind it causes anxiety in students, parents, and teachers. "This kind of anxiety and frustration can be largely avoided," says Tufts University director and author Maryanne Wolf. She and colleague Martha Denckla designed a simple test to quickly know whether there is a problem in the reading circuit early, as early as kindergarten or first grade. Called the RAN/RAS test (Rapid Automated Naming/Rapid Alternating Stimulus), students are timed on how fast they can name letters, numbers, colors, and objects. (Korbey, 2022).

Kilpatrick also supports this test. (2015). It is available by grade level, up to 6th grade.

Joanne Pierson, a speech-language pathologist at the University of Michigan explains "Contrary to popular belief, the core problem in dyslexia is not reversing letters (although it can be an indicator)," she writes. "The difficulty lies in identifying the discrete units of sound that make up words and matching those individual sounds to the letters and combinations of letters to read and spell" (2022, Blog) Whether a student is a natural reader or a struggling reader, research

indicates that instruction in phonemic awareness helps to build and strengthen the foundational skills of reading (Duran, 2022; Kilpatrick, 2015; Korbey, 2015; Moats, 1995, 2012, 2020). This literature review is a preliminary step in the action research on the topic of how does explicit phonemic awareness instruction in a 6th-grade classroom influences students' reading fluency and comprehension. Fluency is the ability to read words, phrases, sentences, and stories accurately, with enough speed, and expression. It is important to remember that fluency is not an end in itself but a critical gateway to comprehension. (National Center on Improving Literacy 2020). Fluency encompasses three aspects; 1. Reading without errors, 2. The reading speed is the rate at which a student can read. And 3. Prosody is the skill of reading aloud with proper intonation, phrasing, and expression (Harn & Chard, 2008).

“Fluency researchers stated these characteristics found in fluent readers, rely primarily on the letters in the word rather than context or pictures to identify familiar and unfamiliar words. process every letter. use letter-sound correspondences to identify words. Have a reliable strategy for decoding words. read words a sufficient number of times for them to become automatic. (Hasbrouck, 1998). The National Center for Improving Literacy states, “To gain meaning from text, students must read fluently. Proficient readers are so automatic with each component of reading skill (phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary) that they focus their attention on constructing meanings from the print (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). These component reading skills need to be well developed to support understanding. It is not enough to be simply accurate; the skills must be automatic.”

A fluent reader can comprehend text and make meaning of the words, sentences, paragraphs, pages, and books. The University of Minnesota, PRESS, Pathways to Reading Excellence in School Sites, offered these four areas to build reading comprehension; predict,

question, analyze, and summarize. Other researchers have added visualization and inference to this list. Making meaning of vocabulary in the text and accessing background knowledge also help readers comprehend what they are reading.

Methodology

The question that was asked is, *How does explicit phonemic awareness instruction in the elementary classroom influence students' reading fluency and comprehension?* Led to explicit phonemic awareness instruction in the sixth-grade classroom that included a review of the 44 phonemes in the English language. Emphasis was placed on the vowel sounds and explicit instruction included the multiple spellings of the long vowel sounds which were phonics but were needed in phonemic awareness because the one phoneme (a single sound) has multiple graphemes (spelling for a sound). For example, the long sound /ā/ has multiple spellings found in these examples; ate, wait, eight, pay, and prey. All of the long vowel sounds have multiple spellings and were taught in phonics lessons.

Seven syllable types were also explicitly taught. Vowel sounds were emphasized and the students learned that all syllables have a vowel and that vowel sounds often determine the pronunciation of a word. The importance of learning this is because in 6th-grade students are increasingly decoding new words while they are reading.

This study was conducted in an elementary school classroom of 6th-grade students. Interventions were given to the students throughout the school year that focused on phonemic awareness. The students were taught what phonemic awareness is; hearing every sound in words. They were also taught that there are 44 sounds in the English language. These 44 sounds are represented by letters or letter combinations and that is called phonics.

Although phonics was not a part of the interventions that assisted in the study because the students showed a more sophisticated language ability than younger students. Phonemic awareness had to be extremely intentional so as not to easily fall into phonics, a more tangible aspect of reading because of the letter/sound correspondence that readers come to depend on. For this very reason, the intentionality of phonemic awareness is necessary to guide students to retract their reading steps to gain a firm understanding of phonemic awareness and its implications for reading fluency and comprehension.

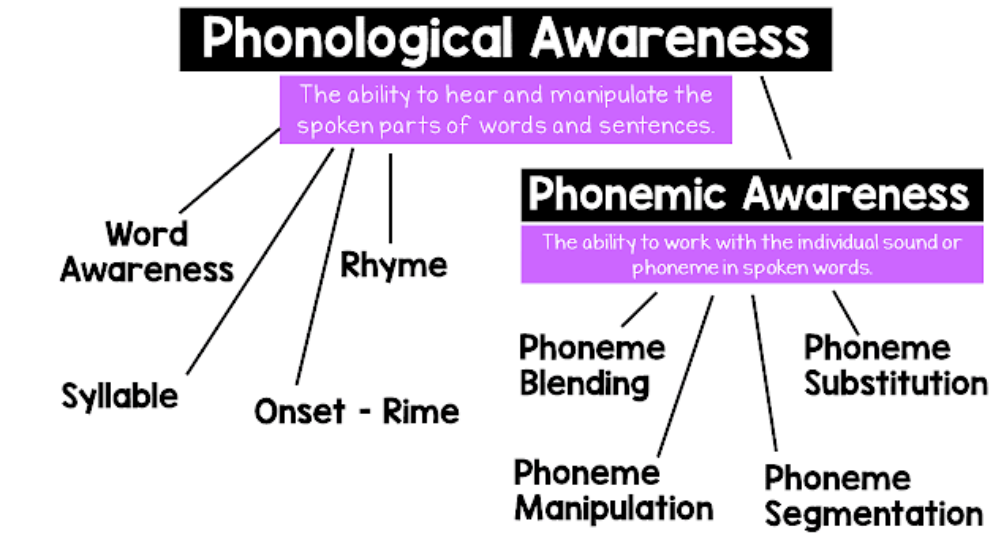
Research suggested that reading comprehension is strengthened when students have a firm grasp on phonological awareness, the umbrella term that includes phonemic awareness, rhyming, alliteration, syllables, and onset and rime. All four of these areas were included in the study because they enhanced the study and helped to vary the interventions for the 6th graders. The overarching goal was maintained - to help the students hear every sound in the words they were speaking, hearing, and reading. By doing this it is expected that reading comprehension and fluency improved, as well as, spelling ability.

The following graphic Figure 4, aids in describing phonological awareness, the ability to hear and manipulate the spoken parts of words and sentences, and shows where phonemic awareness, the ability to work with individual sound or phoneme in spoken words, fits into this spectrum and is better described as a pre-reading skill. It should be noted that pre-reading skills are just as important for sophisticated readers as for early readers.

Figure 4

Phonological Awareness and Phonemic Awareness

https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-P71XIMuHl2w/YPq-jtwe45I/AAAAAACBkE/_bpqLHwOrlI87N5I6I23GijHlAX8L_64wCLcBGAsYHQ/s1280/whats%2Bthe%2Bdifference%2Bgraphic%2Bfixed.png



link to image

Analysis of Data

The data were analyzed and compared to average 6th-grade students using the Literary Nest blog post standards for reading fluency scores. The scores closely connect with the two other fluency scores found in Appendices A and B. Whole classroom assessments were given using the Pennington Publishing assessment. “Efficient, comprehensive, and accurate whole class (or at least small group) phonemic awareness assessments to determine what beginning and remedial readers *know and don’t know*. With these tests, teachers can feel confident that “if they know it, they will show it; if they don’t, they won’t.” Not all students will have mastered the same components of phonemic awareness. No more time-consuming individual phonemic awareness assessments” (Pennington, 2017, Blog). This assessment showed 50% of the 6th grade needed phoneme isolation instruction. Out of the ten questions asked, 16 of the 38 students scored 8 or less correct. Phoneme isolation was the area where most students could not accomplish that task with 90% accuracy. The task asked ten sets of two-word questions.

Students listened to two words for a matching sound in the words. Then the students identified if the same sound was at the beginning, middle, or end of the word. An example: the two words, grew and threw. The /ew/ sound is a diphthong and was at the end of each of the two words or the final sound. Students then marked a circle for final sound on the assessment.

Collected Data from Classwide STAR Renaissance Benchmark Testing

The Pennington assessment gave baseline data specifically for phonemic awareness. The data collected in the four charts below Figures 5-10 represented reading comprehension scores for two sections of 6th-grade students. Fall, Winter, and Spring Benchmark testing for reading comprehension results showed a decline in reading performance over the first four months of the school year. This trend was particularly concerning because students who demonstrated no need for intervention showed a need for intervention and urgent intervention. Phonemic awareness interventions were urgently needed. The Spring data improved from Winter yet showed 25 of the 38 students below grade level for reading comprehension. Only 13 students out of 38 were at grade level reading in May of their 6th-grade year. Figures 5 to 10 showed a color-coded bar graph. The green bars represented students at grade level. The blue bars represented students on watch, the yellow bars represented students needing intervention, and the red bars represented students needing urgent intervention.

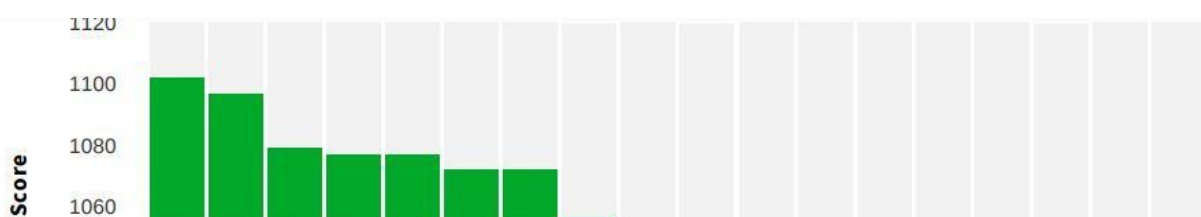
Figure 5

Class A Fall Reading Comprehension Scores

Renaissance Learning Inc. (2023) A software as a service and learning analytics company.

<https://www.renaissance.com>.

This chart showed reading comprehension for the 6th grade at the beginning of the school year.



www.renaissance.com.

Eight students were at grade level in green. Four students were on watch in blue, five students needed intervention in yellow, and one student needed urgent intervention in red.

Figure 6

Class B Fall Reading Comprehension Scores

Renaissance Learning Inc. (2023) A software as a service and learning analytics company.

https//www.renaissance.com.



www.renaissance.com.

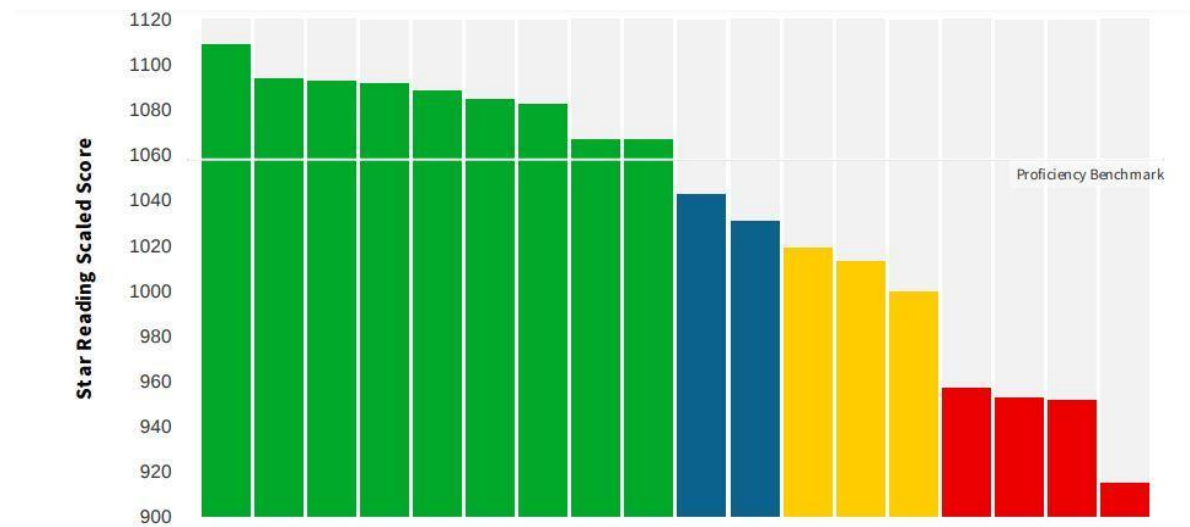
This chart showed Class B Fall Benchmark results. Eight students were at grade level represented in green. Three students were on watch in blue. Three students needed interventions shown in yellow and six students needed urgent interventions shown in red.

Figure 7

Class A Winter Reading Comprehension Scores

Renaissance Learning Inc. (2023) A software as a service and learning analytics company.

<https://www.renaissance.com>.



Categories/Levels	Current Benchmark		Students	
	Scaled Score	Percentile Rank	Number	Percent
At/Above Benchmark				
At/Above Benchmark	At/Above 1058 SS	At/Above 40 PR	9	50%
Category Total			9	50%
Below Benchmark				
On Watch	Below 1058 SS	At/Below 39 PR	2	11%
Intervention	Below 1030 SS	At/Below 24 PR	3	17%
Urgent Intervention	Below 988 SS	At/Below 9 PR	4	22%

www.renaissance.com.

Following three months of weekly 20-minute phonemic awareness interventions that included explicit instruction of the 44 phonemes in the English language and their corresponding

graphemes, the test results showed a backslide instead of improvement. Interventions emphasized long vowel sounds and their spellings to improve spelling, fluency, and reading comprehension. Class A changed from eight students in the green at grade level to nine students. The blue, On Watch, category changed from four to two students. The yellow intervention needed category was reduced from five to three. But the students moved to the urgent need for intervention instead of a positive climb on the grid and moved from one student in the Fall to four students in the Winter.

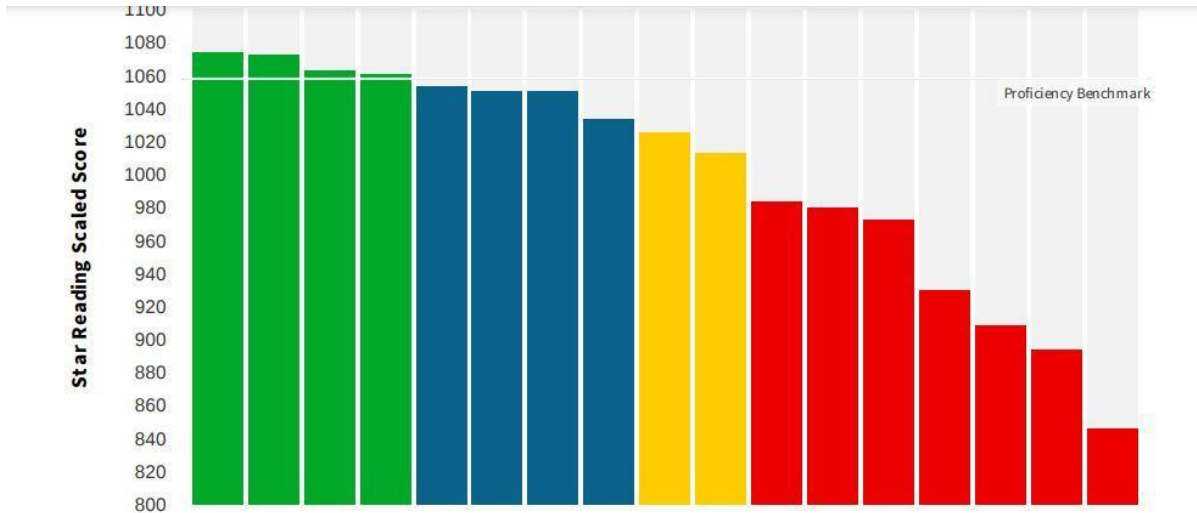
Class B Winter reading comprehension scores shown below were disappointing. Students who were at grade level decreased from eight to four. Students in blue, On Watch, increased from three to four. Students who were in need of urgent intervention, in yellow, changed from three to two. Students who needed urgent intervention, shown in red, increased from six to seven.

Figure 8

Class B Winter Reading Comprehension Scores

Renaissance Learning Inc. (2023) A software as a service and learning analytics company.

<https://www.renaissance.com>.



Categories/Levels	Current Benchmark		Students	
	Scaled Score	Percentile Rank	Number	Percent
At/Above Benchmark				
■ At/Above Benchmark	At/Above 1058 SS	At/Above 40 PR	4	24%
Category Total			4	24%
Below Benchmark				
■ On Watch	Below 1058 SS	At/Below 39 PR	4	24%
■ Intervention	Below 1030 SS	At/Below 24 PR	2	12%
■ Urgent Intervention	Below 988 SS	At/Below 9 PR	7	41%

www.renaissance.com.

Intervention games and activities continued sporadically in the classrooms of both classes. The Spring Reading Comprehension Benchmark concluded the data results for reading comprehension.

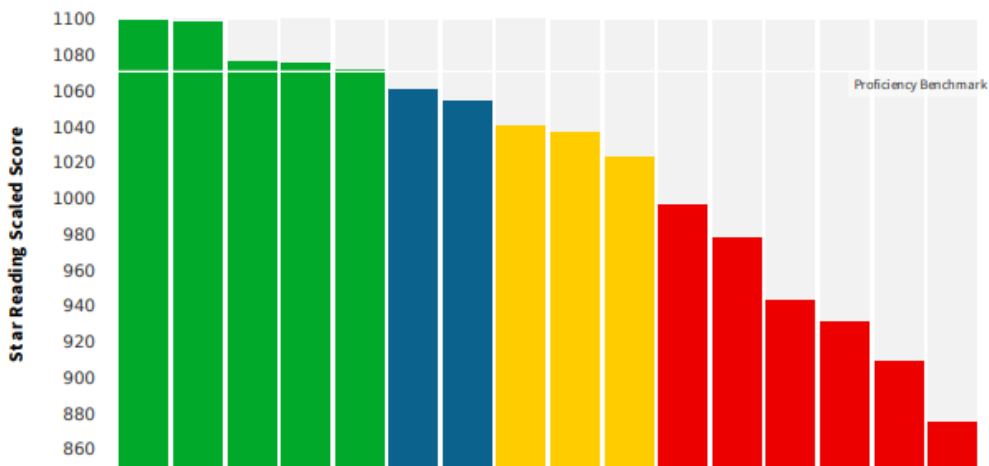
Grade-level reading scores decreased in class A from eight to five students. The STAR Renaissance used four categories to measure student scores; 1. Student at grade level, 2. On watch stayed the same, 3. Intervention needed stayed the same, 4. Urgent intervention increased from four to six students.

Figure 9

Class A Spring Reading Comprehension Scores

Renaissance Learning Inc. (2023) A software as a service and learning analytics company.

<https://www.renaissance.com>.



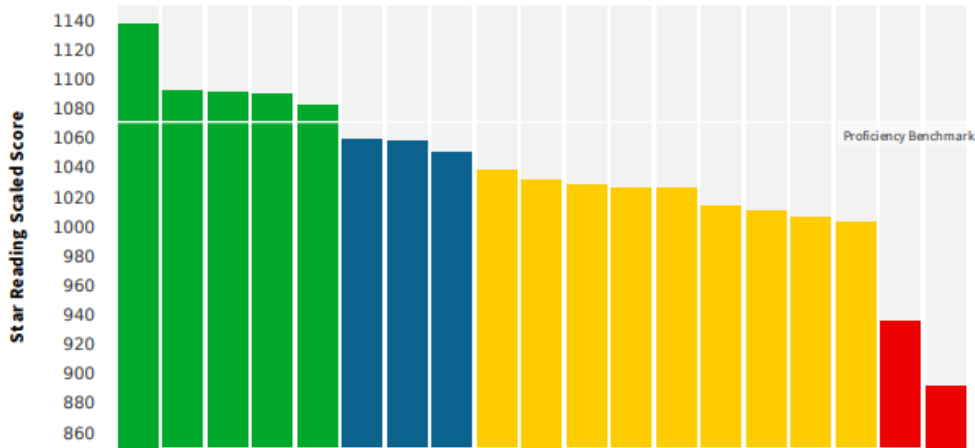
Categories/Levels	Current Benchmark		Students	
	Scaled Score	Percentile Rank	Number	Percent
At/Above Benchmark				
At/Above Benchmark	At/Above 1071 SS	At/Above 40 PR	5	31%
Category Total			5	31%
Below Benchmark				
On Watch	Below 1071 SS	At/Below 39 PR	2	13%
Intervention	Below 1043 SS	At/Below 24 PR	3	19%
Urgent Intervention	Below 1001 SS	At/Below 9 PR	6	38%
Category Total			11	69%
Students Tested			16	
Students Not Tested			2	
Total Students			18	

Figure 10

Class B Spring Reading Comprehension Scores

Renaissance Learning Inc. (2023) A software as a service and learning analytics company.

<https://www.renaissance.com>.



Categories/Levels	Current Benchmark		Students	
	Scaled Score	Percentile Rank	Number	Percent
At/Above Benchmark				
At/Above Benchmark	At/Above 1071 SS	At/Above 40 PR	5	26%
Category Total			5	26%
Below Benchmark				
On Watch	Below 1071 SS	At/Below 39 PR	3	16%
Intervention	Below 1043 SS	At/Below 24 PR	9	47%
Urgent Intervention	Below 1001 SS	At/Below 9 PR	2	11%
Category Total			14	74%
Students Tested			19	
Students Not Tested			2	
Total Students			21	

www.renaissance.com.

Class B Spring STAR Renaissance scores showed students at grade level increased by one student. Students on watch decreased by one student. Students in need of intervention increased by seven students and students in need of urgent intervention decreased by five students.

Data triangulation occurred with observations, note-taking, assessing, and comparing results. The collection of data in the areas of phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension balanced out the information. A universal whole-class assessment, by Pennington Publishing, gave a baseline for student results. These resources were used for follow-up post-tests on the interventions and the phonemic awareness skills that were being instructed during the research

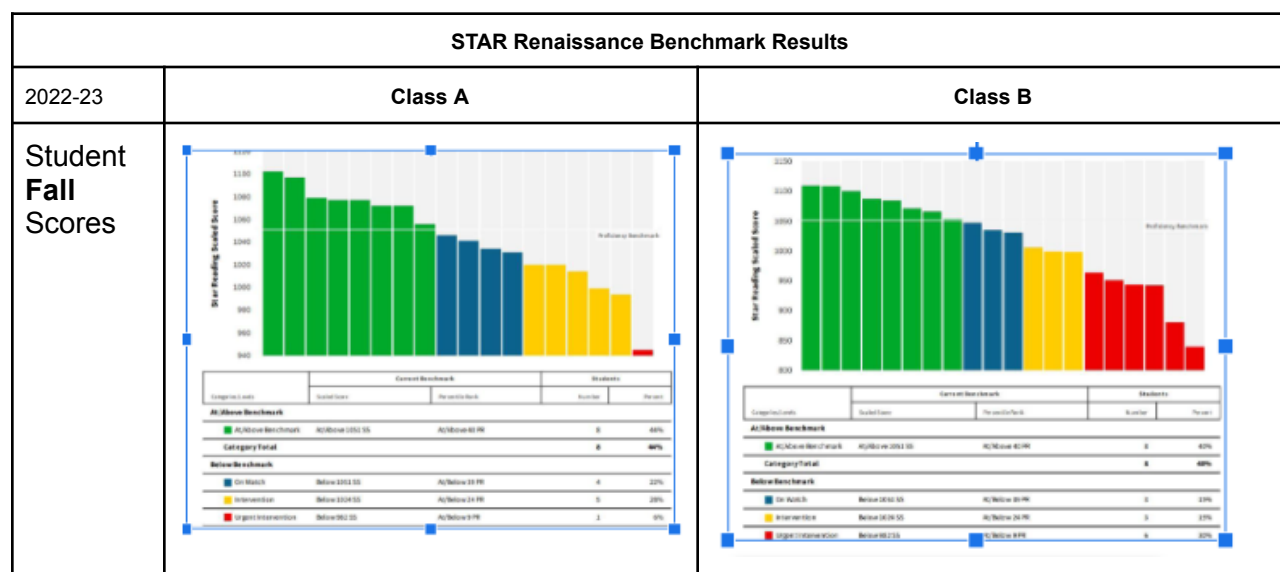
phase. Interventions used the Florida Center for Reading Research student-centered activities focusing on phoneme manipulation and isolation. These advanced reading skills used the skills of deletion and substitution that require a student to know how to isolate, segment, and blend, which are considered beginning skills, as well as, manipulate and change sounds. (Kilpatrick 2015). After the interventions, a post-test was given. The results of the 16 students identified as needing explicit instruction, showed a positive result. Of the 16 students; 11 scored 90% on phoneme isolation skills, four students stayed the same and one student decreased.

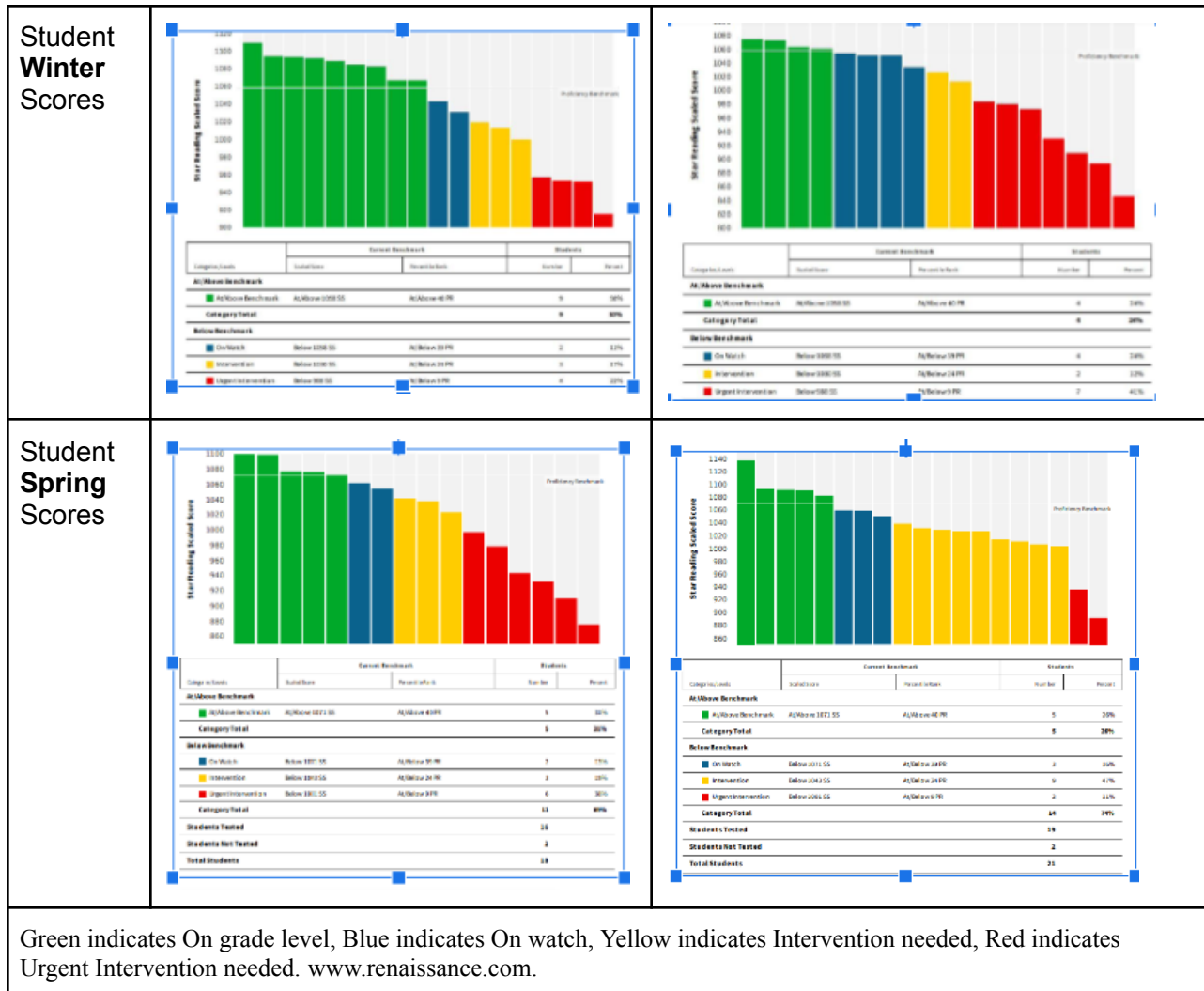
Another look at the reading comprehension scores for the 6th-grade students follows. This chart Figure 11 is an overall view of the STAR Renaissance scores. One student commented that the vocabulary was difficult in the stories that were read in the Renaissance assessments.

Figure 11 Another look at the students' reading comprehension scores

Renaissance Learning Inc. (2023) A software as a service and learning analytics company.

<https://www.renaissance.com>.



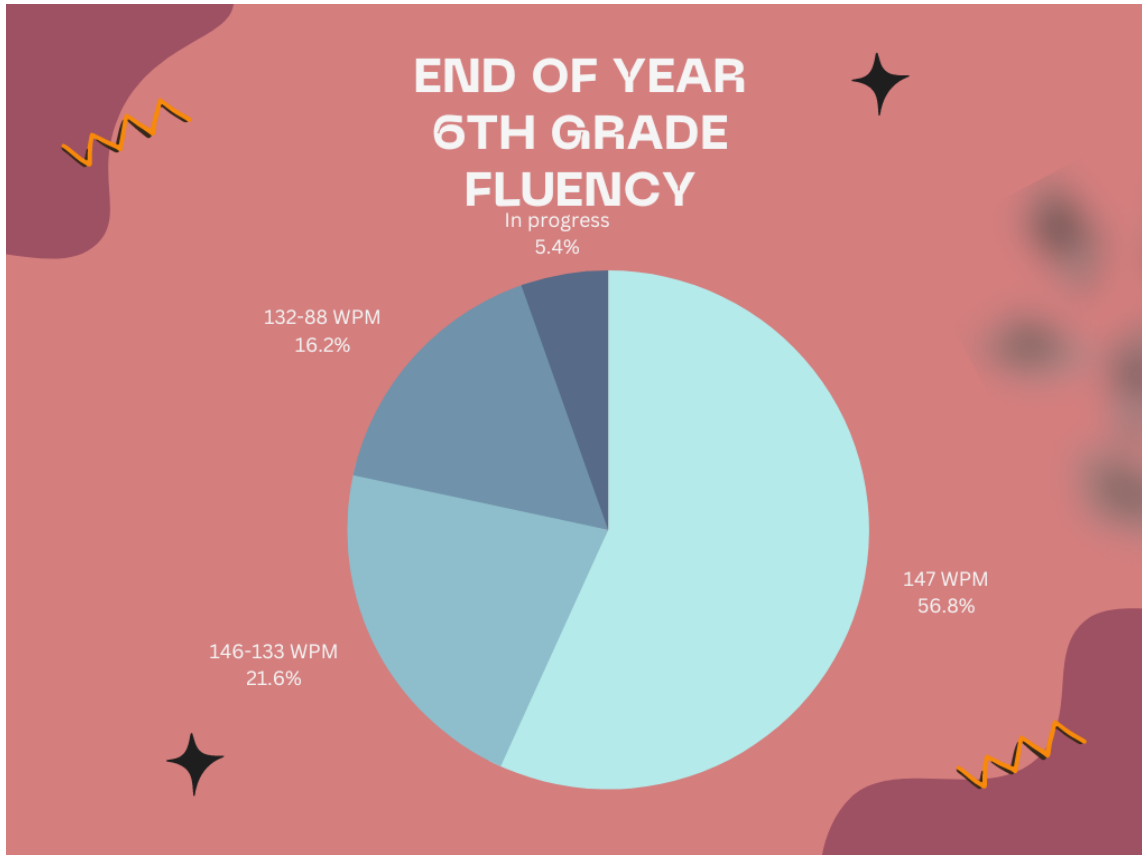


Fluency data was collected at the end of the year. Figure 12 showed 22 of 38 students at grade level for fluency. Eight students were “On Watch” for intervention and seven were “In Need of intervention. One was “In Progress” and had not completed the assessment. One-minute passages were read four times during the school year for 16 students who were not at grade level. Six students gained grade-level fluency during their 6th-grade school year.

Figure 12

End of the Year Fluency Scores

Hendrickson, D. (2023) Research conducted in a 6th-grade classroom.



The following chart Figure 13 is used Nationally and showed reading fluency goals for 1st through 6th-grade students and three checkpoints throughout the school year that teachers used as a guide to monitor student growth in reading more words per minute throughout the school year. Appendices A and B also provided this information. Phonemic awareness instruction gave students an opportunity to mentally think about sounds and use sounds in words to produce words quickly while reading and that produces fluency.

Figure 13

Oral Reading Fluency Chart with Words per Minute per Grade Level.

Grade	Percentile	Fall WCPM*	Winter WCPM*	Spring WCPM*	Avg. Weekly Improvement**

1	90	–	97	116	1.2
	75	–	59	91	2.0
	50	–	29	60	1.9
	25	–	16	34	1.1
	10	–	9	18	0.5
2	90	111	131	148	1.2
	75	84	109	124	1.3
	50	50	84	100	1.6
	25	36	59	72	1.1
	10	23	35	43	0.6
3	90	134	161	166	1.0
	75	104	137	139	1.1
	50	83	97	112	0.9
	25	59	79	91	1.0
	10	40	62	63	0.7
4	90	153	168	184	1.0
	75	125	143	160	1.1
	50	94	120	133	1.2

	25	75	95	105	0.9
	10	60	71	83	0.7
5	90	179	183	195	0.5
	75	153	160	169	0.5
	50	121	133	146	0.8
	25	87	109	119	1.0
	10	64	84	102	1.9
6	90	185	195	204	0.6
	75	159	166	173	0.4
	50	132	145	146	0.3
	25	112	116	122	0.3
	10	89	91	91	0.1

*WCPM = Words Correct Per Minute

**Average weekly improvement is the average words per week growth you can expect from a student. It was calculated by dividing the difference between the fall and spring scores by 32, the typical number of weeks between the fall and spring assessments. For grade 1, since there is no fall assessment, the average weekly improvement was calculated by dividing the difference between the winter and spring scores by 16, the typical number of weeks between the winter and spring assessments. <https://www.theliteracynest.com/blog>

Findings

The reading comprehension findings are not showing the results that were expected. The research question How does explicit phonemic awareness instruction influence student reading fluency and comprehension? Was answered with mixed results in reading comprehension. The

majority of students' scores decreased during the Winter assessment and then gained leverage at the Spring assessment and reading comprehension have not increased across the 6th grade STAR Renaissance Assessments for comprehension. The Fall benchmark scores were compared to the winter benchmark scores and the findings were disappointing. About 10% have increased. 20% have decreased and 70 % of the students have remained the same. This is discouraging and makes me question the fidelity of the phonemic awareness interventions. The research-based materials, used from the Florida Center for Reading Research are evidence-based. The question was if the small group settings in which the students used the activities were not controlled enough to make the interventions effective.

The Spring Benchmark assessment gave final data and the comparison was determined. The results of the research will change my practice to assess the whole class with a phonemic awareness assessment at the beginning of the school year. The students showed a need for phonemic awareness instruction and were given exercises to practice to develop their skills in isolating, blending, segmenting, and manipulating phonemes to hear the sounds in words, given explicit instruction that helped students understand the importance of using this skill when tackling new words that were introduced in readings. The final context for students was to understand that building phonemic awareness skills helped students in reading, spelling, and writing and that the importance of mastering those skills provided a stronger foundation for reading fluency and comprehension.

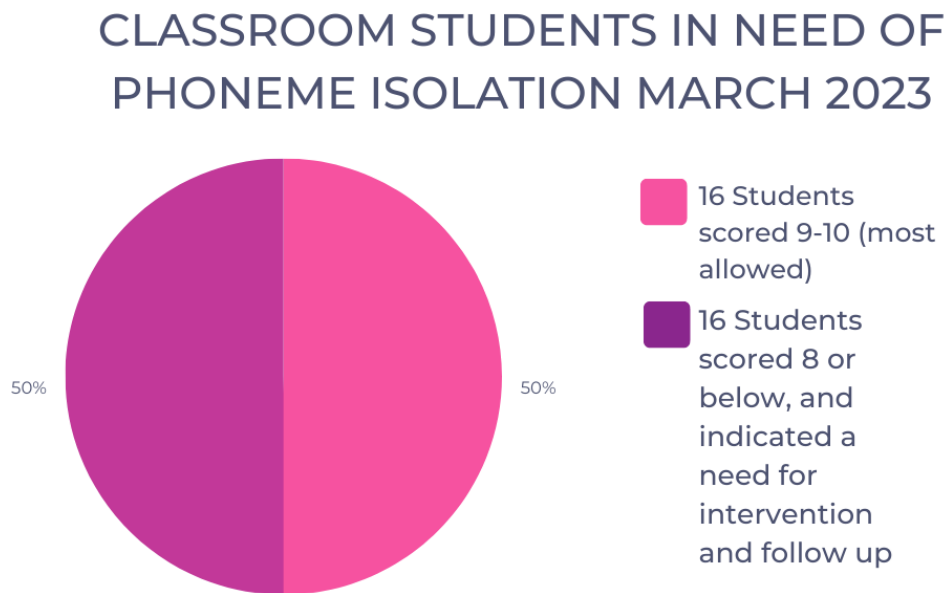
Student's fluency year-end results showed gains for six students who reached grade level expectations for 6th- grade and 22 of the 39 students were recorded at grade level. Next year's results The student had exposure to text every day and read eight novels during the course of the school year. This and the phonemic activities had a positive impact on the test results.

Students were assessed in phonemic awareness using the Pennington Publishing free online assessment. There were four areas tested; syllable awareness, syllable rhyming, phoneme isolation, and phoneme blending. Of the areas tested, phoneme isolation was the area of greatest need. Figure 14 showed the results of the assessment that 50% of the students needed an intervention in phoneme isolation. A ten-day intervention was conducted with the 16 students identified from the initial assessment.

Figure 14

Classroom Students in Need of Phoneme Isolation Intervention

Hendrickson, D. (2023) Research conducted in a 6th-grade classroom.

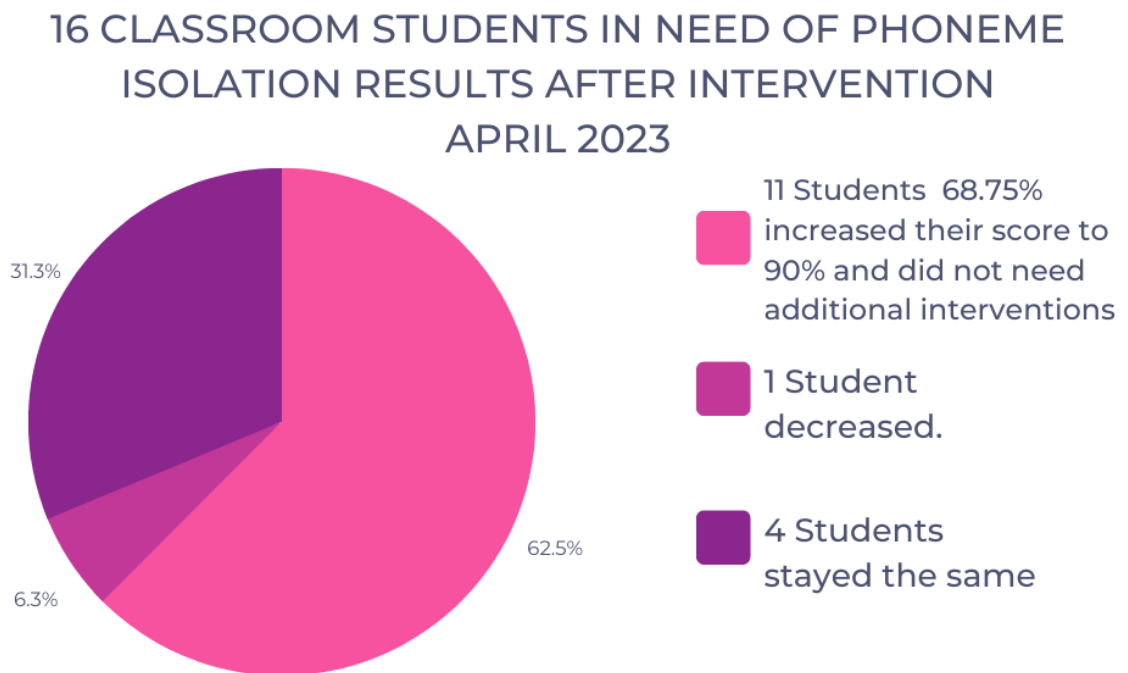


After the 10-day intervention, Figure 15 showed 16 students fell into these categories. 11 students increased their scores to grade level oral reading fluency, one student had a decreased score, and four students stayed the same.

Figure 15

Intervention Results for 16 Identified Students

Hendrickson, D. (2023) Research conducted in a 6th-grade classroom.



These findings suggested that phoneme isolation games and lessons helped students learn to hear sounds in words, identify matching sounds in two separate words, and could decide if the sound

was at the beginning, middle, or final sound in the word and gain grade-level fluency. (See Appendix F for the exact assessment.)

Conclusion

Based on the findings we can conclude that phonemic awareness is a skill that starts with hearing speech sounds, mimicking those sounds, and using the sounds to create words that build sentences and communication. Additional reading accuracy is gained by more challenging phonemic awareness skills and it is a progression of development as students' language skills strengthen (Moats, 2020). Phonemic awareness is the first step in developing reading skills but is also ongoing and should be taught continually. Phonemic awareness when explicitly taught plays a significant role in strengthening students reading fluency and comprehension. Students with disabilities benefit from explicit phonemic awareness instruction, however, students with speech disabilities may not gain the results of other students (Tyler, 2003). Systematic phonemic awareness instruction should be viewed as the natural instructional path of phoneme-first instruction and practice that has a direct impact on many components of literacy development which include decoding and spelling, reading fluency, and comprehension (International Literacy Association, 2020; Castle et al., 2020; Partridge, 2022) and builds the foundational skills to be a good reader.

Mark Pennington also writes, "Some encouraging research indicates that remedial readers can learn phonemic awareness with the right teaching strategies. (Bhat, Griffin, and Sindelar 2003) reported that middle school remedial readers do benefit from phonemic awareness training, although, unfortunately, not as much as younger learners. The study created an opportunity for students to understand the term phonemic awareness and gain an understanding

of how it affected their reading. As students gained an understanding of syllable types, prefixes, and suffixes, and used them in words to create meaning they gained an understanding of text complexity and built stronger vocabularies. This was observational and the Spring testing gave additional data that proved final outcomes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendations for other upper elementary teachers to fill gaps in student reading is to administer a phonemic awareness assessment that included phoneme isolation, blending, segmenting, and manipulation, such as, the Pennington Publishing tool found free online. Use the results of the classwide assessment to organize groups into the categories of phoneme isolating, blending, segmenting, and manipulating. The Florida Reading Research Student-Centered Activities challenged the students and they enjoyed creating and using the materials. Students practiced the skills with partners, in small groups in class, and the whole class. The seven syllable types; open, closed, magic-e, vowel teams, r-controlled vowels, diphthongs, and consonant le, helped students decode larger words and were explicitly taught and students learned how to decode words by focusing on their vowel sounds that aided in pronunciation. As students heard the sounds in words and recognized that these sounds were connected to spelling patterns they were able to incorporate the sounds for spelling, reading, fluency, and comprehension. The reading brain becomes active and reading comprehension was strengthened.

The final conclusion was to maintain confidence as a teacher because phonological awareness is a continuum, it wasn't reached in one year. It is a skill that continues to have depth and breadth and grows in readers as they practice reading, gain vocabulary, write content, speak

How does explicit phonemic awareness instruction influence students reading fluency and comprehension?

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to share knowledge, and mature as readers. The more a teacher understands phonemic awareness and its complexities the improved reading results will follow. The Reading Continuum continued in students as they practiced phonemic awareness skills which led them to understand and to make meaning out of the text and that is the goal of reading.

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Figure 1

Reading Continuum at a Glance marys@stma.k12.mn.us (2023)

Figure 2

Phonological Awareness Steps to Define and Distinguish from Phonemic Awareness

<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/phonological-awareness-instructional-and-assessment-guidelines>

Figure 3

Directionality of Phonemic Awareness

https://www.reallygreatreading.com/sites/default/files/pa-skill-pyramid_difficulty_2.jpg

Figure 4

https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-P71XIMuHl2w/YPq-jtwe45I/AAAAAACBkE/_bpqLHwOrlI87N5I6I23GijHIAX8L_64wCLcBGAsYHQ/s1280/whats%2Bthe%2Bdifference%2Bgraphic%2Bfixed.png

Figures 5 - 11

2017 - 2021 Renaissance Learning, Inc. Online Learning Software www.renaissancelearn.com

Figures 12, 14, 15

Hendrickson, D. (2023) Research conducted in a 6th-grade classroom.

Figure 13

Oral Reading Fluency Chart with Words per Minute per Grade Level

<https://www.theliteracynest.com/blog>

Appendix A
National Oral Reading Fluency Norms

NATIONAL ORAL READING FLUENCY NORMS

Hasbrouck & Tindal (2006)

Grade	Percentile	Fall WCPM*	Winter WCPM*	Spring WCPM*	Grade	Percentile	Fall WCPM*	Winter WCPM*	Spring WCPM*
1	90		81	111	5	90	166	182	194
	75		47	82		75	139	156	168
	50		23	53		50	110	127	139
	25		12	28		25	85	99	109
	10		6	15		10	61	74	83
2	90	106	125	142	6	90	177	195	204
	75	79	100	117		75	153	167	177
	50	51	72	89		50	127	140	150
	25	25	42	61		25	98	111	122
	10	11	18	31		10	68	82	93
3	90	128	146	162	7	90	180	192	202
	75	99	120	137		75	156	165	177
	50	71	92	107		50	128	136	150
	25	44	62	78		25	102	109	123
	10	21	36	48		10	79	88	98
4	90	145	166	180	8	90	185	199	199
	75	119	139	152		75	161	173	177
	50	94	112	123		50	133	146	151
	25	68	87	98		25	106	115	124
	10	45	61	72		10	77	84	97

*WCPM = Words Correct Per Minute

Appendix B
National ORF Norms of Hasbrouck and Tindal

NATIONAL ORF NORMS

50th Percentiles Hasbrouck & Tindal (2006)

Grade	Fall wcpm	Winter wcpm	Spring wcpm
1		23	53
2	51	72	89
3	71	92	107
4	94	112	123
5	110	127	139
6	127	140	150
7	128	136	150
8	133	146	151

GREEN zone 10 or more to -4 YELLOW Zone -5 to -10 RED Zone > 10 below

Appendix C

Florida Center for Reading Research Student-Centered Activities: Phonological Awareness

Phonological Awareness

Sound Changes

PA. 025

Teacher Dialogue

Preparation: Record the bold text.

Allow time for students to say words at the ellipses (. . .).

An Answer Key is provided at the bottom of the page.

Listen to each word, follow the directions, and say the new word. For example, say “rose,” now change /r/ to /n/, say the new word . . . “nose.” Then pause the media player. Find the picture of the new word and place it next to the picture of the original word. You will glue all the pictures in place at the end of the activity.

Number 1. Say sock. . . . Now change the /s/ to /r/. Say the new word. . . .

Number 2. Say tree. . . . Now change the /t/ to /th/. Say the new word. . . .

Number 3. Say cat. . . . Now change the /t/ to /n/. Say the new word. . . .

Number 4. Say coin. . . . Now change the /oi/ to /ā/. Say the new word. . . .

Number 5. Say bow. . . . Now change the /ō/ to /ē/. Say the new word. . . .

Number 6. Say pen. . . . Now change the /e/ to /a/. Say the new word. . . .

Number 7. Say kite. . . . Now change the /ī/ to /ō/. Say the new word. . . .

Number 8. Say train. . . . Say it without the /t/. . . . Say the new word. . . .

Number 9. Say snail. . . . Say it without the /n/. . . . Say the new word. . . .

Number 10. Say block. . . . Say it without the /b/. . . . Say the new word. . . .

Number 11. Say fork. . . . Say it without the /k/. . . . Say the new word. . . .

Number 12. Say tie. . . . Say it without the /t/. . . . Say the new word. . . .

Answer Key:

1. rock 2. three 3. can 4. cane 5. bee 6. pan 7. coat 8. rain 9. sail 10. lock 11. four 12. eye

Phonological Awareness



Phoneme Manipulating

PA. 022

Phoneme Position Sort

Objective

The student will manipulate phonemes in words.

Materials

- ▶ Header picture cards

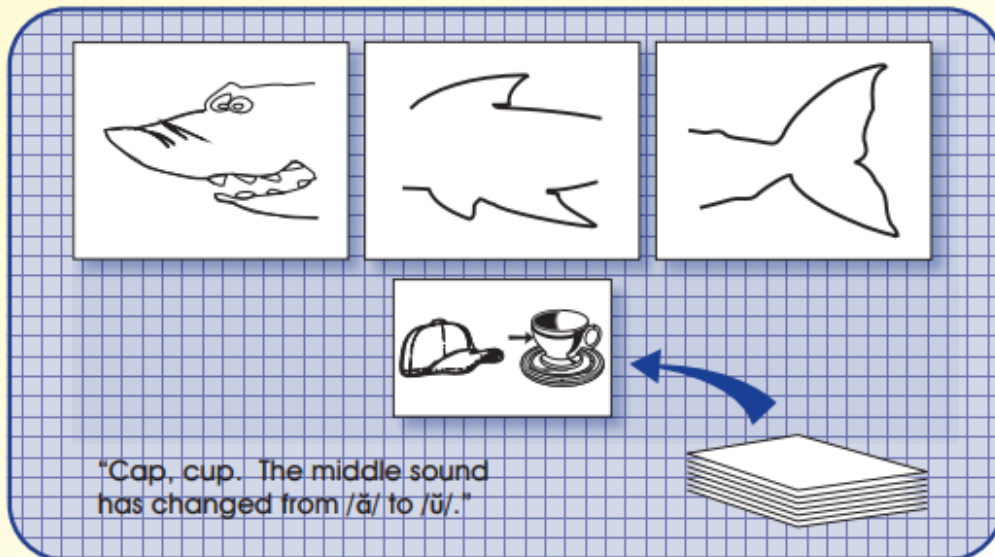
Note: The head of the shark denotes the beginning sound, the body of the shark with fin denotes the middle sound, and the tail denotes the final sound.

- ▶ Set of picture cards

Activity

Students will sort pictures by location of phoneme substitution.

1. Place header picture cards face up on flat surface. Mix and place the picture cards face down in a stack.
2. Taking turns, students select the top card from the stack, name the two pictures (“cap” and “cup”).
3. Determine the phoneme that has changed between the two pictures (e.g., “. . . the middle sound has changed from /ă/ to /ü/”).
4. Place picture card under the header that matches the position of the changed phoneme (e.g., under the body of the shark to indicate the medial phoneme).
5. Continue until all cards are sorted.
6. Peer evaluation



“Cap, cup. The middle sound has changed from /ă/ to /ü/.”

Extensions and Adaptations

- ▶ Make more phoneme substitution picture cards.

Phonological Awareness



Phoneme Isolating

PA. 012

Phoneme Quest

Objective

The student will isolate initial/final/medial phonemes in words.

Materials

- ▶ Set of double-picture cards
Cut words from the bottom of the page before giving to students.
- ▶ Student sheet
Note: The head of the shark denotes the beginning sound, the body of the shark with fin denotes the medial or middle sound, and the tail denotes the final sound.
- ▶ Scissors
- ▶ Glue

Activity

Students identify initial phonemes by matching picture cards.

1. Provide the student with a student sheet and a set of picture cards. Place scissors and glue at the center.
2. The student cuts out a double-picture card, names each picture, and determines if the two pictures share the same initial, medial, or final sound (e.g., “banana” and “bike” share the same initial sound).
3. Places and glues the card under the correct heading on the student sheet (i.e., head of the shark). Student may wait until assured that all cards are in the correct places before gluing.
4. Teacher evaluation

The illustration shows a double-picture card with a banana and a bicycle. An arrow points from this card to a student sheet. The student sheet is a grid with three columns and six rows. The columns are labeled 'Name', 'Phoneme Quest', and 'PA. 012'. The first row of the grid contains three shark icons: a shark's head, a shark's body with a fin, and a shark's tail. The second row contains three sets of picture cards: a banana and a bicycle, a house and a car, and a chair and a table. The remaining rows are empty.

Extensions and Adaptations

- ▶ Sort double-picture cards on a pocket chart by initial, final, or medial sound changes using picture cards from Student Center Activity PA.022: Phoneme Position Sort.

Appendix D
Pennington Publishing Whole Classroom Phonemic Awareness Assessment

Syllable Awareness Assessment

Teacher Notes

The purpose of this “whole class” assessment is to determine whether students can hear syllables as distinct speech patterns. The words are not printed on the **Syllable Awareness Assessment** because this is a sounds recognition phonemic awareness test. Students do not clap during the test to prevent them from copying other students.

Directions/Grading/Recording

Pass out the **Syllable Awareness Assessment** to students. Say—“This is a short test to see if you can count the number of word parts in each of the words I say out loud. A word part is also called a syllable. Let’s practice one together. The word is *table*. [Do not isolate the syllables.] Say the word. [Wait for student response.] How many syllables did you hear? [Wait for student response.] There are two syllables in *table*.

On your test, find the Example and point to it. [Confirm that students have pointed to the Example.] The word is *gasoline*. Say the word. [Wait for student response.] Shade in the number of syllables. [Wait for students to shade in their answers.] You should have shaded in the circle marked ③ because there are three syllables in *gasoline*. All of the words I will say have two, three, or four syllables. Let’s start with Number One. Ready? The word is *nation*. Say the word. Shade in the number of syllables.” Follow this script for the rest of the test.

Once the assessments have been scored, record a / on the **Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Sight Words, and Fluency Mastery Matrix** for each student not meeting the mastery criteria of 80%.

Test Items/Answers

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|---|
| 1. | nation | ② |
| 2. | contribute | ③ |
| 3. | active | ② |
| 4. | relationship | ④ |
| 5. | reference | ③ |
| 6. | dribbling | ② |
| 7. | environment | ④ |
| 8. | upset | ② |
| 9. | indecisive | ④ |
| 10. | lottery | ③ |

Syllable Awareness Assessment

Name _____

Example ② ③ ④

1. ② ③ ④
2. ② ③ ④
3. ② ③ ④
4. ② ③ ④
5. ② ③ ④
6. ② ③ ④
7. ② ③ ④
8. ② ③ ④
9. ② ③ ④
10. ② ③ ④

Syllable Rhyming Assessment

Teacher Notes

The purpose of this “whole class” assessment is to determine whether students can hear ending syllable rhymes. The words are not printed on the **Syllable Rhyming Assessment** because this is a sounds recognition phonemic awareness test.











Directions/Grading/Recording

Pass out the **Syllable Rhyming Assessment** to students. Say—“This is a short test to see if you hear which words rhyme and which words do not. Let’s practice together. If the words rhyme, show me a “thumbs up;” if the words do not rhyme, show me a “thumbs down.” The words are *match* and *catch*. Say the words. [Wait for student response.] Thumbs up or thumbs down? Shhh. Don’t say it. Show it. [Wait for student response.] The correct answer is “thumbs up,” because the two words rhyme. Let’s try another pair. The words are *late* and *page*. Say the words. [Wait for student response.] Thumbs up or thumbs down? [Wait for student response.] The correct answer is “thumbs down,” because the two words do not rhyme.

On your test, find the Example and point to it. [Confirm that students have pointed to the Example.] The words are *fort* and *sport*. Repeat. [Wait for student response.] Circle the “thumbs up” if the words rhyme or circle the “thumbs down” if the words do not rhyme. [Wait for students to circle their answers.] The “thumbs up” should be circled because *fort* and *sport* rhyme. Let’s start with Number One. Ready? The words are *sad* and *bad*. Say the words. Circle your answer.” Follow this script for the rest of the test.

Once the assessments have been scored, record a / on the **Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Sight Words, and Fluency Mastery Matrix** for each student not meeting the mastery criteria of 80%.

Test Items/Answers

- | | | | |
|-----|-------|------|---|
| 1. | sad | bad |  |
| 2. | red | head |  |
| 3. | bit | lip |  |
| 4. | off | soft |  |
| 5. | tub | foot |  |
| 6. | may | day |  |
| 7. | eat | seat |  |
| 8. | smile | wide |  |
| 9. | broke | soak |  |
| 10. | cute | lose |  |
-

Syllable Rhyming Assessment

Name _____

Example



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



Phonemic Isolation Assessment

Teacher Notes

The purpose of this “whole class” assessment is to determine whether students can hear isolated vowel sounds and identify placement within words. The words are not printed on the **Phonemic Isolation Assessment** because this is a sounds recognition phonemic awareness test.

Directions/Recording/Mastery

Pass out the **Phonemic Isolation Assessment** to students. Say—“This is a short test to see if you can hear the same sound in a pair of words and tell if that sound is at the beginning, middle, or end of both words. Let’s practice together. The words are *map* and *cat*. Is the same sound at the beginning, middle, or end of the words? *map* and *cat* [Wait for student response.] The correct answer is “middle,” because the /ă/ sound is in the middle of the two words *map* and *cat*. Let’s try another pair. The words are *blow* and *throw*. Is the same sound at the beginning, middle, or end of the words? *blow* and *throw* [Wait for student response.] The correct answer is “end,” because the long /ō/ sound is at the end of the two words *blow* and *throw*.

On your test, find the Example and point to it. [Confirm that all students have pointed to the Example.] Shade in the beginning circle, middle circle, or end circle to show where the same sound is located. The words are *eat* and *east*—Circle beginning, middle, or end—*eat* and *east*. [Wait for students to shade in their answers.] You should have shaded in the beginning circle because the /ē/ sound is at the beginning of the word. Let’s start with Number One. Ready? The words are *stay* and *weigh*. Circle beginning, middle, or end—*stay* and *weigh*.” Follow this script for the rest of the test.

Once the assessments have been scored, record a / on the **Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Sight Words, and Fluency Mastery Matrix** for each student not meeting the mastery criteria of 80%.

Test Items/Answers

1.	stay	weigh	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
2.	cube	mute	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.	act	ask	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.	grew	threw	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
5.	odd	off	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.	sit	kick	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.	sigh	try	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
8.	egg	edge	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.	bread	stretch	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10.	doubt	loud	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Phonemic Isolation Assessment

Name _____

Example **B** **M** **E**
 ○ ○ ○

- | | B | M | E |
|------------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 2. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 3. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 4. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 5. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 6. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 7. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 8. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 9. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 10. | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Phonemic Blending Assessment

Teacher Notes

The purpose of this “whole class” assessment is to determine whether students can recognize words from blended letter sounds. The words are not printed on the **Phonemic Blending Assessment** because this is a sounds recognition phonemic awareness test.

Directions/Grading/Recording

Pass out the **Phonemic Blending Assessment** to students. Say—“This is a short test to see if you can hear words from the letter sounds that I say out loud. Let’s practice one together. The sounds are /t/ /r/ /ī/ /d/ [Do not add on the *uh* sound to the consonants/t/ /r/ /ī/ /d/. What is the word? [Wait for student response.] The word is *tried*, because /t/ /r/ /ī/ /d/ forms the word *tried*. Let’s practice another. This time, I will give you the sounds and two word choices. You tell me which word is formed from the sounds—the first or the second word I say. The sounds are /c/ /r/ /ī/ /d/. Is the word *light* or *cried*? [Wait for student response.] The second word is correct, because /c/ /r/ /ī/ /d/ forms the word *cried*.

On your test, find the Example and point to it. [Confirm that students have pointed to the Example.] Do not say the sounds or words out loud. Shade in the circle marked ①, if the sounds form the first word I say, or ②, if the sounds form the second word I say. The sounds are /b/ /l/ /ā/ /s/ /t/. Is it *blast* or *clap*? [Wait for students to shade in their answers.] You should have shaded in the bubble marked ① because /b/ /l/ /ā/ /s/ /t/ forms the word *blast*. Let’s start Number One. Ready? The sounds are /g/ /r/ /ā/ /t/. Is it *great* or *skate*? Shade in 1 or 2. Follow this script for the rest of the test.

Once the assessments have been scored, record a / on the **Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Sight Words, and Fluency Mastery Matrix** for each student not meeting the mastery criteria of 80%.

Test Items/Answers

1. The sounds are /g/ /r/ /ā/ /t/. Is it *great* or *skate*? ①
2. The sounds are /p/ /l/ /ē/ /z/. Is it *street* or *please*? ②
3. The sounds are /n/ /ō/ /z/. Is it *most* or *nose*? ②
4. The sounds are /ū/ /z/ /d/. Is it *used* or *huge*? ①
5. The sounds are /b/ /r/ /ī/ /t/. Is it *bright* or *dried*? ①
6. The sounds are /f/ /r/ /ē/ /n/ /d/. Is it *sled* or *friend*? ②
7. The sounds are /wh/ /ī/ /ch/. Is it *which* or *thick*? ①
8. The sounds are /c/ /l/ /ā/ /s/. Is it *crash* or *class*? ②
9. The sounds are /t/ /r/ /ū/ /k/. Is it *luck* or *truck*? ②
10. The sounds are /s/ /t/ /ō/ /p/. Is it *stop* or *spot*? ①

Phonemic Blending Assessment

Name _____

Example ① ②

1. ① ②
2. ① ②
3. ① ②
4. ① ②
5. ① ②
6. ① ②
7. ① ②
8. ① ②
9. ① ②
10. ① ②