

Article #3

LITERACY... PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS RESEARCH

Difficulties with Phonological Awareness skills has been reliably linked to early reading and spelling difficulties.

In fact, research has shown a relationship exists between *phonological awareness* deficits and reading accuracy (reading aloud) and spelling but not always comprehension. Quite frequently, those who have a '*phonological awareness disorder*' may enjoy reading to themselves, but struggle when asked to read aloud.

The child with *phonological awareness* deficits may be able to recognize words by relying on either 'sight' reading or remembering the 'shape' of the written word. This can result in spelling errors that are based on an incorrectly remembered 'look' of a word rather than errors in sound structures (e.g., 'went' is spelled as 'wnet' rather than 'whent').

Speech Pathologists' training in phonics, language, and metalinguistic skills provide the most appropriate background for treating children with *phonological awareness* disorder. They have specific training in sound awareness due to their work with children who have difficulties with pronunciation.

Assessment

Assessment and diagnosis of *phonological awareness* disorder is a specialised field as general language, phonological awareness and auditory discrimination must be examined.

Treatment

Speech pathology treatment programs are based on increased awareness of sound structures through auditory discrimination training (hearing the difference between sounds); rhyme recognition, identification and creation; alliteration skills, development of segmentation, manipulation and blending skills with both syllables and individual sounds, and discussions to raise the metalinguistic ability to use language to learn about language, and sound-letter conversions.

Research References

Several studies have demonstrated the success of this approach for those children who have this specific literacy disorder which is based on phonological awareness deficits. Whilst early treatment of this disorder can assist in avoiding future literacy problems, therapy with older children has also been shown to be effective in remediating some longstanding difficulties (Brady, Fowler, Stone, and Winbury, 1994; Catts, 1991; Gillon & Dodd, 1995; Rohl & Milton, 1993).

Results

As a guide to the success of this technique, results from some students who have been helped using a Phonological awareness based program are outlined below.

Using the Lindamood Auditory Conceptualization Test, a group of eight Grade 3&4 students, saw their grade average change from Grade 1.8 to 4.6. A good result. These students were also tested using the Queensland University Inventory of Literacy. Results were similar.

Selection of students.

Which students are able to be helped? Not all, but it is mooted that 30 – 40% of students in remedial Literacy have as a contributing factor a Phonological Awareness disorder and these need to be identified otherwise time could be wasted.

Some Parents or Teachers using a simple screening questionnaire would be able to identify a student requiring but it will take the skills of a Speech Pathologist to accurately assess the suitability of candidates for this program.

Ask your Speech Pathologist for their screening questionnaire.