



PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY

There is a long history of research showing that a child’s phonological knowledge at pre-school is a good indicator of their future success in learning to read and spell accurately.

Even the most current research continues to show the importance of phonological awareness. In McNamara, Scissons, and Gutknecht’s (2011) longitudinal study published last month, the reading achievement of 382 children was assessed yearly from kindergarten through to Grade 3. In kindergarten, children were screened with a battery of phonological awareness measures. On the basis of percentile rank scores, children were then identified as having poor, average, or strong phonological awareness. Reading achievement data was subsequently collected in the spring of each year when the students were in Grades 1, 2, and 3. (Click here to see a graph of the results.)

Those students who had poor phonological awareness in kindergarten had the lowest scores in reading achievement in Year 1, 2 and 3 in word identification, word attack, and reading fluency. Furthermore, each year the gap in reading ability between these struggling readers and their peers increased significantly.

These results strongly indicate the need to specifically teach struggling readers phonological awareness. Even more importantly, these results indicate the need to be assessing for phonological awareness in kindergarten and putting programs in place in kindergarten to help those students who score poorly on these test.

However, for students with literacy difficulties it is not sufficient to just teach phonological awareness in isolation. It also needs to be incorporated into every aspect of teaching reading and spelling. This is an integral part of the *Cracking the ABC Code* programs.

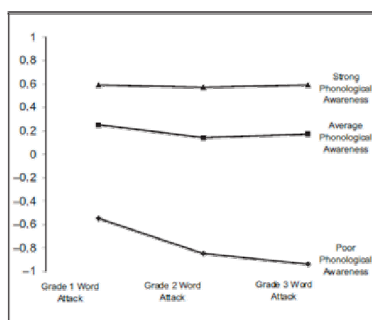


Figure 1. Line plot of standardized group means for Word Attack across grade levels

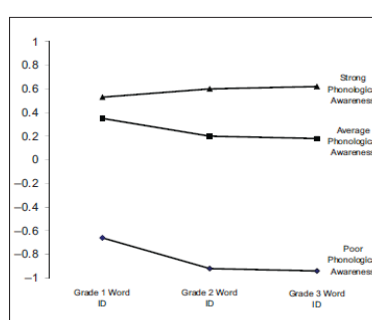


Figure 2. Line plot of standardized group means for Word Identification across grade levels

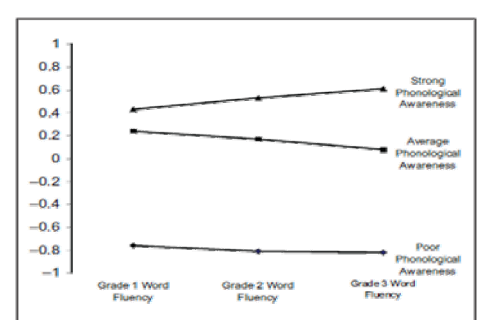


Figure 3. Line plot of standardized group means for reading fluency across grade levels

Reference

McNamara , J.K., Scissons, M., & Gutknecht, N. (2011). A longitudinal study of kindergarten children at risk for reading disabilities: The poor really are getting poorer. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 44 (5), 421-430.