Course Description

Phonemic awareness and phonics skills are critically linked to reading achievement. This course focuses on the developmental continuum of these skills, as well as recommended assessment procedures and instructional strategies associated with both. The characteristics of phonemic awareness and phonics instruction for second language learners are also explored. Last, course participants learn to evaluate phonemic awareness and phonics curricula for elements critical for student success.

Competencies

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:
1. Demonstrate knowledge of phonemic awareness and phonics and how each integrates into fluent reading;
2. Administer a portion of a phonemic awareness assessment, and use assessment information to place students along a developmental continuum and identify students’ proficiencies and difficulties;
3. Use information from spelling assessment to form instructional groups appropriate for accomplishing given purposes;
4. Identify characteristics of effective phonemic awareness and phonics assessment and instruction;
5. Explore the characteristics of effective phonemic awareness and phonics instruction for second-language learners; and

Materials
All materials are accessed via the CaseNEX website http://www.casenex.com using the PIN provided and the user name/password you create.

All readings listed can be found by going to the Virtual Library and looking under the case you are reading that session. When pdf files are linked, we recommend printing them for easier reading.

If you do not have the following software, please download each from the given sites. You will find detailed instructions under the ‘Tutorials’ link.


**Cases Used**

- Just Sick About It
- Little Tikes: Teaching Young Gifted Learners
- Now What
Course Schedule

Typical course sessions run from Sunday morning through Saturday at midnight. Specific session dates may be found by clicking on Syllabus on the top menu bar. Course participants should read both the case and assigned readings prior to joining the online discussion. Participation in the discussion should be ongoing throughout each course session. For typical courses, final discussion postings, journals, and workbook assignments are due by Saturday at midnight unless otherwise noted. Please see the News Flash for any alterations of the course schedule posted by your instructor.
Introductory Session
Exploring the CaseNEX Site

Complete these tasks prior to the beginning of Session 1.

Readings

Read the “Course Tutorial” linked from the TUTORIAL menu, paying special attention to the Case-Analysis and Workbook Assignment Rubrics. These rubrics will be used by your instructor throughout the course to evaluate your Journal entries, Discussion responses, and Workbook assignments where appropriate.

Discussion

Post one entry introducing yourself to your classmates. You may choose to describe your professional background and experience, relevant personal information, or why you are taking this course. (100 words or fewer)

Journal

What do you find inspiring and challenging about teaching children about sounds, letters, and the alphabetic principle? (100 words or fewer)

Note

Use CaseMail to send a note to your instructor stating that you will be taking this course. To do so, click on CaseMail on the top menu bar and then ‘Click here to create a new message.’ Use the marked link to look up an address. Continue linking down until you see the class list. Click on the instructor’s name and then compose your message and hit ‘Post Message.’
Session 1

Important Terminology: Phonics vs. Phonemic Awareness vs. Phonological Awareness

Case
None this session

Readings
• Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read
• The Importance of Phonemic Awareness in Learning to Read

Discussion

Consider the perspective of an emergent reader developing phonemic awareness (PA). Why is developing PA difficult for some students? Why is developing PA so easy for other students? What types of classroom activities can make it easier for students to acquire PA? What types of things can families do at home to foster PA?

Journal

Using knowledge from this session’s reading and your own research, develop a metaphor or an analogy to describe the relationship among these terms: phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and phonics. Then, for each term, quantify or label your level of professional knowledge (beginning, developing, accomplished, exemplary). Which resources have been most helpful to you in learning this content, and what issues exist within these content areas?

Note

Check your CaseMail (linked from top menu bar) and News Flash (on the right when you login) for notes from your instructor every time you log on to the site.

Workbook Assignment

None this session
Session 2
*Developmental Continuum of Phonemic Awareness Skills*

**Case**
*None this session*

**Readings**
- *Teaching Phonemic Awareness: Sequencing Phonemic Awareness skills*
- *Phonemic Awareness and the Teaching of Reading*

**Discussion**

*Discuss the relationship between phonemic awareness and reading. Which phonemic awareness tasks most closely align with reading? Which ones may have less utility in terms of reading readiness? Write about a student you have worked with whose phonemic awareness skills posed instructional challenges. What types of activities or actions were successful with that student? Or, write from the perspective of a student for whom English is not their first language. What types of activities or actions might be successful with an ESOL student? Be sure to cite examples from the readings in your discussion.*

**Journal**

*In your own words, what are the characteristics of good phonemic awareness instruction? Which issues or sensitivities must an educator consider when planning phonemic awareness instruction? Consider issues surrounding text, students, and time.*

**Workbook Assignment**

*None this session*
Session 3
Assessing Phonemic Awareness

Case
Now What?

Readings
• Using DIBELS (Initial Sounds Fluency and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency only; follow the links that guide you to a longer description and to learn how to administer and score the two phonemic awareness measures on DIBELS)
• Phonological Awareness: Instructional and Assessment Guidelines

Discussion

Review Andrew’s DIBELS results, and consider the knowledge presented in the readings. What types of instructional insights did you gain from Andrew’s assessments? Using information from the continuum of PA tasks presented in the reading as a guide, what sorts of instructional activities would benefit Andrew? What would you NOT recommend for him, and why?

Journal

Discuss the benefits and challenges to using timed assessments with young children from two of the following perspectives: teacher, student, administrator, and parent.

Workbook Assignment

DIBELS Assessment

Choose at least 5 kindergarten or first-grade students for a DIBELS assessment. For kindergarten students, you will be administering four tasks: Initial Sounds Fluency (ISF), Letter Naming Fluency (LNF), Phonemic Segmentation Fluency (PSF) and Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF). For first grade students, you will be administering 3 tasks: Phonemic Segmentation Fluency (PSF), Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF), and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). The Administration and Scoring Guide, student and teacher materials, student summary sheet, and benchmark expectations can be found at the Official DIBELS website: http://dibels.uoregon.edu/index.php

Complete each assessment as directed, fill out the student summary sheet, and write a 250 word summary of the assessment experience. Reflect on
what went well and what you might do differently if you completed the same assessment again.

OR

Phonemic Awareness Assessment

If your school/district uses a different assessment of phonemic awareness skills, use that assessment with at least 5 kindergarten or first-grade students. Complete each assessment as directed; create a student summary sheet that outlines what tasks you gave and the students’ scores. Write a 250 word summary of the assessment experience. Reflect on what went well, and what you might do differently if you completed the same assessment again.

Due by the end of Session 4
Session 4
Phonemic Awareness Instruction

Case
Now What?

Readings
• How Now Brown Cow: Phoneme Awareness Activities for Collaborative Classrooms
• Phonemic Activities for the Preschool or Elementary Classroom

Discussion
In Now What? Shaunna says that she lessened time spent in learning centers to make room in her class schedule for progress monitoring during reading groups. Like teachers everywhere she is faced with difficult classroom management decisions. Based upon your professional experiences and what you know about Shaunna’s teaching situation, other actions would you suggest to help her juggle assessment and instruction? What additional knowledge about Shaunna’s situation and her students’ needs might help you to make more helpful suggestions?

Journal
Create a list of your current actions that help children develop phonemic awareness. Add to that list any activities Shaunna (the teacher from Now What?) described that were a part of her classroom instruction. Organize the activities into groups by phoneme manipulation, blending, and segmenting. Use the reading to help you sort the activities. Evaluate your knowledge. In which areas do you feel most and least comfortable?

Workbook Assignment

DIBELS or Phonemic Awareness Assessment Assignment due by the end of this Session
Session 5
Phonics Continuum / Assessing Phonics Knowledge

Case
Just Sick About It

Readings
• Systematic Phonics Instruction: Findings of the National Reading Panel (pages 11-14 only)
• Spelling: Logical, Learnable—and Critical
• Word Study: A New Approach to Teaching Spelling

Discussion

The “Systematic Phonics Instruction” reading addresses some of the critical components of a systematic phonics program. Given that Reggie is a new, floating specialist in her building, what actions can you recommend she take that will enable her to provide more systematic phonics instruction to her students? What might be the long- and short-term consequences of these?

Journal

“Word Study”, as mentioned in Scene 5 of Just Sick About It is one approach to teaching phonics. In this scene, Reggie is asked to give the same spelling pretest to the class in order to assess their phonics knowledge and create spelling groups. Reflect on the consequences of this approach. From Reggie’s perspective, what are the pros and cons of this approach? What are the pros and cons of the approach you use? Consider issues such as grouping students for phonics instruction, grade-level expectations, integration with other components of the reading program, and level of teacher knowledge about phonics.

Workbook Assignment

Spelling Assessment and Instruction

Score the students’ spelling tests from this session’s case, paying particular attention to specific phonics features (initial and final consonants, short vowels, blends and digraphs, long vowel patterns, other vowels, inflected endings, syllable markers, suffixes) and their place in the developmental continuum of phonics skills. Group the students by instructional needs. Create a list of 10 spelling words for each group. Justify grouping and
instructional decisions. Then consider the following: How should students gain practice with the words? What writing activities could the students do? What reading could they do to gain practice with the skill in context? Reflect on the ways your suggestions may apply to teaching and learning in your class or school.

Due by the end of this session
Session 6
Effective Phonics Instruction

Case
Little Tikes: Teaching Young Gifted Learners

Readings
• Types of Systematic Phonics Programs
• Put Reading First: Phonics Portion

Discussion

Using the knowledge gained through the readings, review Scene 2 of the Little Tikes case, paying close attention to the phonics elements of Jane Smittey’s lesson. Which approach to teaching phonics does it appear Jane takes? Provide evidence to support your answer. What actions could Jane take to make her phonics instruction more effective? Use recommendations from the course readings to help form your answers.

Journal

In your own words, what are the characteristics of effective phonics instruction? Which actions could you take to more closely align your instructional practices to incorporate the knowledge from the course readings? What might be the consequences (intended or unintended) of those actions?

Workbook Assignment

None this session
Session 7
Phonemic Awareness and Phonics with Second Language Learners

Case
Little Tikes: Teaching Young Gifted Learners

Readings
- Developing Literacy in English-language Learners: Key Issues and Promising Practices (Slides 1-9 only)
- Fostering Literacy Development in English Language Learners

Discussion

Look back at Steve and Jane’s lesson plans. Based on the knowledge from this session’s readings and your own research, what issues might arise during these lessons? What actions might you recommend to them that would make their lessons more effective for the second language learners in the class? Share your own successful strategies as well.

Journal

In your own words, describe the characteristics of effective phonemic awareness (PA) and phonics instruction for second language learners. Then, think about your own classroom instruction. Then, consider your PA and phonics instruction from your students’ perspective: What actions could you take to incorporate some of the knowledge from the readings into your own teaching that would benefit your second language learners?

Workbook Assignment

None this session
Session 8
Evaluating Phonemic Awareness or Phonics Curriculum Materials Using Standard Guidelines

Case
None this session

Readings
None this session

Discussion
Review your teaching philosophy and approach to reading instruction (as you described it in Session 1). How has it changed as a result of taking this course? Specifically, which actions will you take based on the knowledge you gained? What do you imagine your students’ perspectives will be on these changes?

Journal
Summarize the instructional issues and key pieces of information you’ve learned from this course about phonemic awareness and phonics. Do so using the Sum It Up Worksheet (accessed from the bottom of this link: http://www.readingquest.org/pdf/sumitup.pdf) Create an acrostic poem with the words “Systematic Phonics” or “Phonemic Awareness.” (Note: regardless of which term you choose, your poem can include information about both content areas).

Note
Remember to complete the online course evaluation which is found under Class Materials on the menu bar.

Workbook Assignment

Curriculum Review / Case Analysis

Systematic and explicit phonics instruction makes a bigger contribution to children's growth in reading than instruction that provides non-systematic or no phonics instruction. The hallmark of programs of systematic phonics instruction is the direct teaching of a set of letter-sound relationships in a clearly defined sequence. The set includes the major sound-symbol relationships of both consonants and vowels. The programs also provide
materials that give children substantial practice in applying knowledge of these relationships as they read and write. These materials include books or stories that contain a large number of words that children can decode by using the letter-sound relationships they have learned and are learning.


Use the criteria provided in the Curriculum Review document http://www.casenex.com/casenex/syllabus/Generic2/CurriculumReview.htm to evaluate either a phonics curriculum or a phonemic awareness curriculum. For each criterion, rate the curricula on a scale of 1-5 (lowest to highest) and provide a rationale for your rating. Where possible, provide specific examples from the curriculum materials as support. Then, use the 5-Step Method to reflect upon your findings, ending with your recommendations (recommended actions) regarding these materials.

Due by the end of this Session