



Session 8

Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves.

-The Duchess

Lewis Carroll (Alice in Wonderland, 1865)

Teaching Phonological Awareness with the Reasoning Strategy

Learning Objectives

- ◇ **Review** the term low-support strategy and **define** the term reasoning strategy.
- ◇ **Demonstrate** use of the reasoning strategy when teaching phonological awareness.
- ◇ **Analyze** children's responses to the reasoning strategy in a phonological awareness activity.
- ◇ **Reflect** on how the reasoning strategy can be used in your classroom to improve children's phonological awareness.
- ◇ **Describe** how the reasoning strategy can be extended to all four *Read It Again–PreK!* domains.

Overview

In this session, we will turn our attention to children who typically meet with success on during phonological awareness activities. These children benefit when teachers use strategies that challenge them to accelerate their pace of learning and acquire deeper levels of knowledge about phonological awareness.

As we discussed in Session 6, the types of strategies we use to challenge children who perform very well on a task or activity are called low-support strategies. When employing low-support strategies, the teacher serves less as a model and more as a “guide on the side.” **Low-support strategies** encourage children to think about particular tasks at more complex levels.

The Reasoning Strategy

The low-support strategy we address in this session is **reasoning**.

The reasoning strategy asks children to explain why something happened or will happen, or to explain why something is the way it is.

The reasoning strategy challenges children who find certain activities easy by encouraging them to engage in tasks in a more complex way – by reasoning. When children are asked to reason through a task or their response, this furthers their knowledge and helps to solidify the concept or skill being targeted. The reasoning strategy can serve to challenge a child who may find a particular phonological awareness activity too easy. This provides an opportunity for the child to move even further up the ladder of learning. Let's look at an example:

Teacher: On this page, I read the words **waddle**, **wriggle** and **wade**. These words have something in common. Tell me what you think it is?

Audrey: Because they all start with 'www'.

Teacher: Exactly! **Waddle**, **wriggle** and **wade** all have the same first sound. They are similar.

In this example, the teacher addresses the phonological awareness skill initial sound identification and challenges the child to demonstrate her understanding of this skill through reasoning. In this task not only is the child challenged to consider how certain words are similar in their phonological structures, but she is also asked to explain this to others.

Let's look at another example:

Teacher: How do you know if a word is a long word or short word? What makes **chocolate** a long word and **big** a short word?

In this example, the teacher asks children to explain why something is the way it is. In addition to asking children to think about the length of different words as they listen to them, the teacher is asking children to engage in reasoning, which makes the task even more challenging. This is an excellent strategy for children who are participating in a task that is easy for them.

Terms and Background Knowledge

Vocabulary

Low-support strategy – A strategy that is used for tasks that are relatively easy for the child and that he or she is close to being able to do on his or her own.

Reasoning – A strategy that asks children to explain **why** something happened or will happen, or to explain why something is the way it is.



Activity 1. Teacher Implementation of the Reasoning Strategy

As we think about using the reasoning strategy, let's consider how to challenge children's phonological awareness skills by asking them to explain why something happened or will happen, or to explain why something is the way it is. Read this transcript of a classroom conversation.

Teacher: Do the words **can** and **hat** rhyme or do the words **can** and **man** rhyme?

Sam: **Can** and **man**.

Teacher: You are right. **Can** and **man** rhyme but **can** and **hat** do not. What makes some words rhyme and some words not rhyme?

Sam: **Can** and **man** sound the same.

Teacher: Exactly! **Can** and **man** sound the same. So, when I say **can** and **man** my mouth looks the same. When I say **can** and **hat** my mouth looks different.

Now, answer these questions about the exchange above.

Give an example of an instance when the teacher could have used the reasoning strategy but did not.

Activity 1. Teacher Implementation of the Reasoning Strategy

What might she have said and how might this interaction have played out if she had provided this low-support strategy in that instance?

Describe the child's response to the teacher's use of the reasoning strategy. Was the child able to successfully complete the task?



Activity 2. Learners' Ladders

Review the strategy of reasoning addressed in four *Read It Again–PreK!* Learners' Ladder Phonological Awareness Lessons. These lessons are:

- Learners' Ladder Lesson 10
- Learners' Ladder Lesson 34
- Learners' Ladder Lesson 46
- Learners' Ladder Lesson 58

Of the examples provided in these lessons, which ones do you feel you use often in your daily instruction?

Activity 2. Learners' Ladders

Next, review these two examples taken from Learners' Ladder Lesson 22.

Example 1:

Teacher: How do you know if a word is a long word or short word? What makes **chocolate** a long word and **big** a short word?

Example 2:

Teacher: Think about your name. Would you say your name is a short word or long word? Why?

Reflect on these questions:

Rewrite each of the examples above so the teacher does not use the reasoning strategy, but uses instead a high-support strategy such as eliciting, reducing choices, or co-participation. Predict how a child with strong phonological awareness skills might perform given these revised examples.

How many children in your classroom would find tasks such as these quite easy?

What is it about the reasoning strategy (used in the above examples) that may help to motivate children who find phonological awareness tasks quite easy?

Listen and Learn



Activity 3.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 8, Activity 3** from the RIA DVD menu. You will see a teacher reading a book to a group of children. Complete the activity as described below.

Watch this teacher use the reasoning strategy to discuss new phonological awareness skills with her students while reading *I Stink!* by Kate McMullan.

Then, answer these questions:

Which phonological awareness skill was the teacher targeting?

Describe a specific instance in which the teacher used the reasoning strategy.

Describe how the children responded to this strategy.

Now, listen to what we have to say.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 8, Activity 3 Discussion** from the RIA DVD menu.

Activity 3.

Activity 4.

Read the following transcript of a teacher using the reasoning strategy to target phonological awareness skills using rhyming cards that accompany *Read It Again-PreK!* Lesson 10.

Teacher: Look at these words – **bed, head, red, bread**. I put these words together in one group. Why do you think I did that?

Kathryn: Because they sound the same!

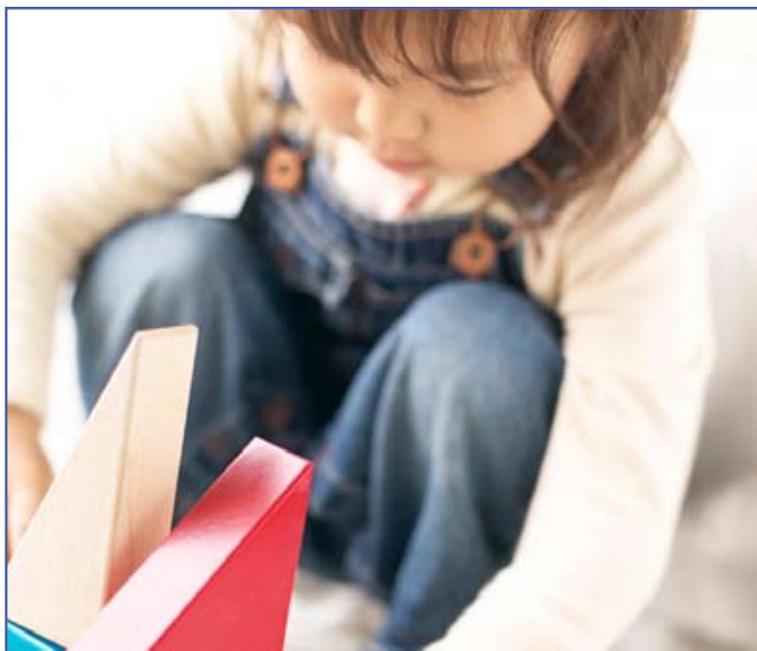
Teacher: Yes. **Bed, head, red,** and **bread** rhyme, or sound the same at the end. So I put these words together in one group.

Choose other sets of rhyming words from the book *The Night Before Kindergarten* by Natasha Wing.

Write down the exact words you could use to implement the reasoning strategy when asking children to identify whether or not sets of words rhyme.

Now, watch our example.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 8, Activity 4 Discussion** from the RIA DVD menu.



Activity 4.



Activity 5.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 8, Activity 5** from the RIA DVD menu. You will see a teacher reading a book to a group of children. Complete the activity as described below.

Watch this teacher use the reasoning strategy to discuss a different domain than that of phonological awareness, namely narrative. The teacher uses this strategy with her students while reading the text *The Biggest Snowman Ever* by Steven Kroll. Answer these questions:

What kinds of words did the teacher use to apply the reasoning strategy?

How did the children respond to this strategy? Did it seem to challenge the students for whom this activity might have otherwise been too easy?

Now, listen to what we have to say.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 8, Activity 5 Discussion** from the RIA DVD menu.

Activity 5.

Reflect and Apply

Reflect

1. Think about a child in your classroom who finds it easy to complete phonological awareness activities. Write that child's name here: _____.

How often do you currently use the reasoning strategy with this child when engaging in phonological awareness activities?

Do you think this child would benefit from more exposure to this strategy? Why or why not?

2. Look again at the reasoning strategy as addressed in the *Read It Again–PreK!* Learners' Ladders. How often do you use this strategy in your classroom? Why or why not?

What could you do in your classroom this week to use this strategy more often?

3. Read over this excerpt from the book *In the Small, Small Pond* by Denise Fleming.

In the small, small pond...
Wiggle, jiggle, tadpoles wriggle
Waddle, wade, geese parade
Hover, shiver, wings quiver
Drowse, dose, eyes close
Lash, lunge, herons plunge

How could this excerpt be used to teach children about in the phonological awareness skill of rhyme? Give a specific example of what you might say or do to teach children to identify word rhymes using this excerpt.

Are there children in your classroom who may find tasks like this too easy and need to be challenged? If so, describe the exact words you would use to apply the reasoning strategy to this task.

Apply

1. Find a storybook in your classroom that contains rhyming words. Select a child in your classroom and read the storybook, pausing while reading to identify rhyming words. Use the reasoning strategy. What words did you use to apply the reasoning strategy? Did you feel that using this strategy detracted from the quality of the storybook reading session?

2. Gather a small group of children in your classroom who do well with phonological awareness activities. Ask the children to clap out the number of syllables in several words. First, deliver this activity without providing the low-support strategy of reasoning. Note here the exact words you use:

Now, deliver the same activity using the low-support strategy of reasoning. Describe here the specific words you use and your impressions of the children's performance.

3. Gather a small group of children in your classroom who need to be challenged in the area of vocabulary. Ask children to locate items on the pages of a storybook using prepositional words. For example, "Can someone show me what is *above* the door in this picture?" First, deliver the activity without providing the low-support strategy of reasoning. Note here the exact words you use:

Now, deliver the vocabulary activity providing the low-support strategy of reasoning. Describe here the specific words you use and your impressions of the children's performance.

Resources

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