

## Some Ideas to Keep in Mind:

- ◆ **Don't stress written words or letters.** Even though a child can possess some level of phonemic awareness before knowing the alphabet, written words or letters should not be the focus of phonemic awareness activities until he or she can readily identify the letters. But once children know the alphabet, these visual cues benefit many children. This generally happens in the second half of kindergarten. At this point, the combination of phonemic awareness and phonics instruction is a powerful union (Fox, 1996). Before that, using print may distract from the purposes of the activities or cause confusion for children.
- ◆ **Keep the tone fun and informal.** Although the phonemic awareness activities give you evaluative information about children's progress, avoid using the activities as assessments. It is important that children are engaged in playing with language, not concerned about being assessed. Respond favorably and enthusiastically to their attempts.
- ◆ **Monitor each child's progress.** In small groups, all children can participate in and enjoy these language play activities. However, children progress through the phonemic awareness activities at varying rates. Some catch on quickly; others do not. Continue informally to monitor children throughout the year. Watch for patterns of difficulty over time.
- ◆ **Model, model, model!** Continually model for children how to accomplish the various phonemic awareness tasks. And provide corrective feedback. Much of the learning occurs through this feedback. Following are some sample models for rhyming, oral blending, and substituting sounds (phonemic manipulation).
- ◆ **Keep assessing phonemic awareness.** Most poor readers—whatever their grade level—have weak phonological sensitivity (phonemic awareness skills), which may be standing in their way of becoming good readers and writers. So intermediate-level teachers should be aware of the importance of phonemic awareness, assess their poor readers' skills, and provide any needed training.
- ◆ **Provide lots and lots of language experiences.** Nothing can take the place of reading, writing, and listening to stories in an early literacy program. So whatever you do with phonemic awareness, do it within the context of a print-rich environment with multiple language experiences.