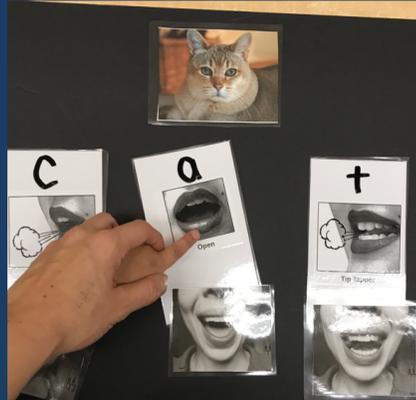


# FOSTER PHONEMIC AWARENESS WITH PRESCHOOLERS USING MOUTH PICTURES



**WHERE TO BEGIN:**  
**USING MIRRORS AND PHOTOS OF THE MOUTH, DEVELOP A CONVERSATION AROUND THE ACTIONS AND FEELINGS OF EACH PHONEME. FOCUS ON LIP & TONGUE PLACEMENT AS WELL AS SENSATIONS IN THE THROAT AND WITH THE AIR**

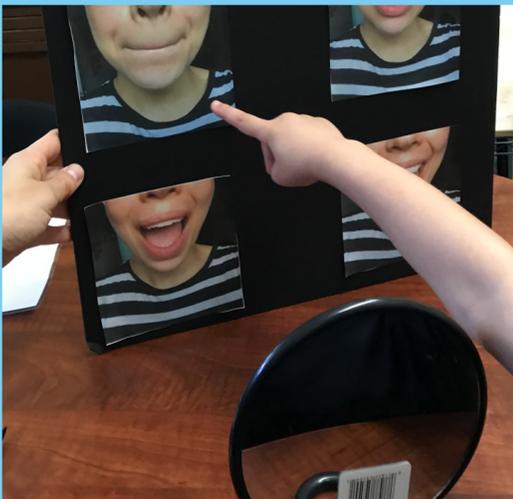
"When I say /m/, as in 'man', I feel my lips vibrate. Do you? Which picture do you think shows me saying /m/>?"

When you say the /h/ sound, what do you feel your breath do?

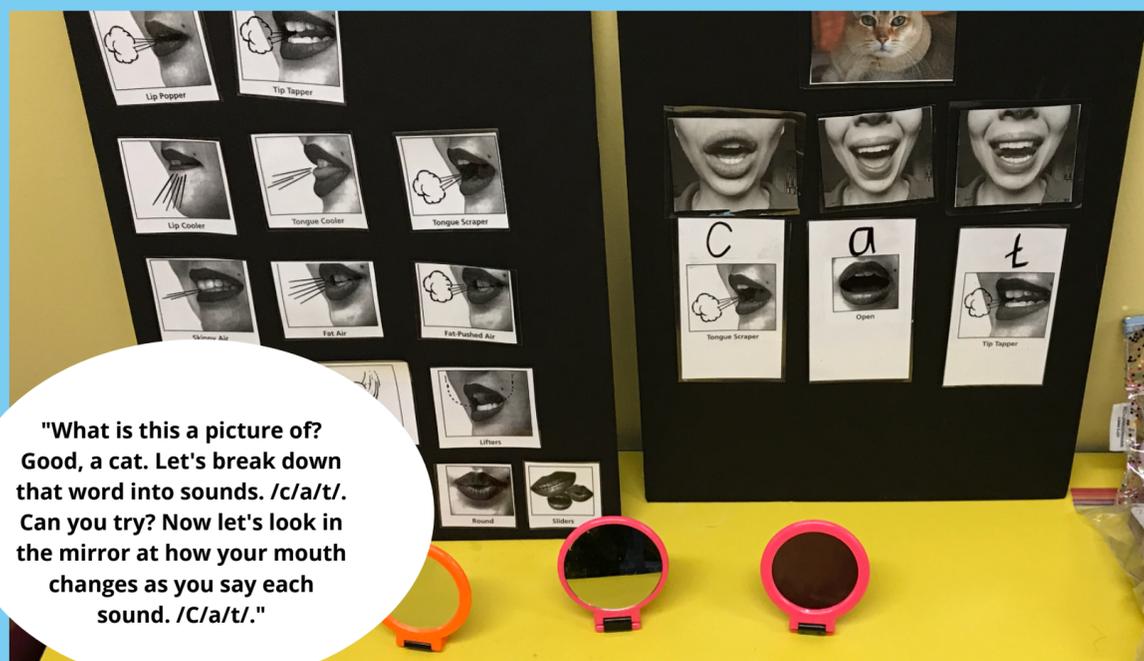
In the picture, my mouth is saying the sound /a/. Can you say /a/ too? Tell me about what shape your mouth is making.

Starting here helps children develop bodily awareness of phonemes. They will begin to hear the details in each small unit of sound. This ultimately aids in their ability to segment and distinguish between phonemes and retain the grapheme-phoneme connection (Boyer & Ehri, 2011). A good place to start is with the initial sounds of students' names, or the starting sounds of their favorite literary characters.

For sounds that are tricky to capture on camera, such as /b/ or /k/, I supplemented using pictures from the sensory-cognitive program Lindamood-Bell that include drawings of how the air comes out of the mouth (it is "pushed", it "puffs", it "pops," etc.)



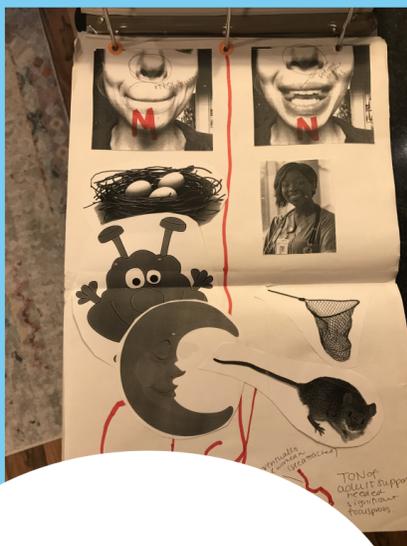
**NEXT, BEGIN SEGMENTING PRACTICE WITH CVC WORDS, FOCUSING ON EACH PHONEME'S SHAPE AND SOUND. LETTERS ARE NOT THE FOCUS YET BUT CAN CERTAINLY BE INCLUDED!**



"What is this a picture of? Good, a cat. Let's break down that word into sounds. /c/a/t/. Can you try? Now let's look in the mirror at how your mouth changes as you say each sound. /c/a/t/."

Show the children a photo of a CVC word with each of the three phonemes in picture form below it. Give a choice for how they wish to point to each sound (with a pointer, their palm, finger, etc.) They are beginning to segment. How exciting! Encourage them to "check their work" using the mirrors.

## ENCOURAGE DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN CONSONANT STARTING SOUNDS.



"yes, this is a moon. What sound does 'moon' start with? Yes, /m/. Which mouth is making the /m/ sound?"

Show two options for sounds, for example /m/ and /n/, pictured here at the left, and provide students with photos of objects with that starting sound. They can sort the pictures into two columns based on their starting sounds. Keep the mirrors handy as they explore which sound they are making. This can be done as a group or an individual activity. This can also be done using real objects from around the classroom with two baskets delineating each sound with photos of the mouth.

Students love to connect these explicit activities to their own work. Have the children draw a picture of their family or classmates. Once their picture is done, explain that we are going to make all the people in their drawing say the same sound, such as /a/. Using cut out pictures of mouths (I used stock photos from the web), have them place those mouths atop the mouths they drew.

Now the whole family is making the /a/ sound! Children can glue the mouths down, or just lay the pictures over until the activity is finished.

## STUDY VOWELS USING CHILDREN'S ORIGINAL ARTWORK



"Everyone is saying /a/, as in apple! What else makes the /a/ sound? Can you think of another word that would make the whole family say this sound?"

## NOW IT'S TIME TO BLEND!

"When we go up the stairs, we step /c/a/t/. On our way down the slide, we slide the sounds together. Cat."

For some students, this takes lots of practice and needs lots of modeling. Keep at it!



Get creative! Two strategies I found successful were using fingerprint to encourage children to use dots smeared together to blend their sounds. I also used "up the staircase, down the slide" to segment and then blend. In both of these activities, the photos of the mouth acted as prompts/reminders, but the real work of the activity was each child's journey to beginning to physically blend the sounds together, slowly and deliberately. Now that the children are familiar with the mouth pictures as a visual cue for each phoneme, they can begin to show how they blend together.

Once your students are familiar with blending and segmenting using just the pictures, the introduction of letters can happen lots of different ways. Pictured on the right, we used letters cut out of cardboard to make puppets with the mouths of each letter saying its own sound using the Lindamood-Bell pictures. This created a tight connection between the letters and their sounds. Letters can be introduced earlier or even from the beginning (using a whiteboard marker and laminated mouth pictures, for example.) Some students might be ready before others. Eventually, of course, the goal is to no longer use the mouth picture prompts and have letters stand alone for their grapheme-phoneme connections.

## MAKING THE CONNECTION TO LETTERS



"Your name starts with the letter Z. I see that your Z puppet is saying its sound, /z/."

## References

Miles, K. (2015). Misconceptions about appropriate literacy instruction for young children. *LiteracyWorldwide.org*. Retrieved from: <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog/literacy-now/2015/11/05/misconceptions-about-appropriate-literacy-instruction-for-young-children>

Lindamood, P. & Lindamood, P. (1998) *The Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program for Reading, Spelling, and Speech*. Pro-Ed: Austin, TX.

Boyer, N. & Ehri, L.C., (2011). Contribution of phonemic segmentation instruction with letters and articulatory pictures to work reading and spelling in beginners. *Scientific Study of Reading*. 15(5). 440-470.