At this year's NAEYC Conference, I bought a new tool for helping children how to improve their sound production and letter-sound knowledge. Teddy Talker is a new teacher's tool developed by a speech pathologist. There are manipulatives and instruction cards that help the classroom teacher (or parent) as they work with the young child in developing auditory discrimination, pronunciation, and letter recognition. I've just begun using it, but so far it's been a winner with my daughter, Lucy, and her classmates.

What I like about this kit is that it integrates the use of the auditory, visual, tactile and kinesthetic learning with pre-reading, reading and articulation skills. It also increases the child's focus on speech production using movable articulators. In so doing, it also helps to connect sounds and the spoken word to the printed word.

The kit comes with a small bear hand puppet and a backdrop felt board with a friendly bear's face on it. The teacher, or child, then uses the alphabet felts to focus on one particular sound or blend. The child practices making the sound, and then uses the felt mouth pieces to design the mouth position for that particular sound. You can incorporate ASL signs with the tool as well as use a mirror to help the child watch as they attempt to formulate the phonemic sound.

Here's why this is important and an exciting find (excerpts from Wikipedia): Phonemic awareness is a subset of phonological awareness in which listeners are able to hear, identify and manipulate phonemes, the smallest units of sound that can differentiate meaning. Separating the spoken word "cat" into three distinct phonemes, /k/, /æ/, and /t/, requires phonemic awareness.
Teddy Talker to the Rescue!

The National Reading Panel has found that phonemic awareness improves children’s word reading and reading comprehension, as well as helping children learn to spell.[1] Phonemic awareness is the basis for learning phonics.[2]

Phonemic awareness and phonological awareness are often confused since they are interdependent. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate individual phonemes. Phonological awareness includes this ability, but it also includes the ability to hear and manipulate larger units of sound, such as onsets and rimes and syllables.

Studies by Vickie Snider have shown that phonemic awareness has a direct correlation with students’ ability to read as they get older. Phonemic awareness builds a foundation for students to understand the rules of the English language. This in turn allows each student to apply these skills and increase his or her oral reading fluency and understanding of the text.[3]

Phonemic awareness relates to the ability to distinguish and manipulate individual sounds, such as /f/, /ʊ/, and /t/ in the case of foot. The following are common phonemic awareness skills practiced with students:

- Phoneme isolation: which requires recognizing the individual sounds in words, for example, “Tell me the first sound you hear in the word paste” (/p/).
- Phoneme identity: which requires recognizing the common sound in different words, for example, “Tell me the sound that is the same in bike, boy and bell” (/b/).
- Phoneme substitution: in which one can turn a word (such as "cat") into another (such as "hat") by substituting one phoneme (such as /h/) for another (/k/). Phoneme substitution can take place for initial sounds (cat-hat), middle sounds (cat-cut) or ending sounds (cat-can).
  - Oral segmenting: The teacher say a word, for example, "ball," and students say the individual sounds, /b/, /ɑl/, and /l/.
  - Oral blending: The teacher say each sound, for example, "/b/, /ɑ/, /l/" and students respond with the word, “ball.”
  - Sound deletion: The teacher say word, for example, "bill," has students repeat it, and then instructs students to repeat the word without a sound.
  - Onset-rime manipulation: which requires isolation, identification, segmentation, blending, or deletion of onsets (the single consonant or blend that precedes the vowel and following consonants), for example, j-ump, st-op, str-ong.

Games are a wonderful way for children to learn phonemic awareness. For example, the teacher might say, now say bill without the /b/.” Students should respond with /ɪl/. There are other phonemic awareness activities, such as sound substitution, where students are instructed to replace one sound with another, sound addition, where students add sounds to words, and sound switching, where students manipulate the order of the phonemes. These are more complex but research supports the use of the three listed above, particularly oral segmenting and oral blending.

In case you’re wondering, The Teddy Talker™ tool aligns with the following Common Core State Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.1B: Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.1.d: Recognize and name all upper- and

Continued on page 3
The Purposes of ACCN:

1. To affirm, encourage and empower all engaged in the weekday ministry to young children.
2. To encourage the continued professional growth of early childhood professionals and to provide opportunities for their professional and spiritual growth.
3. To provide networking opportunities for Seventh-day Adventist Child Development professionals.
4. To foster unity between all areas of child development within the Adventist Church.
5. To encourage the incorporation of Early Childhood Education in the nurture and outreach programs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
6. To foster working relationships with the world church, unions, conferences, local churches, and schools.
7. To encourage surveys and research in the area of Child Development and Early Childhood Education in cooperation with the North American Division.
8. To counsel with the North American Division and General Conference in the development and review of programs and strategies for Child Development.
9. To provide guidance and resources to training organizations, colleges, and universities.
10. To advocate the hiring of Early Childhood specialists at all organizational levels of the Adventist Church.
11. To develop working relationships with other Early Childhood Education organizations.
12. To encourage child care centers to obtain national accreditation.

Teddy Talker to the Rescue!

Teddy Talker to the Rescue!
Continued on page 4

and pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in spoken single-syllable words.

References

1. "Findings and Determinations of the National Reading Panel by Topic Areas". NICHD.
2. "Critical Issues: The National Reading Panel". Reading Online.

Retrieved 26 July 2012.

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Lowercase letters of the alphabet.

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.2d: Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme (consonant-vowel-consonant, or CVC) words.

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.2e: Add or substitute individual sounds (phonemes) in simple, one-syllable words to make new words.

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.3a: Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary sound or many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant.

• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.1.2c: Isolate and pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in spoken single-syllable words.
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Discoveryland Children's Center - Angwin is now hiring a full-time Infant/Toddler teacher. For more details, please refer to the job posting website.

Discoveryland Children's Center - St. Helena is now hiring a full-time Director. For more details, please refer to the job posting website.

Discoveryland Children's Center - St. Helena is also hiring a part-time Infant/Toddler teacher. For more details, please refer to the job posting website.

Pacific Union College job posting website: https://www.puc.edu/campus-services/human-resources/current-job-postings

Southern California Conference
If you are Seventh-day Adventist, have a degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development or the core classes (Child/Human Growth & Dev.& Child, Family & Community) & other EC Program/Curriculum (6SU/8QU) and are interested, please fax your resume ASAP to 818-547-4824. A+ Adventist Children’s Center, Malisa Smith, Director, 234 N. Isabel Street, Glendale, California 91206. 818-241-9353.

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