

When we are talking about a strong foundational instruction I think it is important to also mention that the age we are talking about keenly being kindergarten age is a time where kids are developing so rapidly that it is so important for us as teachers to ensure we are giving instruction that is precise, focused, and willing to push the students to their best potential. This need for a strong instruction is influenced by the idea mentioned by Richardson (2016) in which she states that, "Children enter school with different literacy experiences", she then goes on to explain this range, but within this is the point that all the students that enter the classroom are going to vary vastly in literacy skills, but strong instruction in phonological awareness and concepts of print is the way that we can even the playing field and make sure that kids are on target for their grade level standards (pg. 26). This idea is also continued by Blevins (2017) in which they state that "it doesn't take a great deal of time to bring many students' phonemic awareness skills up to a level at which phonics instruction begins to make sense" and that again with a strong instruction related to phonological awareness kids are able to get back on track and be at the level they should be at (pg. 7).

As mentioned by Blevins (2017) "active exploration of the relation between letter names, the sound of the letter names, their visual characteristics, and the motor movement involved in their formation", in reference to the best ways students learn the alphabet is just the surface of what types of instruction we can give to students to help them get on track for their grade standard. This correlates strongly with some of the exercises Richardson (2016) mentions like name puzzles (pg. 35). Name puzzles are one key tactile experience pre-A readers would really dive deep into as the teacher will cut up their name either in half or multiple pieces and that day by day their name will get more broken apart and that they will have to keep putting it together (Richardson, 2017, pg. 35). This is a great lesson because it uses kids names, something they are very familiar with, and also creates that hands-on experience by making them put the letters together while still giving them the ability to say the letters and sounds outloud to figure it out. This helps inform my practice because I feel like this exercise is a great way to get students to

start fully thinking about how and why letters have sounds and how we can put them together by giving them an example that is very easy like their name which I think is extremely accessible and perfect for a true beginner. Another key lesson aid that I think would resonate strong with the pre-A readers would be to over accentuate pronunciation and be conscientious of how we are articulating the words we are saying, because kids are listening to us to hear the right thing, and if we are speaking too fast or not pronouncing everything fully, kids can get very confused (Blevins, 2017, pg. 21). This is key to so many lessons and that even within the videos of Richardson that we watched in class, we saw how clear she was with her words and made sure that if a kid wasn't saying something fully or correctly that she would pause the lesson and make sure to review what the sound in the word is meant to sound like. This will be key to informing my practice because we as adults get so used to not having to pronounce everything fully, but that we need to be more aware as teachers that they are listening to us for direction and that if we aren't being fully aware of how we are speaking then our students might not learn how to spell or say something correctly. Another great lesson that aligns with how we are figuring out how words sound and breakdown is the Clapping Syllables lesson (Richardson, 2016, pg. 38). This lesson relies on students being active participants but is extremely effective by making sure that they are doing a physical action when they are saying the words aloud so that they can grasp the concept of syllables and saying words in parts. I could easily see myself using this within my own instruction and implementing this constantly for my kids to follow along with when they stumble upon words that they might find hard to say or break down.

Overall both Richardson and Blevins have so many great lessons and concepts that we as teachers can use for our pre-A readers and that there is no excuse to say a student can't learn these concepts. I can easily see how all of this can be implemented within a classroom and that the building blocks that both of these books share can lead to any student finding success within literacy.

Works Cited

Blevins, W. (2017). *A fresh look at phonics: Common causes of failure and 7 ingredients for Success*. Corwin.

Richardson, J. (2016). *The next step forward in Guided Reading: An assess-decide-guide framework for supporting every reader*. Scholastic.