

Funēemics® and Speech Therapy

Many students arrive in kindergarten without the phonemic awareness skills that will assist them in navigating an early reading program, but this problem is intrinsic to most students with communication disabilities and delays (Swank, 1998). According to a survey conducted by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, “from 2000 to 2012, 91%–97% of [speech-language pathologists] served students with articulation/phonological disorders” (2012, p. 2).



The Division of Special Populations in the Louisiana Department of Education published an extensive report on phonological awareness strategies for speech and language pathologists. The report lists eight overarching instructional strategies to effectively teach phonological awareness to students with language disorders. Here are the eight strategies, as stated in the report (Louisiana Department of Education, 2002, p. 21), and how the Funēemics program addresses these needs:

What the Research Indicates	How the Research is Applied in <i>Funēemics</i> .
“Provide brief instructional sessions.”	The <i>Funēemics</i> program consists of 59 lessons, each of which can be completed in 15–20 minutes.
“Teach phonological awareness skills explicitly and systematically.”	The <i>Funēemics</i> program is scripted to ensure the concepts are explicitly taught and uses research-based practices to systematically teach each of the six outcomes in the phonological awareness continuum.
“Progress from easier to more difficult phonemic awareness activities.”	The six Lesson Guides in the <i>Funēemics</i> program teach the six outcomes in the continuum of phonological awareness in sequential order. See Funēemics® Program Overview in the Teacher’s Manual for a visual representation of how the Lesson Guides follow the continuum.
“Model phonemic awareness tasks and responses orally.”	The <i>Funēemics</i> lessons are all done orally. <i>Funēemics</i> breaks instruction into small units and provides modeling, group responses, and individual and group practice and repetition. Supports decrease over time as students reach mastery of the small units of material.

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<p>“Make [the] student’s cognitive manipulations of sounds overt by using concrete representations (i.e., markers, pictures, and Elkonin boxes) of sounds. Limit letter-sound correspondence in all phonemic awareness interventions.”</p>	<p>The <i>Funēemics</i> program is entirely pre-grapheme, using whimsically illustrated pictures or simple shapes to represent words, syllables, and sounds in the spoken language. Interactive widgets, for example, might have three pictures of a cat, representing the three sounds /k/ /a/ /t/. Students say each sound as the teacher points to the icons. Touching the first or last icon turns that icon to a shadow to visually represent the deletion of the initial or final phoneme.</p>
<p>“When instruction begins to focus on phonemic level use short words.”</p>	<p>The <i>Funēemics</i> program uses words made of two or three phonemes for the initial focus on individual phonemes, and the lessons increase in difficulty until instruction focuses on words using blends. For example, when practicing phoneme blending or segmenting, <i>Funēemics</i> lessons begin with words containing only three continuant sounds. After students experience success with those short words, words with stop sounds are introduced. The difficulty of the lessons increases until students are able to work with one-syllable words with more than three sounds that contain blends and both continuant and stop sounds.</p>
<p>“Focus on segmentation or a combination of blending and segmenting.”</p>	<p>The following <i>Funēemics</i> lessons include the blending and segmenting of syllables: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8.</p> <p>The following <i>Funēemics</i> lessons include the blending and segmenting of phonemes: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, 6.10, 6.11, 6.12.</p>

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<p>“Add letter-sound correspondence instruction to phonemic awareness interventions as the final step before teaching phonics and decoding.”</p>	<p>The <i>Funēemics</i> program is entirely pre-grapheme, making it the perfect instructional tool to precede or supplement any of the Read Naturally® intervention reading and spelling programs, as well as core reading programs in the classroom.</p>