

The Phonemic Awareness of Kindergarten Learners in the Public Elementary School of Calauag West District, Division of Quezon

Jenifer N. Depaz¹ & Jay Ar Recto, Ph.D²

¹University of Northeastern Philippines, School of Graduate Studies

²Southern Luzon State University; University of Northeastern Philippines

ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Article history: Published: August 2026 Keywords: Phonemic Awareness Kindergarten Early Literacy Teacher Strategies Calauag West District	This study assessed kindergarten learners' phonemic awareness and the strategies used by teachers to develop early reading skills in public elementary schools of Calauag West District, Division of Quezon. A descriptive-evaluative-correlational survey involved 30 kindergarten teachers selected purposively from Central School, Roadside, and Upper Calauag sectors. A validated 56-item questionnaire measured four learner-awareness domains and four instructional-strategy domains. Weighted means, ranks, and Kendall's coefficient of concordance were analyzed at $\alpha=.05$. Phonemic awareness was Highly Evident overall ($M=3.69$), led by highlighting phonological concepts ($M=3.95$), followed by matching pictures ($M=3.86$), finding patterns ($M=3.81$), and matching pictures to sound patterns ($M=3.67$). Teacher strategies ranged from Highly to Very Much Evident: play with rhymes ($M=4.42$), matching sounds with words ($M=4.27$), listening to sounds within words ($M=4.07$), and identifying word parts ($M=3.95$). Recalculation from W and χ^2 with $df=6$ indicated significant concordance only for matching pictures to sound patterns ($W=.923$, $\chi^2=16.618$, $p=.011$) and listening to sounds within words ($W=.819$, $\chi^2=14.582$, $p=.024$). Findings support explicit and playful sound instruction, systematic blending and segmentation, early screening, differentiated support, and home-school practice routines.

1. Introduction

Reading development is cumulative. Early command of spoken-language sounds supports word recognition, while fluent decoding, vocabulary, background knowledge, strategic processing, and motivation jointly sustain comprehension. Weakness in any component can constrain later learning because reading increasingly becomes the medium through which learners encounter content across the curriculum (Hoover & Gough, 1990; Scarborough, 2001).

Phonological and phonemic awareness refer to learners' capacity to notice and manipulate the sound structure of spoken language. These abilities are distinct from print knowledge, yet they support learners in understanding the alphabetic principle and mapping sounds to letters. Meta-analytic and panel evidence shows that explicit, systematic instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics can strengthen early word-reading development, particularly when instruction is integrated with meaningful language and text experiences (Ehri et al., 2001; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008).

Reading comprehension extends beyond accurate word recognition. Readers construct meaning by connecting textual information with prior knowledge, monitoring coherence, generating questions, identifying central ideas, making inferences, and repairing misunderstanding. Effective instruction makes these processes visible through modeling, guided practice, discussion, formative assessment, and gradual release of responsibility (Duke & Pearson, 2002; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

Engagement and motivation influence whether learners persist with challenging text and use comprehension strategies deliberately. Classrooms that provide relevant materials, supportive interactions, meaningful choice, and collaborative discussion can strengthen both cognitive engagement and willingness to read. Concept-oriented instruction demonstrates how strategy teaching and motivational support can be combined rather than treated as separate interventions (Guthrie et al., 2004).

Home and community conditions also matter. Caregivers influence reading through routines, access to print and digital materials, shared reading, discussion, encouragement, and communication with teachers. The quality of participation is more important than attendance alone: brief, regular, developmentally appropriate interactions can create continuity between classroom instruction and home practice.

Intervention programs are most effective when they are diagnostic and responsive. Screening should identify the specific skills that require support; instruction should then be explicit, sufficiently intensive, and monitored using repeated evidence. A single program label does not guarantee effectiveness. Fidelity, teacher expertise, learner exposure, material quality, family support, and timely instructional adjustment determine whether an intervention produces meaningful gains.

Philippine literacy policy emphasizes assessment, targeted intervention, and shared responsibility for reading development. The revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory and the Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa initiative provide policy anchors for identifying needs and organizing support, while the Enhanced Basic Education Act situates literacy within a standards-based curriculum (Department of Education, 2018, 2019; Republic Act No. 10533, 2013).

Within this policy and instructional context, particular attention is required for kindergarten learners' phonemic awareness and the sound-focused strategies used by their teachers.

Perception surveys are useful for mapping reported practice across schools and respondent groups. Their evidentiary scope is nevertheless bounded. A high mean indicates that a practice was frequently observed or favorably assessed; it does not establish the magnitude of learner growth. Stronger claims require direct assessments, baseline and follow-up measures, documented intervention exposure, and an analysis that links instructional variation with learner outcomes.

Kendall's coefficient of concordance is suited to examining whether groups rank indicators similarly. A statistically significant coefficient indicates shared ordering, not necessarily high implementation or educational impact. Conversely, non-significant concordance may reflect contextual variation, small numbers of groups, or genuine differences in priorities. Both the descriptive means and the inferential decision must therefore be considered.

The present inquiry contributes district-level evidence on kindergarten learners' phonemic awareness and the sound-focused strategies used by their teachers. By examining instructional and contextual dimensions together, it identifies practical priorities for classroom teaching, school support, family engagement, and future outcome-based evaluation.

1.1 Research Purpose and Analytical Focus

The study sought to determine the extent of kindergarten learners' phonemic awareness in highlighting phonological concepts, finding patterns, matching pictures, and matching pictures with sound patterns. It also assessed teacher strategies involving rhyme, listening within words, identifying word parts, and matching sounds with words.

Kendall's W tested whether the three school-sector groups ranked the seven indicators within each domain similarly. Policy recommendations were developed for early screening, instruction, teacher learning, material provision, and family participation.

1.2 Conceptual and Empirical Synthesis

The conceptual model positions phonemic awareness as an oral-language foundation for alphabetic learning. Learners move from broad sensitivity to rhyme and syllables toward finer-grained recognition, blending, segmentation, and manipulation of phonemes. Visual representations can support this progression when pictures direct attention to sounds rather than replace auditory analysis.

Teacher strategies operate through explicit modeling, playful repetition, guided discrimination, corrective feedback, and cumulative practice. Rhyme and movement can increase engagement, while isolation, blending, and segmentation build the precision needed for decoding. The sequence should be developmentally responsive rather than rigidly uniform.

The model expects instructional consistency to be valuable, but it also allows contextual variation. Differences in learner readiness, home language, attendance, material access, and teacher experience may produce different rankings even when overall practice is favorable.

2. Methodology

A descriptive-evaluative-correlational survey design was employed. The descriptive component profiled perceived learner awareness and teacher strategies; the evaluative component interpreted their extent using five-point scale ranges; and Kendall's W examined agreement among three sector-based groups.

Thirty kindergarten teachers from public elementary schools in Calauag West District participated through purposive sampling. Central School and Roadside sectors each contributed six respondents, while Upper Calauag contributed eighteen.

The researcher-made instrument contained 56 items. Part I allocated seven items to each of four phonemic-awareness domains, and Part II allocated seven items to each of four teacher-strategy domains. Expert jurors reviewed the instrument, and pilot testing used Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency.

Descriptive analyses used frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and rank orders. The interpretation ranges were 4.21–5.00 Very Much Evident, 3.41–4.20 Highly Evident, 2.61–3.40 Evident, 1.81–2.60 Slightly Evident, and 1.00–1.80 Not at All.

For each Kendall test, three groups ranked seven indicators; consequently, $\chi^2=3(7-1)W$ and $df=6$. Probability decisions in this article follow the reproducible W and chi-square values at $\alpha=.05$.

Table 1. Research Design, Participants, Measures, and Analysis

Component	Specification
Design	Descriptive-evaluative-correlational survey
Participants	30 kindergarten teachers
Sector distribution	Central School=6; Roadside=6; Upper Calauag=18
Instrument	Validated researcher-made questionnaire; 56 items
Learner domains	Phonological concepts; patterns; picture matching; picture–sound patterns
Strategy domains	Rhyme; sounds within words; word parts; sound–word matching
Scale	Five-point extent scale
Analysis	Weighted means, ranks, Kendall's W; $\alpha=.05$

2.1 Analytical Rigor and Boundaries

Equal item allocation supports content balance, while expert review and pilot reliability testing provide a foundation for instrument quality. Reporting the actual alpha coefficients by part and domain would further strengthen reproducibility.

The Kendall decisions were recalculated from the reported W and chi-square statistics using $df=6$. This procedure prevents significance labels from overriding the mathematical test result and separates the magnitude of concordance from its probability under the null hypothesis.

Because teachers rated learner awareness and their own strategies, shared-source bias is possible. Direct learner tasks, classroom observations, audio-recorded lessons, and evidence of instructional dosage would provide stronger corroboration.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Participant Coverage

The sample covered all three school sectors, with Upper Calauag contributing the majority of respondents.

Table 2. Distribution of Kindergarten-Teacher Respondents

School Sector	Frequency	Percent
Central School	6	20%
Roadside	6	20%
Upper Calauag	18	60%
Total	30	100%

The distribution provides broad school coverage but is unbalanced across sectors. The Upper Calauag group necessarily contributes more information to pooled means, while Kendall's W treats the three sector rankings as the units of concordance.

The small number of ranking groups limits statistical power. Non-significant W values should therefore be interpreted as insufficient evidence of common ordering, not as proof that the sectors fundamentally disagreed.

3.2 Phonemic-Awareness Profile

Table 3. Perceived Phonemic Awareness of Kindergarten Learners

Domain	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Highlighting phonological concepts	3.95	Highly Evident	1
Matching pictures to other pictures	3.86	Highly Evident	2
Finding patterns	3.81	Highly Evident	3
Matching pictures to sound patterns	3.67	Highly Evident	4
Grand mean	3.69	Highly Evident	—

Highlighting phonological concepts ranked first, suggesting that learners most consistently demonstrated broad sound awareness, word and syllable recognition, and related oral-language behaviors. Picture matching also rated favorably, indicating that concrete visual cues can support attention to sound relationships.

Matching pictures to sound patterns ranked last. Although still Highly Evident, it places greater demand on auditory discrimination and the coordination of visual and phonological information. Instruction should therefore move from clear contrasts and familiar vocabulary toward subtler initial, medial, and final sound distinctions.

The summary means are used because they provide internally coherent domain estimates. They also avoid overinterpreting isolated item fluctuations within a small teacher sample.

3.3 Agreement in Phonemic-Awareness Rankings

Table 4. Kendall Concordance for Learner-Awareness Domains

Domain	W	χ^2	df	Decision
Phonological concepts	.604	10.868	6	$p=.092$; n.s.
Finding patterns	.469	8.447	6	$p=.207$; n.s.
Picture matching	.611	11.000	6	$p=.088$; n.s.
Picture-sound patterns	.923	16.618	6	$p=.011$; significant

Only picture-sound pattern rankings reached statistical significance. The high W indicates that sector groups similarly identified which of the seven tasks were comparatively stronger or weaker within this demanding domain.

The other coefficients ranged from moderate to strong in magnitude but did not exceed the $df=6$ critical threshold. With only three ranking groups, even seemingly substantial W values may not be statistically conclusive. Policy should respond to both the descriptive profile and the uncertainty around cross-sector ordering.

3.4 Teacher Strategies for Early Reading

Table 5. Strategies Used by Kindergarten Teachers

Strategy Domain	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Play with rhymes	4.42	Very Much Evident	1
Matching sounds with words	4.27	Very Much Evident	2
Listen to sounds within words	4.07	Highly Evident	3
Identify word parts	3.95	Highly Evident	4

Play with rhymes was the most evident strategy. Songs, movement, card games, and playful oral routines can provide high-frequency exposure while lowering participation barriers for young learners. Their instructional value increases when teachers make the target sound relationship explicit.

Identifying word parts was lowest, pointing to the greater complexity of isolating initial, medial, and final phonemes and blending several sounds into a word. This area requires systematic modeling, cumulative practice, manipulatives, and immediate corrective feedback. The profile supports a balanced sequence: engagement through rhyme and oral play, followed by explicit sound isolation, blending, segmentation, and application to letters and words.

3.5 Agreement in Strategy Rankings

Table 6. Kendall Concordance for Teacher-Strategy Domains

Strategy Domain	W	χ^2	df	Decision
Play with rhymes	.424	7.636	6	p=.266; n.s.
Sounds within words	.819	14.582	6	p=.024; significant
Identify word parts	.416	7.489	6	p=.278; n.s.
Match sounds with words	.547	9.840	6	p=.132; n.s.

Sector groups shared a statistically significant ordering only for listening to sounds within words. This may reflect a common understanding of which discrimination and blending practices are most or least consistently implemented.

The remaining non-significant results indicate that sector-specific routines, learner profiles, or teacher preparation may affect strategy priorities. A common instructional framework should therefore establish essential components while preserving room for responsive pacing and examples.

3.6 Integrated Interpretation of the Findings

The combined findings describe an early-literacy environment with favorable phonemic awareness and active teacher use of sound-focused strategies. Strengths are most visible in explicit phonological concepts, picture-supported tasks, rhyme, and sound-word matching.

The most important instructional need is the transition from broad, playful awareness to fine-grained analysis of word parts. Learners require structured opportunities to hear, isolate, blend, segment, and manipulate phonemes, with careful attention to language familiarity and developmental readiness.

Concordance was domain-specific rather than universal. This pattern favors a district framework built around non-negotiable instructional principles—explicitness, cumulative sequence, formative assessment, and differentiation—rather than a rigid script detached from local learner needs.

Assessment should be brief, recurring, and actionable. Results should organize small-group instruction, identify learners needing intensified support, and provide families with simple practices that reinforce rather than confuse classroom routines.

4. Conclusions and Implications

4.1 Conclusions

Kindergarten learners' phonemic awareness was Highly Evident overall, with strongest performance in highlighting phonological concepts and the greatest relative need in matching pictures to sound patterns.

Teachers used all four strategy domains favorably. Rhyme-based activities were most evident, whereas identifying word parts was least evident and should receive more explicit instructional support.

Cross-sector agreement was selective. Significant concordance occurred for picture-sound patterns and listening within words, while the remaining domains did not show statistically conclusive common ordering.

4.2 Study Limitations

The cross-sectional design captures perceptions at one point in time and cannot establish temporal order or causal influence. High ratings should therefore be interpreted as evidence of perceived implementation or effectiveness, not as proof that the practices caused improved organizational or learner outcomes.

The measures rely on structured questionnaire responses and may be affected by social desirability, recall, common-method variance, and differences in how respondents interpreted scale anchors. Observation, document review, interviews, and performance records were not integrated into the principal statistical estimates.

Rank-based comparisons summarize ordering among indicators or groups but do not quantify the practical size of an intervention effect. Generalization is bounded by the specified locale, participant selection, school year, and organizational conditions represented in the study. Future applications should retain item-level data, document missing-data procedures, report reliability coefficients for every multi-item scale, and publish reproducible test statistics with degrees of freedom and exact probability values.

Learner awareness was assessed through teacher perception rather than individual performance tasks, so domain means cannot be interpreted as direct measures of children's phonemic proficiency.

4.3 Implications for Practice and Policy

Teachers should use an explicit developmental sequence that connects rhyme and syllables with onset-rime work, phoneme isolation, blending, segmentation, and sound manipulation. Multisensory materials should direct attention to sound structure rather than serve as decorative activities.

School heads should organize demonstration lessons, peer observation, coaching, and Learning Action Cell sessions focused on diagnosing errors and differentiating small-group instruction. Materials should include picture cards, sound boxes, letter tiles, decodable text, and home-practice guides.

Families should receive brief, language-accessible routines for shared reading, rhyming, oral blending, and sound identification. Progress communication should emphasize what to practice, how often, and how adults can respond supportively to errors.

District monitoring should combine teacher practice evidence with direct learner screening and progress data. This creates a clearer link between implementation and early reading development.

5. Policy and Implementation Priorities

Table 7. Early Literacy Policy and Implementation Matrix

Priority Area	Recommended Direction	Expected Evidence
Instructional sequence	Adopt an explicit, cumulative phonemic-awareness progression.	Lesson maps; demonstration records; learner work
Early screening	Administer brief diagnostic and progress-monitoring tasks.	Baseline profiles; intervention groups; growth records
Teacher learning	Use coaching, peer observation, and LAC inquiry on sound instruction.	Coaching logs; calibrated lesson artifacts
Learning resources	Provide sound boxes, picture cards, letter tiles, and decodable materials.	Inventory; usage evidence; accessibility checks
Family engagement	Distribute simple home-language practice routines and feedback guides.	Family participation; practice logs; progress conferences
Evaluation	Link implementation fidelity with direct learner outcomes.	Pre/post skill data; fidelity rubric; review report

6. Directions for Future Research

Future studies should administer direct phonemic-awareness tasks to individual learners and compare teacher ratings with observed performance. Experimental or quasi-experimental evaluations should test the added value of explicit blending, segmentation, and sound-manipulation modules beyond existing practice.

Research should examine home language, attendance, oral vocabulary, hearing status, material access, and teacher preparation as moderators of learner response.

Longitudinal work should determine whether kindergarten gains predict decoding accuracy, fluency, and comprehension in the primary grades.

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