

ENGLISH

First Additional Language

PSRIP

Grade **1–3**

Subject Advisor Training Handout

Terms 1 & 2

Edition 5, 2023



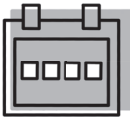
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Contents

Agenda	iv
Day 1	1
Getting Education Right: What Matters to You?	2
Revision of How The PSRIP Works	3
Foundation Phase EFAL Routines	4
Allocation of Lesson Demonstrations	6
Giving Feedback	7
Day 2	9
21st Century Skills: Critical Thinking	10
Reflection:	10
Critical Thinking Activity 1:	11
Critical Thinking Activity 2:	13
Reflection:	15
The Science of Reading	16
Text 1	17
Text 1: Questions	23
Text 2	24
Text 2: Questions	26
Text 3	27
Text 3: Questions	32
Text 4	33
Text 5	36
Text 5: Questions	40
Text 6	41
Text 6: Questions	52
Reflection:	53
Podcast: Sold a Story	54
Before Listening	54
While Listening	55
After Listening	56
Reviewing The Components of Skilled Reading: The Reading Rope	57
Applying Critical Thinking: PSRIP Core Methodologies	59
Closing Reflection	62
Some thoughts to leave you with...	63

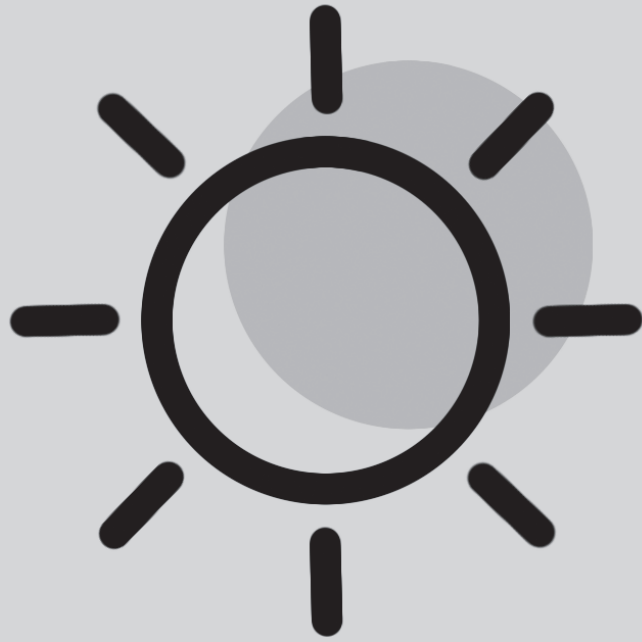


Agenda

DAY ONE			
	TIME	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR
1.1	45 minutes	Pre-test	
1.2	15 minutes	Welcome and agenda	
1.3	60 minutes	Getting education right: What matters to you?	
1.4	45 minutes	Revision of how children learn to read	
1.5	30 minutes	Revision of PSRIP and allocation of lesson demonstrations	
1.6	3 hours	Revision of the PSRIP through lesson demonstrations	
1.7	30 minutes	Preparation for teacher training	
1.8	15 minutes	Closure	

DAY TWO			
	TIME	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR
2.1	1 hour 30 minutes	21 st Century skills & the PSRIP: Critical thinking	
2.2	2 hours 30 minutes	Science of Reading: Expanding and Deepening Knowledge	
2.3	2 hours	Sold a Story Podcast and Discussion	
2.4	1 hour	Reviewing the Components of Skilled Reading: The Reading Rope	

DAY THREE			
	TIME	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR
3.1	90 minutes	Applying Critical Thinking: PSRIP materials	
3.2	60 minutes	Reflection: Where to from here?	
3.3	45 minutes	Post test	
3.4	45 minutes	Closure	



Day 1



Getting Education Right: What Matters to You?

There are many challenges related to education in South Africa in 2022.

As a Subject Advisor, you are exposed to many different aspects of education, and have your own perspective on the challenges.

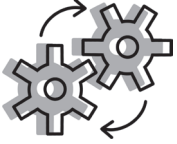
1 Think about:

- the **meetings** and **trainings** you attend and facilitate
- the **documents** you read and produce
- the **schools** and **classrooms** you visit
- the **teaching** and **learning** you observe, and
- the **written work** you see.

Jot down some key words related to the challenges that really trouble you.

2 Next, look at all the words you written, and then complete the statement below:

What matters most to me, the thing I really want us to get right, is...



Revision of How The PSRIP Works

1 Follow the same routine every week.

The routine integrates all aspects of language in a logical way. Do not skip any lessons.

2 Use the same core methodologies to teach all lessons.

This means you can master and become an expert in delivering really strong lessons every week.

3 Teach themes that last for two weeks.

Themes allow learners to 'link their learning' and consolidate new language.

4 Use the Display Boards to 'frame your work' for the week.

At a glance, see the theme, phonics, sight words and writing frame that you will cover for the week.

5 Use your resources in a routine manner, prepare them, use them and store them properly.

Do the same thing every week with your resources.

6 Divide learners into 3 kinds of groups and make sure they can get into groups quickly.

Group Guided Reading groups – Grades 2&3

Question of the Day groups – all grades

Small discussion groups – all grades

7 Work on your pacing – you will get faster!

Learn the core methodologies and teach them to learners. Don't speak too much! Be well prepared.

8 Create a happy, safe, ordered space for learning.

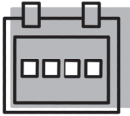
Be well organised, keep your classroom in order, encourage and praise learners, teach learners to be kind to each other.

9 Use transitions and attention getters for better classroom management.

Teach a few transition activities and attention getters to learners to make your classroom run smoothly.

10 Work as a team!

Plan and prepare with colleagues. Discuss challenges together and help each other. Share and celebrate successes!



Foundation Phase EFAL Routines

GRADE 1 WEEKLY ROUTINE

MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY	
Daily Activities	15	Daily Activities	15	Daily Activities	15	Daily Activities	15	Daily Activities	15
Shared Reading Pre-Read	10	Shared Reading First Read	15	Shared Reading Illustrate the Story	15	Shared Reading Second Read	15	Shared Reading Post-Read	15
Phonemic Awareness & Phonics	5	Phonemic Awareness & Phonics	5	Phonemic Awareness & Phonics	5			Phonemic Awareness & Phonics	5
						Writing	15		
TOTAL	30	TOTAL	35	TOTAL	35	TOTAL	45	TOTAL	35

GRADE 2 WEEKLY ROUTINE

MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY	
Daily Activities	10			Daily Activities	10			Daily Activities	10
		Shared Reading Pre-Read/ First Read	15			Shared Reading Second Read/Post-Read	15		
Phonemic Awareness & Phonics	5			Phonemic Awareness & Phonics	5			Phonemic Awareness & Phonics	5
		Writing	15			Writing	15		
Group Guided Reading	15	Group Guided Reading	15	Group Guided Reading	15	Group Guided Reading	15	Group Guided Reading	15
TOTAL	30	TOTAL	45	TOTAL	30	TOTAL	45	TOTAL	30

GRADE 3 WEEKLY ROUTINE

MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY	
Daily Activities	10			Daily Activities	10			Daily Activities	10
		Shared Reading Pre-Read/ First Read	15			Shared Reading Second Read/ Post-Read	15		
Phonemic Awareness & Phonics	5			Phonemic Awareness & Phonics	5			Phonemic Awareness & Phonics	5
		Writing Plan & Draft/ Edit	30			Writing Plan & Draft/ Publish & Present	30		
								Language Use	30
Group Guided Reading	15	Group Guided Reading	15	Group Guided Reading	15	Group Guided Reading	15	Group Guided Reading	15
TOTAL	30	TOTAL	60	TOTAL	30	TOTAL	60	TOTAL	60



Allocation of Lesson Demonstrations

All groups will present lessons from Grade 3 Term 1 Weeks 3 & 4: **What is friendship?**

Make note of the lesson that you and your group will present:

Week	Day	Lesson	Time Allocation	Group Members
3	Monday	Daily activities	15 minutes	
		Feedback	5 minutes	
3	Monday	Phonics	10 minutes	
		Feedback	5 minutes	
3	Tuesday	Shared reading: pre-read	15 minutes	
		Feedback	5 minutes	
3	Tuesday	Writing: plan and draft	15 minutes	
		Feedback	5 minutes	
3	Wednesday	Daily activities	15 minutes	
		Feedback	5 minutes	
3	Wednesday	Phonics	15 minutes	
		Feedback	5 minutes	
3	Wednesday	Group guided reading (management)	15 minutes	
		Feedback	5 minutes	
3	Thursday	Shared reading - first read	15 minutes	
		Feedback	5 minutes	
4	Tuesday	Writing - edit	15 minutes	
		Feedback	5 minutes	



Giving Feedback

If your group is responsible for giving feedback on a lesson, consider the following points:

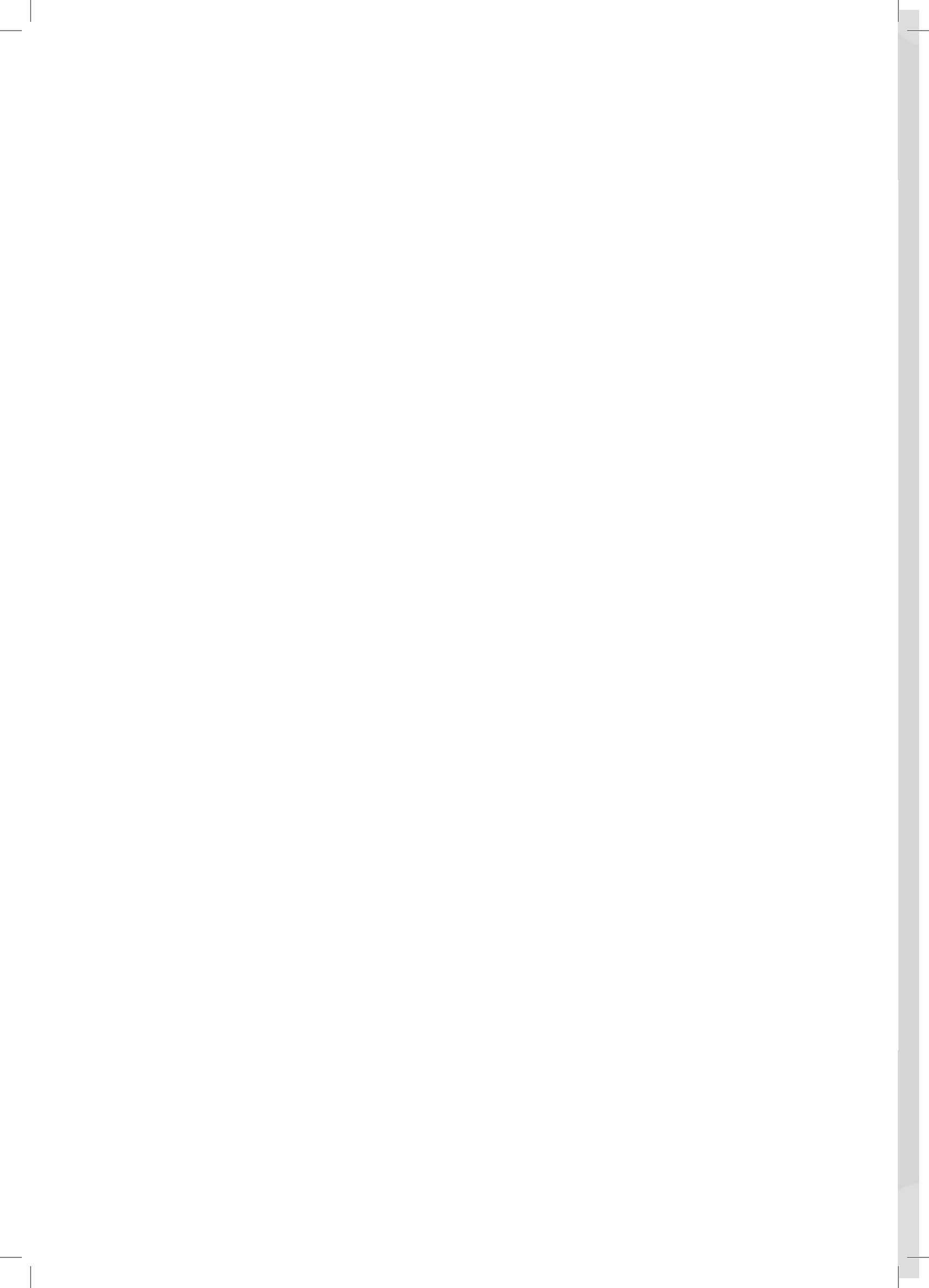
- 1** It is very important to **be familiar with the core methodology and the lesson plan** for the lesson you are observing.

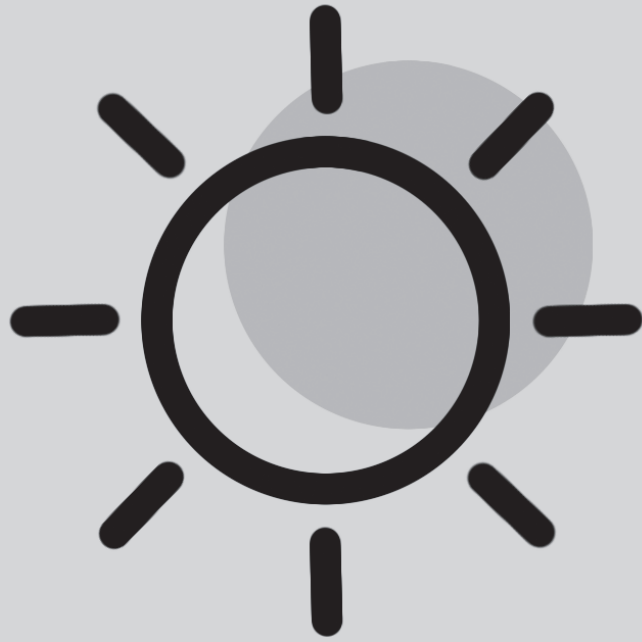
- 2 Always start the feedback session by:**
 - Asking the presenter how they felt the lesson went.
 - Giving some positive feedback – tell the presenter what went well.

- 3** During the observation, take note of:
 - a Did the lesson follow the core methodology correctly?**
 - If not, what was incorrect? What was added in or left out?
 - How did this affect the lesson?
 - b Was the correct content covered?**
 - If not, what was incorrect? What was added in or left out?
 - How did this affect the lesson?
 - c Was the presenter well-prepared and organised?**
 - If not, what could have been done better?
 - d What were the strengths and challenges of the presentation style?**
 - Was the presenter clear and concise?
 - Did they talk too much or over-explain?
 - e Was 'learner' involvement well-managed?**
 - Did the presenter involve learners according to the lesson plan and core methodology?
 - Did they call on different learners?
 - Did the presenter acknowledge learners' input?

- 4 Do not overwhelm the presenter with feedback.**
 - Prioritise the points for feedback, and give constructive criticism on a maximum of 2-3 points.

- 5** End by asking the presenter if they would like **clarity on any of the feedback**, or if they would like to **further discuss any points**. **Thank them** for being open to this experience and **encourage them**.





Day 2



21st Century Skills: Critical Thinking

Thinking is skilled work. It is not true that we are naturally endowed with the ability to think clearly and logically – without learning how, or without practicing.

-A.E. Mander



Reflection:

- What do you think it means to be a critical thinker?
- Do you think this is an important skill for children to learn? Why or why not?

Do you have anything to add to your definition of a critical thinker after listening to your colleagues?



Critical Thinking Activity 1:

Turn and talk with a partner to discuss how each category was demonstrated in the video, and how you think you could support the teachers you work with to build critical thinking skills in their classrooms.

1 Teach learners to consider different perspectives (different ways of thinking)

- Read complex stories to learners, with diverse characters, settings and themes
- Encourage learners to value other people's perspectives, beliefs and ideas

How this was demonstrated in the video:

How I could support my teachers to build these skills:

2 Teach learners to use logic and reasoning to make decisions and judgements

- Ask learners 'how' and 'why' questions
- Encourage learners to ask 'how' and 'why' questions
- Teach learners to identify cause and effect
- Teach learners to distinguish between fact and opinion

How this was demonstrated in the video:

How I could support my teachers to build these skills:

3 Teach learners how to question sources and quality of information

- Model how to research something when you don't have all the answers
- Show learners how to question the quality and reliability of sources
- Show learners how to back up an argument with evidence

How this was demonstrated in the video:

How I could support my teachers to build these skills:



Critical Thinking Activity 2:

Critical thinking isn't just something for our young learners. It is also a skill that adults must practice and hone. Think about the information provided in the video. Reflect on your own ability to use these skills and think about how you could improve critical thinking in your own, everyday life.

1 Consider different perspectives (different ways of thinking)

- Read complex stories with diverse characters, settings and themes
- Value other people's perspectives, beliefs and ideas

How I practice this skill in my own life:

How I could improve this skill in my own life:

2 Use logic and reasoning to make decisions and judgements

- Ask 'how' and 'why' questions
- Identify cause and effect
- Distinguish between fact and opinion

How I practice this skill in my own life:

How I could improve this skill in my own life:

3 Question sources and quality of information

- Research something when you don't have all the answers
- Question the quality and reliability of sources
- Back up an argument with evidence

How I practice this skill in my own life:

How I could improve this skill in my own life:



Reflection:

- Has your definition of critical thinking changed or expanded at all during this session? How?
- What information from this session, if any, will you take back into your job as a Subject Advisor?
- What information from this session, if any, will you take back into your personal life?



The Science of Reading

*The Science of Reading has been introduced in PSRIP training before. During this training, we will **review**, **expand** and **deepen** our knowledge around this body of research.*

What do you remember / already KNOW about the Science of Reading (SOR)?



Text 1

Excerpts from: **Science of Reading: Defining Guide**

The Reading League

Download the full, free text:

The Reading League. (2023, January). **Science of Reading: Defining Guide**. <https://www.thereadingleague.org/what-is-thescience-of-reading/>

Rationale for Promoting a Common Definition of the Science of Reading

Although the scientific evidence base for effective reading has existed for decades, the term “the science of reading” has gained traction in the last few years, potentially leading to misunderstandings. As a result, we believe that a common definition is useful for the field.

The Definition

The **science of reading** is a vast, interdisciplinary body of *scientifically-based** research about reading and issues related to reading and writing.

This research has been conducted over the last five decades across the world, and it is derived from thousands of studies conducted in multiple languages. The science of reading has culminated in a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop; why some have difficulty; and how we can most effectively assess and teach and, therefore, improve student outcomes through prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties.

* See the chart on page 11 for a better understanding of what is meant by scientifically-based research

What the Science of Reading is **NOT**

- ⊗ an ideology or philosophy
- ⊗ a fad, trend, new idea, or pendulum swing
- ⊗ a political agenda
- ⊗ a one-size-fits-all approach
- ⊗ a program of instruction
- ⊗ a single, specific component of instruction, such as phonics



Reading Development: What the Science of Reading Discovered About How Skillful Reading Develops

To understand how a student develops into a skillful reader (i.e., a fluent reader who can comprehend text), we look toward two theoretical frameworks aligned with science. We encourage all stakeholders to familiarize themselves with these frameworks as they should be used to inform reading assessment and instruction.

SIMPLE VIEW OF READING

The Simple View of Reading has been empirically validated by over 150 scientific studies. It shows us that reading comprehension is not the sum, but the product of two components - word recognition and language comprehension - such that if either one is weak, reading comprehension is diminished. No amount of skill in one component can compensate

for a lack of skill in the other. While it is a simple view of a developmental process, skilled reading development is **NOT** simplistic. For a more in-depth understanding of the subcomponents within word recognition (WR) and language comprehension (LC), we turn next to Scarborough's Reading Rope.



SCARBOROUGH'S READING ROPE

Scarborough's Rope is a visual metaphor for the development of skills over time (represented by the strands of the rope) that lead to skilled reading.

Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook for research in early literacy*, (pp. 97-110). Guilford.

Language Comprehension

Background Knowledge
(facts, concepts, etc.)

Vocabulary
(breadth, precision, links, etc.)

Language Structures
(syntax, semantics, etc.)

Verbal Reasoning
(inference, metaphor, etc.)

Literacy Knowledge
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

Word Recognition

Phonological Awareness
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

Decoding
(alphabetic principle, spelling-sound correspondences)

Sight Recognition
(of familiar words)

Increasingly Strategic

Increasingly Automatic

Skilled Reading

Fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension.

The Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001)

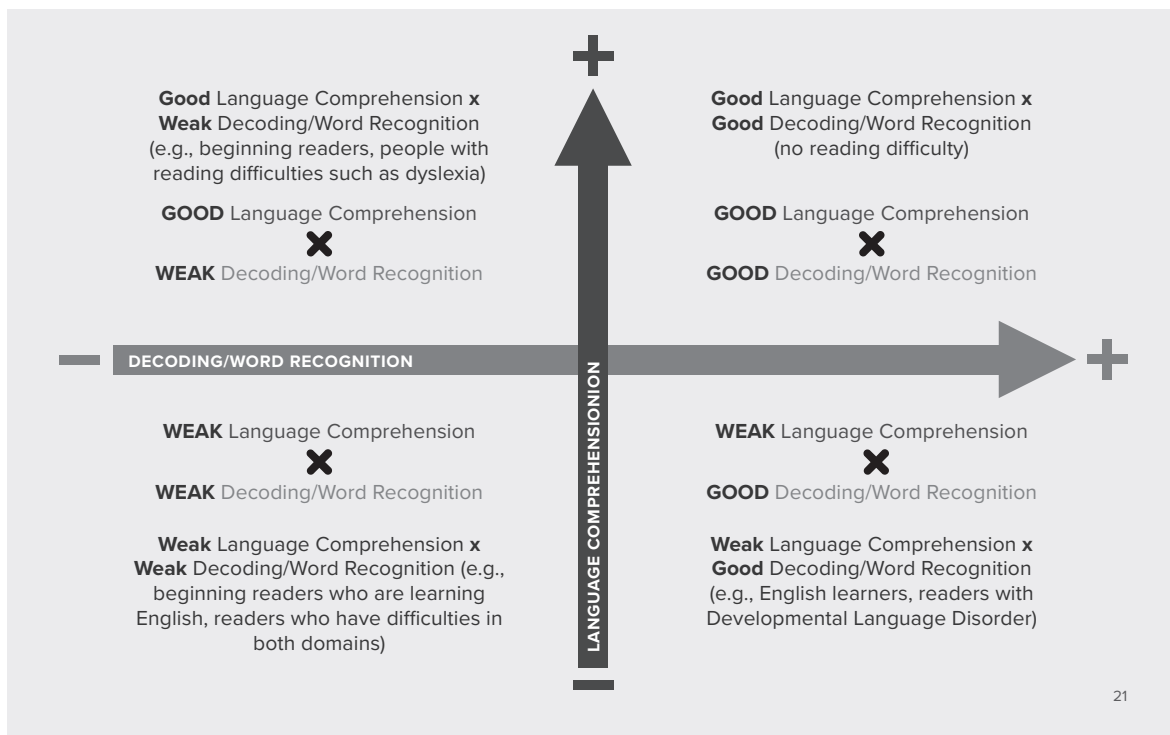
19

Patterns of Reading Skills Derived From the Science of Reading Inform Instruction for *All* Learners

The Simple View of Reading allows us to recognize patterns of reading skills in both word recognition/decoding and language comprehension. Knowing where learners fall on the continuum of reading patterns depicted on the next page provides insight into the reasons for the reading difficulty and where to focus instruction.

Based on the Simple View of Reading, each of the three patterns in which there is a weak area will result in diminished reading comprehension. Universal screening and diagnostic assessment data must inform student strengths and needs that then become the focus of instruction and intervention.

See Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *Remedial and Special Education*, 7, 6-10.



Instructional Practices Aligned With the Science of Reading: Word Recognition

The following is a *sampling* of instructional practices for word recognition. It is not an exhaustive list.

Examples of instructional practices aligned with findings from the scientific evidence base:

- Phonemic awareness and letter instruction: Instruction in the identification of phonemes in spoken words and how they link to letters.
- Explicit and systematic instruction in how to decode (read) and encode (spell) words, including word part analysis (e.g., syllables, morphemes).
- Connected text reading to build reading accuracy automaticity, fluency, and comprehension.

Examples of instructional practices NOT supported by scientific evidence:

- Emphasis on larger units of speech (syllables, rhyme, onset-rime) rather than individual phonemes.
- Implicit and incidental instruction in word reading, visual memorization of whole words, guessing from context, and picture cues.
- Emphasis on speed or words per minute over accuracy when reading texts (practiced with reading of patterned texts or sustained silent reading for all students).

Instructional Practices Aligned With the Science of Reading: Language Comprehension

The following is a *sampling* of instructional practices for language comprehension. It is not an exhaustive list.

Examples of instructional practices aligned with findings from the scientific evidence base:

- Read-alouds from a variety of complex texts to build knowledge and vocabulary.
- Robust conversations to develop students' academic language (e.g., narrative and inferential language).
- Explicit instruction in grammatical structures and academic vocabulary within the context of other reading activities.

Examples of instructional practices NOT supported by scientific evidence:

- Read-alouds from leveled texts that students will be reading so that text is not sufficiently complex.
- A lack of explicit instruction of morphology, memorization of isolated words and definitions out of context, and a lack of strategic and intentional instruction.
- Implicit instruction of grammatical structures.

The Science of Reading Includes Learners with Linguistic Differences

Educators supporting students with linguistic differences such as multilingual learners (MLLs), English learners (ELs), and speakers of English language variations can rely on the science of reading and the conceptual frameworks highlighted in this guide. These students benefit from the practices derived from the science of reading. All proficient readers must master the same concepts in order to learn to read. However, it is important to provide students with linguistic differences a focused attention on oral language development.

“Both English literacy and English oral language proficiency must be priorities if these students are to have adequate and equitable opportunities for success in school and beyond.”

(Goldenberg, 2020: bit.ly/Goldenberg2020RdgWarsRdqScienceEngLearners).

“The linguistic differences that children bring with them to school should be viewed positively in classrooms and used as strengths to leverage performance in literacy.”

B Gatlín-Nash, L Johnson, R Lee-James. International Dyslexia Association: *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*, 28-35, 2020.

“ELs benefit from reading instruction that includes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Adjustments are necessary, however. One of the major adjustments includes a focus on oral language proficiency, which is often overlooked during instruction.”

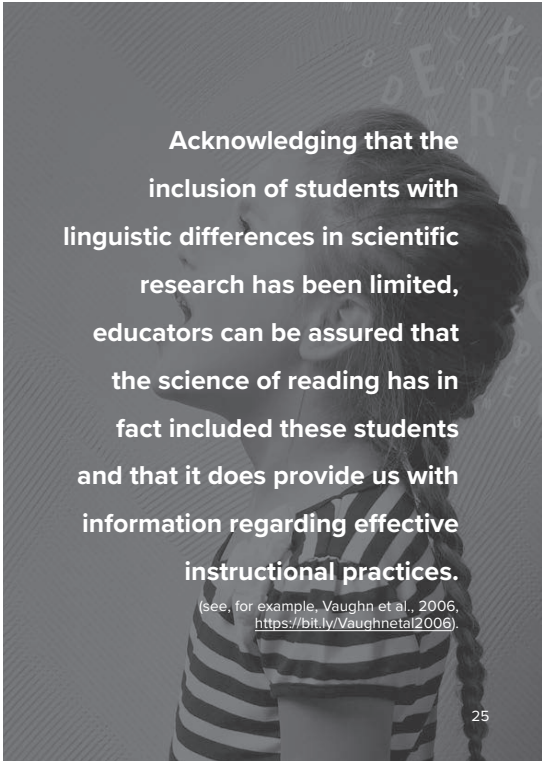
(Cárdenas-Hagan, 2020, p. 38: <https://bit.ly/Cardenas-HaganText>).

Additional Resources:

[ASHA Phonemic Inventories and Cultural and Linguistic Information Across Languages](#)

[Gatlín-Nash, Johnson, & Lee-James \(2020\)](#)

[Seidenberg & Washington \(2021\)](#)



Acknowledging that the inclusion of students with linguistic differences in scientific research has been limited, educators can be assured that the science of reading has in fact included these students and that it does provide us with information regarding effective instructional practices.

(see, for example, Vaughn et al., 2006, <https://bit.ly/Vaughnetal2006>).

25



Text 1: Questions

Why do the authors of this guide believe there is a need for a common definition of the term 'Science of Reading'?

What is the Simple View of Reading, in your own words?

What information in this article did you find particularly useful or interesting?



Text 2

Excerpts from: An Explanation of Structured Literacy, and a Comparison to Balanced Literacy

Nina A. Lorimor-Easley, Deborah K Reed

Download the full, free text:

<https://iowareadingresearch.org/blog/structured-and-balanced-literacy>

“Learning to read is the process of acquiring the several types of statistical knowledge that support rapid and efficient comprehension starting with phonological structure, orthographic structure, the mapping between orthography and phonology, vocabulary, and grammar” (Seidenberg, 2017).

All teachers want their students to master the skills that will allow them to enjoy reading books and writing their own texts. There is little disagreement on the goal, but teachers can have very different beliefs about the best ways to help their students accomplish that goal. This post explains the two most common approaches to literacy instruction, how they differ, and why one approach currently is the more promising means of preventing reading difficulties.

Diversity of Two Approaches

Structured Literacy instruction is the umbrella term used by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) to unify and encompass evidence-based programs and approaches that are aligned to the Knowledge and Practice Standards (KPS; Cowen, 2016). IDA defines KPS as “the knowledge and skills that all teachers of reading should possess to teach all students to read proficiently.” Structured Literacy approaches are effective at helping students with learning disabilities in the area of reading, such as dyslexia, learn to read and write (Spear-Swerling, 2019). Put simply, Structured Literacy is explicit, systematic teaching that focuses on phonological awareness, word recognition, phonics and decoding, spelling, and syntax at the sentence and paragraph levels.

Balanced Literacy is a “philosophical orientation that assumes that reading and writing achievement are developed through instruction and support in multiple environments using various approaches that differ by level of teacher support and child control” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Although phonics, decoding, and spelling may be taught in word study lessons, the skills typically are not emphasized and rarely taught systematically (Spear-Swerling, 2019). Rather, students are encouraged to use word analogies and pictures or context to identify words. Balanced Literacy instruction is focused on shared reading (e.g., the teacher reads aloud to students and asks questions about the text), guided reading (e.g., students read texts at their current ability level and discuss them with the teacher in homogeneous groups), and independent reading (e.g., students self-select books to read on their own).

Often at the heart of an argument about learning to read is the question, “Which comes first: sounds (phonemes) or letters (graphemes)?” Balanced Literacy focuses students on grapheme representations combined with context or imagery to teach beginning literacy skills. As part of Balanced Literacy instruction, exposing early learners to high-quality children’s literature is intended to expand their understanding of text and comprehension of concepts (Hoffman et al., 2000). The repeated, varied, and expanded exposure to children’s literature, in turn, is meant to increase prosody (the ease and expressiveness of reading) and fluency. Conversely, Structured Literacy is deeply rooted in the sounds from which our spoken language is composed (phonemes) and systematically introduces the letters or letter combinations (graphemes) that correspond with each phoneme.

Critics of Structured Literacy believe that limiting students to phonemes initially and then to decodable texts stifles the development of fluency and prosody. Whereas, critics of Balanced Literacy believe that if children cannot encode and decode naturally, then exposure to unfamiliar text will only lead to practicing compensatory strategies, such as relying on picture cues, while valuable instructional time passes by. A weak foundation of decoding strategies compromises reading comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986).

So which instructional approach is best? Although many young learners would master expressive and receptive language skills from repeated exposure alone as suggested by Balanced Literacy, there is a population of students for whom this is not sufficient (McCardle, Scarborough, & Catts, 2001). Therefore, utilizing a Structured Literacy approach is best because it avoids making potentially erroneous assumptions about what students are naturally capable of implicitly learning. By explicitly teaching all concepts, students who readily internalize the patterns of language will learn quickly and easily, and those who otherwise may struggle will get the instruction they need for success. Moreover, these students are more likely to be identified if specific weaknesses arise in their foundational language skills.

Recently, a school district in the Pacific Northwest conducted a 3-year study comparing the implementation of a program built on Balanced Literacy principles with a program built on Structured Literacy principles (Robinson, Lambert, Towner, & Caros, 2016). The students receiving Structured Literacy instruction outperformed their peers. Investigations of Structured Literacy go back decades and offer evidence that class-wide implementation of the approach can produce results comparable to costly one-on-one interventions for all students, including those with reading disabilities (Center & Freeman, 1996).



Text 2: Questions

Which approach is aligned to the science of reading – balanced literacy or structured literacy?

Which approach is best, according to these authors? Why?

What information in this article did you find particularly useful or interesting?



Text 3

Excerpts from: *Teaching Reading is Rocket Science*, 2020

Louisa Moats

Download the full, free text:

<https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/moats.pdf>

This text focuses on what teachers need to know to teach children to read. In this handout, we have taken a few sections to help participants understand the research about reading. This full text is highly recommended if you are interested in learning more about how reading instruction can be improved.

The most fundamental responsibility of schools is teaching students to read. Because reading affects all other academic achievement and is associated with social, emotional, economic, and physical health, it has been the most researched aspect of human cognition. By the year 2000, after decades of multidisciplinary research, the scientific community had achieved broad consensus regarding these questions: How do children learn to read? What causes reading difficulties? What are the essential components of effective reading instruction and why is each important? How can we prevent or reduce reading difficulties? Two decades later, hundreds of additional studies have refined and consolidated what we know about bolstering reading achievement, especially for students at risk.

Unfortunately, much of this research is not yet included in teacher preparation programs, widely used curricula, or professional development, so it should come as no surprise that typical classroom practices often deviate substantially from what is recommended by our most credible sources. As a result, reading achievement is not as strong as it should be for most students, and the consequences are particularly dire for students from the least advantaged families and communities.

This we know: reading failure can be prevented in all but a small percentage of children with serious learning disorders. It is possible to teach most students how to read if we start early and follow the significant body of research showing which practices are most effective. Students living in poverty, students of color, and students who are eligible for remedial services can become competent readers—at any age. Persistent “gaps” between more advantaged and less advantaged students can be narrowed and even closed. Fundamentally, these gaps are the result of differences in students’ opportunities to learn—not their learning abilities.

The tragedy here is that most reading failure is unnecessary. We now know that classroom teaching itself, when it includes a range of research-based components and practices, can prevent and mitigate reading difficulty. Although home factors do influence how well and how soon students read, informed classroom instruction that targets specific language, cognitive, and reading skills beginning in [Grade R] enhances success for all but a very small percentage of students with learning disabilities or severe dyslexia. Researchers now estimate that 95 percent of all children can be taught to read by the end of first grade, with future achievement constrained only by students’ reasoning and listening comprehension abilities.

Where We Are: Research-Validated Ideas That Should Drive Instruction

A well-validated concept that should underpin the design of instruction is called the Simple View of Reading. It states that reading comprehension is the product of word recognition and language comprehension. Without strong skills in either domain, an individual’s reading comprehension will be compromised. A reader’s recognition of printed words must be accurate and automatic

to support comprehension. The development of automatic word recognition depends on intact, proficient phoneme awareness, knowledge of sound-symbol (phoneme-grapheme) correspondences, recognition of print patterns such as recurring letter sequences and syllable spellings, and recognition of meaningful parts of words (morphemes). Young readers progress by gradually learning each of these ways that our print system represents language, and then applying what they know during ample practice with both oral and silent reading. If reading skill is developing successfully, word recognition gradually becomes so fast that it seems as if we are reading “by sight.” The path to that end, however, requires knowing how print represents sounds, syllables, and meaningful word parts; for most students, developing that body of knowledge requires explicit instruction and practice over several grades. While some students seem to figure out how the print system works through incidental exposure, most do not.

Language comprehension, the other essential domain that underlies reading comprehension, depends on background knowledge, vocabulary, ability to decipher formal and complex sentence patterns, and recognition of the devices that hold a text together. Furthermore, language comprehension is facilitated by metacognitive skills such as monitoring whether reading is making sense and choosing to act if it does not. The language comprehension factor in overall reading achievement becomes more and more important from about fourth grade onward. From preschool through high school, students gain vital exposure to a variety of text forms, language patterns, background knowledge, and vocabulary both by listening to text read aloud and by reading itself

The Complexity of Teaching Is Underestimated

Learning to read is a complex achievement, and learning to teach reading requires extensive knowledge and skills across the components of word recognition, language comprehension, spelling, and writing.

The demands of competent reading instruction, and the training experiences necessary to learn it, have been seriously underestimated.

The Mental Processes Involved in Learning to Read Are Hidden

What drives the mind of the reader is neither self-evident nor easy to grasp. Consequently, many years of interdisciplinary scientific inquiry have been necessary to expose the mechanisms of reading acquisition. On the surface, reading appears to be a visually based learning activity, when in fact it is primarily a language-based learning activity. Proficient reading requires unconscious and rapid association of spoken language with written alphabetic symbols. For adults who are skilled readers and who learned to read long ago, relying on introspection, intuition, or logic to understand how reading is taking place can be misleading.

Reading requires sufficient visual acuity to see the print, but the act of translating alphabetic symbols into meaning is only incidentally visual. Rather, the recognition of printed words depends first on awareness of the speech sounds (phonemes) that the alphabetic symbols represent and then on the brain’s ability to map sounds to letters and letter combinations (graphemes). As reading develops, the mapping of speech to print includes recognition of letter sequences, including syllable patterns and meaningful units (morphemes). The reading brain gradually builds neural networks that facilitate rapid processing of symbol-sound and sound-symbol connections. Once these networks for mapping speech to print are developed, the brain can recognize and store images of new printed words with little conscious effort.

Superficial visual characteristics of printed words, such as their outline or configuration, have no bearing on this process. That is why we can read many fonts and many kinds of handwriting.

Printed words are not learned as wholes but rather as letter sequences that represent speech sounds and other aspects of language. What appears to be whole-word learning or whole-word retrieval is, under the surface, dependent on a rapid, letter-by-letter and sound-by-sound assembly of linguistic elements.

Skilled reading happens too fast and is too automatic to detect its underlying processes through simple introspection. We read, but we cannot watch (or intuit or deduce) how our minds make sense out of print. Once we can read, the linkage of sounds and symbols occurs rapidly and unconsciously. The linguistic units that compose words—the single speech sounds (phonemes), syllables, and meaningful parts (morphemes)—are automatically matched with writing symbols (graphemes and their combinations) so that attention is available for comprehension. Because our attention is on meaning, we are not aware of the code translation process by which meaning is conveyed.

The Relationships among Components of Reading and Writing

Although the purpose of reading is to comprehend text, teachers should also appreciate the relationships among reading components in order to teach all components well—in connection to one another and with the emphasis needed at each phase of development. A child cannot understand what he cannot decode, but what he decodes is meaningless unless he can understand it. If this relationship is realized, a teacher will teach linguistic awareness and phonics deliberately, while linking skills to application in context as much as possible.

Beginning reading instruction of necessity will focus on teaching students how to read and write words, following a systematic and logical sequence. When appropriate, the emphasis will shift to increasing reading volume. Combining research on reading, cognitive science related to the role of knowledge in thinking, and practice-based wisdom, it appears that opportunities for wide reading are best provided within a knowledge-building curriculum in which text readings are linked by a theme or topic. Ironically, while background knowledge can be gained from reading, it is also true that those who already know more about a topic make better inferences and retain meanings better than those who know little about it. Therefore, reading practice should be linked to or embedded within the study of subjects including science, history, literature, and the arts. Interpretive strategies that facilitate comprehension—including summarizing, questioning, predicting outcomes, and monitoring one's own understanding—are best used in the service of learning defined curricular content. Moreover, writing in response to reading is one of the best ways to enhance reading comprehension.

A focus on language comprehension can—and should—begin long before children can read text on their own. Reading aloud to children from well-written text serves to develop their vocabularies and knowledge, their familiarity with academic language, and their appreciation for the pleasures of the written word.

How Reading and Spelling Develop

Longitudinal studies of reading and spelling development have shown that the vast majority of students who read well in high school learned by the end of first grade to sound words out and read new words with ease. That is, they gained the insight that letters in our writing system more or less represent segments of speech (phonemes) and used this knowledge to increase their reading vocabularies. Moreover, emergent reading and spelling follow a predictable course regardless of the speed of reading acquisition. The learner progresses from global to analytic processing, from approximate to specific linking of sounds with symbols, and from context-driven to print-driven reading as proficiency is acquired. For reading and spelling, awareness of letter sequences, speech sounds, and morphology develop in a reciprocal fashion as soon as basic

phonological awareness and letter knowledge are gained. Effective teachers will recognize where their students are in reading and writing development and will tailor instruction accordingly.

The signs of each phase are readily apparent to a teacher who is a trained observer. In the very beginning of learning to read, children do not understand that letters represent the sounds in words, although they do know that print represents spoken messages. Pre-alphabetic students may also know a lot about how print is supposed to look, for example, that it goes from left to right and that certain letter sequences are common. Next, children use their knowledge of letters and rudimentary awareness of speech sounds to attempt spelling and reading by sounding out parts of words, often the prominent consonants of a word (as in KR for car and HP for happy). Skill at sounding out words and at spelling them phonetically unfolds gradually as the child becomes aware of all the speech sounds in a word to which letters need to be matched.

With appropriate instruction, children learn how print patterns represent speech. For example, they know that ck is used at the ends of words, that letters can be doubled at the ends of words but not at the beginnings, and that words typically contain a vowel letter and sound. They learn in phases that -ed spells the past tense but is pronounced three different ways: /t/ as in raked, /d/ as in played, and /ed/ as in painted. More advanced students will decipher words such as synchronous by larger chunks, reading by analogy to known words with the prefix syn-, the root -chron, and the suffix -ous. At that point, mapping of speech to orthography—at the level of phonemes, syllables, morphemes—should be rapid and efficient, and should support the reader’s ability to quickly decipher, remember, and retrieve new words from the mental dictionary.

Effective teaching, matched to the students’ current levels of reading development, requires knowledge of word structure so that print conventions can be explained, identified, classified, and used for the higher purposes of efficient word recognition and vocabulary development. The methods of any lesson will be chosen according to the learner’s current level of skill development. Teaching children about sounds is appropriate early on; emphasizing morphemes is appropriate later on. At every level, teachers need to connect the teaching of these skills with the joy of reading and writing, using read-alouds and the motivating activities associated with a rich, knowledge-building curriculum. Expert teachers will have the knowledge, strategies, and materials to judge what to do with particular children, not on the basis of ideology, but on the basis of observation, evidence for what works, and knowledge of the science of reading, child development, and content.

Best Practices / Use of Validated Instructional Practices

Children—particularly those who are not strong readers—are routinely subjected to teaching practices that have not been shown to be effective for children like themselves. These include teaching students to rely on context, pictures, and guesswork to decipher new words, instead of decoding the sound-symbol relationships. In far too many classrooms, a great deal of time is allocated to practices—like drilling children on hundreds of “sight” words on flash cards and drawing outlines around words as if a word’s silhouette would help identify it—that are less effective than practices based on the latest research. There is now a large body of evidence indicating the content and the methods of instruction most likely to help the weaker students come up to par.

Experts agree that children who initially are at risk for failure are saved, in most cases, by instruction that directly teaches the specific foundational language skills on which proficient reading depends. Effective teachers of reading raise awareness and proficiency through every layer of language organization, including sounds, syllables, meaningful parts (morphemes), phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and various genres of text. Their teaching strategies are explicit,

systematic, and engaging. They also balance language skill instruction with its application to purposeful daily writing and reading, no matter what the skill level of the learner. Middle- and upper-grade children who are weak readers can be brought up to grade level with appropriate instruction (although the time, effort, and emotional strain for children and teachers involved is considerably greater than that required to teach younger children, so offering research-based instruction in the early grades must remain a top priority).

Well-designed, controlled comparisons of instructional approaches have consistently supported these components and practices in reading instruction:

- Direct teaching of decoding, comprehension, and literature appreciation is necessary from the beginning; as students develop, the emphasis, content, pacing, and complexity of lessons will change.
- Phoneme awareness instruction, when linked to systematic decoding and spelling (encoding), is a key to preventing reading failure in children who come to school without the ability to identify, separate, and manipulate individual speech sounds.
- It is better to teach the code system of written English systematically and explicitly than it is to teach it indirectly, incidentally, or with an as-needed, just-in-time approach.
- Vocabulary is best taught with a variety of complementary methods, both direct and incidental, designed to explore the relationships among words and the relationships among word structure, origin, and meaning.

Teachers who know the basics of reading psychology and development can answer questions like these:

Why is it useful to know if a student can read nonsense words such as *flep*, *tridding*, and *pertollic*?

The ability to read nonsense words depends on rapid and accurate association of sounds with symbols. Strong readers do this easily so they can decipher new words and attend to the meaning of the passage. Weak readers usually are slower and make more mistakes in sounding out words. Their comprehension suffers as a consequence. Weak readers improve if they are taught in an organized,

systematic manner how to decipher the spelling code and sound words out.

What does it mean if a 5-year-old child writes “pez tak me yet u” (Please take me with you)?

This is early phonetic or letter-name spelling, showing fairly well-developed awareness of speech sounds (phonological awareness) but little knowledge of standard spelling. Over the next year, the child needs to be taught how to read and spell single consonants,

short vowels, and regular word patterns with those elements, as well as a few high-frequency, irregular words at a time. Practice with decodable text is appropriate at this stage.

Which words do good readers skip as they read along at a good pace?

Almost none. Good readers process every letter of almost every word when they read. It is weak readers who skip words and try to make sense by relying on pictures or other cues.

Teachers who know about reading development and understand language structure and its application can answer questions like these:

What sounds will children confuse with /p/ and what can the teacher do to help children avoid confusion?

Sounds that are articulated similarly are most likely to be confused. The /b/ is articulated exactly like the /p/, except that it is voiced—the vocal cords get involved right away with /b/. Sometimes children confuse /p/, /b/, and /m/, again because they are all produced with the lips together. A teacher should call attention to subtle pronunciation differences and then have them practice identifying, saying, reading, and spelling these sounds in contrasting words such as *bike*, *Mike*, and *pike*.

Why do children often spell *dress* with a *j* or *g* in the beginning?

Because we pucker before the /r/ and make a sound more like /j/ or soft *g* than the /d/ in *desk*. Children can be asked to think about this and watch what their mouths do before practicing the recognition and spelling of *dr* (and *tr*) words.

Are *love*, *dove*, *have*, and *give* “exception” words in English?

No, they are completely predictable. English doesn’t permit its written words to end in one *v* letter alone. The *e* is necessary to keep it company and prevent the word from ending in a *v*. These words can be taught as a group that does follow a pattern.

How many meaningful parts (morphemes) are there in the word *contracted*?

Three. The prefix *com*, meaning *with*, was changed to *con* so that it would match up with the *t* in *tract* for easier pronunciation. The other morphemes are the root *tract* meaning *to pull* and the past tense inflection *ed*. During instruction, *contract* should be grouped with *retract*, *intractable*, *traction*, and other words that share its root.



Text 3: Questions

Like the first text, this text discusses the Simple View of Reading. Why do you think this is?

Moats writes that, ‘Children—particularly those who are not strong readers—are routinely subjected to teaching practices that have not been shown to be effective for children like themselves. These include teaching students to rely on context, pictures, and guesswork to decipher new words, instead of decoding the sound-symbol relationships.’

Have you ever seen practices like these being used with struggling readers?

What information in this article did you find particularly useful or interesting?



Text 4

Excerpts from: Ending the Reading Wars: Reading Acquisition From Novice to Expert

Anne Castles, Kathleen Rastle and Kate Nation

Download the full, free text:

Castles, A., Rastle, K., & Nation, K. (2018). Ending the reading wars: Reading acquisition from novice to expert. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 19, 5–51

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1529100618772271?fbclid=IwAR2IDQ0hdXdUqggfoiDOP0QqB4Y205MZMimLviaeLMeY863GUzD6B2926Y&>

Box 1. What Is Reading?

The goal of reading is to understand what has been read, and thus the goal of reading development must be to develop a system that allows children to construct meaning from print. Our review takes a broad perspective on reading development, reflecting the fact that reading is complex. To set the scene, consider the challenges posed by this simple, two-sentence text:

Denise was stuck in a jam. She was worried what her boss would say.

What needs to happen for us to understand this text? First and foremost, we need to identify the **individual words**. This in itself is hugely challenging, requiring us to distinguish a word such as *jam* from all the numerous similar-looking words it could be, such as *jar* or *ham*. We must have a means of identifying words that may be unfamiliar, such as *Denise*, and of analyzing words which appear in a complex form, such as *worried*. Words are the building blocks of comprehension, but it's not just a matter of identifying words: Their **meanings** need to be activated, appropriate for the **context**. This means understanding *jam* with respect to traffic, not the fruit preserve. **Causal connections** need to be made within and across sentences to understand that *she* and *her* in the second sentence refer to *Denise* in the first sentence.

Despite its brevity, this text demands a good deal of **background knowledge**: that Denise was probably on her way to work but was running late because of heavy traffic. We can further infer, perhaps prompted by our knowledge of Denise, her routines or her attitudes. Perhaps she is in a car or on a bus; we might wish to ponder her relationship with her boss. Perhaps she has been late several times recently and is thus especially worried about their reaction; maybe she is en route for a meeting that, if missed, will have important consequences. We might know her boss, and make **inferences** based on his or her reputation, prompting us to think about the extent or nature of Denise's worry. We have no idea, but these are just some of the potential elaborations and inferences that are licensed by the text.

Other factors also add complexity. Making connections within a text and integrating information with background knowledge places demands on **working memory**. Dealing with an ambiguous word such as *jam* might engage **executive** skills if the contextually inappropriate meaning is activated and then needs to be ignored.

This brief analysis makes clear that reading is complex. Even a straightforward, two-sentence text has the potential to require a range of mental operations, ranging from word recognition through to an appreciation of theory of mind. The challenge facing the beginner reader is thus substantial.

Box 2. Some Myths About Phonics Instruction

Myth	Evidence	References
1. Phonics teaches children to read nonwords	The aim of phonics instruction is to equip children with the skills to sound out <i>words</i> independently. Nonwords are primarily used not for teaching but for assessment, to index children’s phonics skills independently of their word knowledge. An analogy would be measuring heart rate to assess cardiovascular fitness: We don’t train the heart to beat more slowly, but we assess this function to measure how effective a fitness training program has been.	Castles et al. (2009)
2. Phonics interferes with reading comprehension	At a basic level, phonics supports comprehension by allowing the child to link an unfamiliar printed word with a familiar word in oral vocabulary. Phonics also supports the development of fluent word reading ability, which in turn frees up the child’s mental resources to focus on the meaning of a text. Ehri et al.’s (2001) meta-analysis found that children taught by a systematic phonics method made gains in text comprehension as well as in word reading and spelling.	Perfetti & Hart (2002) Ehri et al. (2001)
3. English is too “irregular” for phonics to be of value	It is true that the English writing system is complex, and many words violate typical letter-sound mappings. However, learning phonics will still take a child a long way: More than 80% of monosyllabic words are completely regular and, for those that are not, a “partial decoding” will often bring a child close to the correct pronunciation, which can then be refined using oral vocabulary knowledge.	Share (1995)
4. Phonics is boring for children and turns them off reading	Phonics instruction is often portrayed as robotic and mechanical, but this is at odds with the array of engaging and enjoyable structured phonics programs currently available. And, through its positive effects on reading attainment, phonics instruction is associated with greater motivation to read, more extensive reading for pleasure, and higher academic self-esteem.	Kirsch et al. (2002) Anderson et al. (1988) McArthur & Castles (2017)

Box 6. The Language of the Book

Written language is different from spoken language. Speech usually takes place in a communicative context, meaning that some cues that are present in speech (e.g., prosody, gesture, tone of voice, facial expression) are absent in writing. To compensate, written language draws on a much larger vocabulary and more complex grammar: Noun phrases and clauses are longer and more embedded, and the passive voice is much more common.

Comparing Novels and Films

Baines (1996) analyzed the language content of three novels (*Wuthering Heights*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*) and their film scripts. He randomly sampled 25 passages of 100 words from each and found differences in language content and structure. Films contained far fewer polysyllabic words, suggesting lexical content that is morphologically less rich. Vocabulary was also less diverse. For example, in the script extract from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, only 7 words began with the letter “u” (*ugly, under until, up, upstairs, us, used*). In contrast, the novel extract contained 17 words (*unceiled, uncontrollable, uncrossed, under, undress, unhitched, unique, unless, unlighted, unpainted, until, up, upon, upstairs us, use, used*). The two genres also differed in sentence complexity. Seeing the film or even reading the script is no substitute for reading the novel.

Learning About the Differences Between Spoken and Written Language Starts Early

Strikingly, even books written for prereaders contain language that is quite different from what is heard in ambient conversation. Montag, Jones, and Smith (2015) analyzed the vocabulary in 100 children’s books, selected from those recommended for preschoolers aged 0 to 60 months and typically used by parents in shared reading. They compared their content with the vocabulary used by caregivers in child-directed conversations. The books included a larger number of unique words, showing that the vocabulary encountered via shared reading is more diverse. Children with more shared book experience have the opportunity to develop a larger and more diverse vocabulary.

Differences in Syntax, Not Just Vocabulary

Cameron-Faulkner and Noble (2013) analyzed the content of 20 picture books aimed at 2-year-olds and compared this with child-directed speech. Books contained many more complex utterances (e.g., two verb sentences, subject-predicate sentences), which suggests that shared book reading may be an important source of language experience for children. Turning to books that children might read themselves, Montag and McDonald (2014) also found greater syntactic complexity. Complex sentences seen in written language such as object-relatives (e.g., *the student who the teacher scolded finally finished the assignment*) and passive-relatives are virtually absent in child-directed speech; they are rare too in adult speech, but they do feature in children’s reading. Reading thus provides the opportunity to learn new syntactic forms—those that characterize the “language of the book.”

What information in this article did you find particularly useful or interesting?



Text 5

What Research Tells Us About Reading Instruction

Rebecca Treiman



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What Research Tells Us About Reading Instruction

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Parents, educators, reading researchers, and policy makers all agree that children must learn to read to participate fully in a modern society. They agree, moreover, that much of this learning will take place in school. Beyond this, agreement breaks down. There have been many debates about how children should learn to read; those between proponents of phonics instruction and proponents of whole-language instruction have sometimes been so heated that they have been called the “reading wars.” What can psychological science tell us about the issues? This is the question that Castles, Rastle, and Nation (2018) set out to answer in their article. They provide a wide-ranging review of how reading develops, from beginners to experts, and consider the implications of the research for how reading should be taught.

The Difficulty of Reading and the Importance of Phonics Instruction

Reading is, in the words of Gough and Hillinger (1980), an unnatural act. This is in contrast to listening and speaking, which are natural. Language is as old as our species, and we are built to acquire it. Exposure and experience are required, of course, but babies come into the world with the tools they need. Well before infants can understand any words, for example, they find speech interesting to listen to and prefer it to other kinds of sounds (Shultz & Vouloumanos, 2010). The idea of symbolizing a language by making marks on a durable surface is rather new in historical terms, having arisen in a few cultures five or six thousand years ago and spreading to others. Evolution did not equip us to read and write in the same way that it equipped us to listen and speak. Children who do not know how to read, for example, are not drawn to look at writing in the same way that babies who cannot understand spoken words are drawn to listen to speech (Evans & Saint-Aubin, 2005). These considerations suggest that written language is learned rather differently than spoken language.

For many children, what is hard about learning to read is understanding that the marks on the page represent units of their language and figuring out the code by which they do so. This is the unnatural part of reading. It is particularly unnatural when the marks represent individual speech sounds, as in alphabetic writing systems. Adults who know how to read and write an alphabet find it obvious that spoken words are composed of sounds. We can easily judge that *bean* begins with the same sound as *bat* and that *went* includes the same “n” unit that *name* does. But these things are not obvious to preliterate children, illiterate adults, or adults who are literate in a nonalphabetic writing system (Lieberman, Shankweiler, Fischer, & Carter, 1974; Morais, Cary, Alegria, & Bettelson, 1979; Read, Zhang, Nie, & Ding, 1986). Individual speech sounds, what linguists call *phonemes*, are abstract units. The *n* in *went*, for example, is not exactly the same in its pronunciation or acoustic form as the *n* of *name*. Humans spoke for many thousands of years before a few of them had the idea that one could symbolize abstract units of language with visible marks. It is not realistic to expect 5- or 6-year-old children to discover on their own a technology that took their ancestors so long to invent.

These considerations suggest that children need to be taught explicitly about how their writing system works and how it maps to the language they already know. A large body of research supports this point, and Castles et al. provide an accessible discussion of this research. This is an important service, because the value of teaching children how their writing system works is not always appreciated by educators, parents, and policy makers.

One reason that the importance of phonics instruction is not more widely appreciated is the common

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belief that the best way to ensure that children will become good readers is to read to them frequently, starting from infancy. This idea, which is held by many parents and teachers, is both true and false. It is true in the sense that reading to children exposes them to spoken language—often more language than they would hear in the same amount of time and often more complex language. Spoken-language skills are important both in their own right and because they provide a foundation for reading, and the language skills that children develop by being read to pay off later in the form of improved reading comprehension. Reading to children also serves to interest them in books and what can be learned from them. This can pay off in increased motivation for reading. But the idea that reading to children is the best way to ensure that they will read well themselves is false in the sense that children do not usually learn very much about how their writing system works from being read to. When adults read to children who cannot yet read on their own, the children pay attention to the language they are hearing and the pictures in the book. They do not pay much attention to the writing. In one representative study, mentioned earlier, preschool children spent about 20 times longer looking at the pictures in a storybook that was being read to them than looking at the words in the text (Evans & Saint-Aubin, 2005). Thus, it is not realistic to expect children to learn very much about how their writing system works from being exposed to print while being read to. Uncritical acceptance of the idea that reading to children is what counts in making them good readers has contributed to failures to recognize the value of direct teaching.

Another reason that the importance of teaching children about their writing system is not always appreciated is that an alternative idea—that children learn best by discovering things on their own—is so attractive to so many. Discovery learning fits with Piaget's view of the child as forming and testing hypotheses about how the world works and, more generally, with the idea that learners actively construct knowledge. The best way for children to learn to read, according to such a *constructivist* view, is to expose them to print and allow them to discover its patterns and its links to language. However, research shows that pure discovery learning does not work very well in a variety of domains (Alfieri, Brooks, Aldrich, & Tenenbaum, 2011; Mayer, 2004). Whether the subject is math, science, or reading, teachers must provide direct instruction, guidance, and feedback. They cannot rely on students to come up with the right generalizations and procedures on their own. The statement that students benefit from direct instruction and feedback does not mean, of course, that learning is impossible if these things are not provided. Research on statistical learning has amply shown that

people can and do learn through exposure, even when they are not trying to learn and even when the patterns in the material to which they are exposed are not explicitly pointed out (Aslin, 2017). But when a body of knowledge is complex, and when we are not evolutionarily prepared to learn it, as is the case for reading and writing, learning from exposure can be slow and prone to error.

Improving Phonics Instruction

Phonics instruction is an attempt to provide the guidance and teaching that children need to learn how an alphabetic writing system works. As Castles and colleagues discuss, extensive research has shown that systematic phonics instruction as currently practiced leads to better word-level skills than does whole-language instruction. But is phonics instruction ideal as currently practiced? Advocates of phonics instruction have been somewhat reluctant to discuss this point because such discussions might be seen as weakening their position. But, just as psychological science has provided evidence for the value of phonics instruction, it can provide suggestions about how such instruction can be improved.

Phonics instruction teaches that the spellings of words encode the phonemes within them by virtue of systematic links between letters or groups of letters and phonemes. This is indeed a critical feature of alphabetic writing systems. However, as Castles et al. note, phonics instruction does not teach children very much about certain other aspects of writing. One important characteristic of English (and some other alphabetic writing systems, such as French) is that there are links between letters or groups of letters and *morphemes* (units of meaning). For example, *jumped* is composed of the root morpheme {jump} and the past-tense morpheme {-ed}. The word *bunted* is similarly composed of a root morpheme and the past-tense morpheme. The past-tense morpheme has a different phonemic form in the two words: /t/ in *jumped* and /ɪd/ in *bunted*. But the morpheme is spelled alike in the two words. Children need to learn that the spellings of morphemes often remain the same across words even when their pronunciations change. With its focus on links between writing and language at the level of phonemes, phonics instruction is not very helpful here (Bowers & Bowers, 2017).

Another aspect of writing that is not covered by current phonics instruction is that writing is a system of its own. There are restrictions on which letters can occur in which parts of words, for example, some of which are not motivated by anything in the spoken language. Consider the fact that *love*, *give*, and *have* all end with *e*. This is unexpected given that the words are pronounced with short vowels. Phonics instruction

teaches that an *e* at the end of a one-syllable word signifies a long vowel, but *love*, *give*, and *have* do not contain long vowels. The *e* is there for *graphotactic* reasons—having to do with the kinds of letter sequences that can occur in the writing system—rather than phonological reasons. English words rarely end with a single *v*, and the final *e* protects a word from such an ending. Teaching children about this graphotactic pattern could help them understand why the phonics rule about long and short vowels that works for other words, such as *bat* and *bate*, does not work for words with *v*. Another example of an English graphotactic pattern is that double consonants do not usually occur after a sequence of more than one vowel letter. Thus, *veell* does not look as if it could be a word of English, whereas *vell* does.

Rather than talking about the value of phonics instruction, Castles et al. suggest that we might talk about the value of teaching children how their writing system works. For alphabetic writing systems, this includes the body of information that is currently taught in phonics instruction and some other information as well, the specifics of which depend on the language and the script under consideration. For nonalphabetic writing systems, the kind of information that children need to learn is different, but the need to learn about the workings of the writing system is the same.

When teaching children about the workings of their writing system, it may be beneficial to place more emphasis on spelling and writing than many current phonics programs do. Phonics instruction typically focuses on correspondences from letters to sounds and use of the taught correspondences to pronounce written words. More emphasis on links from sounds to letters and on spelling orally presented words could be helpful, in part because spelling is an important skill in itself and in part because knowing the exact spellings of words helps people to read them (Ouellette, Martin-Chang, & Rossi, 2017). Practice with production helps in the learning of language, whether it is spoken (Hopman & MacDonald, 2018) or written, and educators could take better advantage of it (for a discussion of spelling instruction, see Treiman, 2018).

To provide good instruction about how a writing system works, teachers need to have a good understanding of this themselves. They also need a good understanding of how children learn to read and spell (e.g., knowledge of the mistakes that are typical of children of different ages). Many teachers have little opportunity to obtain such knowledge during their training. An important part of improving children's reading performance, therefore, is improving the teaching of teachers. This will help teachers to answer children's questions, such as a question about why *book* does not have the same sound as *boot* and *spoon* do

(not that *book* is an isolated exception; most words with *oo* before *k* have this same vowel pronunciation) and respond in a helpful way to children's reading and spelling mistakes.

Learning how a writing system works to represent a language is essential for learning to read because children who can connect the marks on the page with their language system can use the processes and knowledge that they have developed for spoken language to understand what they read. However, children can have difficulty when the structure and content of written language differs from the structure and content of the language that they are accustomed to hearing. As Castles et al. point out, there are some differences between written and spoken language even for young children: Less common words such as *treasure* and *llama* are more likely to occur in books than in everyday speech (Hayes & Ahrens, 1988). Differences between written language and spoken language can be larger for older children. Therefore, teaching children to read requires not only teaching them how their writing system represents language but also teaching them about the language of books. Production of writing can play an important role in the learning of both aspects. Advocates of phonics instruction have sometimes ignored or downplayed the complexities of written language comprehension, and a valuable feature of the article by Castles and colleagues is that it does not do so.

Conclusions

Much of the research in the field of reading has examined the relationships between children's reading ability and their other cognitive skills. For example, there is a good deal of work on the associations between reading and working memory. Such work is of limited educational value, however, if the other skill in question—working memory, in this example—cannot be improved through teaching or if any improvements do not generalize to reading. Training of working memory does not appear to generalize, in fact (Melby-Lervåg, Redick, & Hulme, 2016), and the same may be true for a number of other skills outside of reading as well. Whether the task is learning to read or learning to do something else, we should teach children how to perform the task rather than teach something else and hope for generalization.

Children differ from one another in their reading ability, as in their performance on other tasks. Researchers and educators cannot erase these differences. But research can improve our understanding of how written language works and of how children learn, and educators can use this information to design instruction. Better instruction will raise the level of all children, whether they are faster or slower learners. Castles and colleagues provide a comprehensive overview of what researchers

have learned so far, and the information in their report will benefit teachers, parents, and policy makers.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Text 5: Questions

This article states that, 'One reason that the importance of phonics instruction is not more widely appreciated is the common belief that the best way to ensure that children will become good readers is to read to them frequently, starting from infancy. This idea, which is held by many parents and teachers, is both true and false.'

What is true about this belief? What is false about this belief?

What is one way the article states that phonics instruction should be improved?

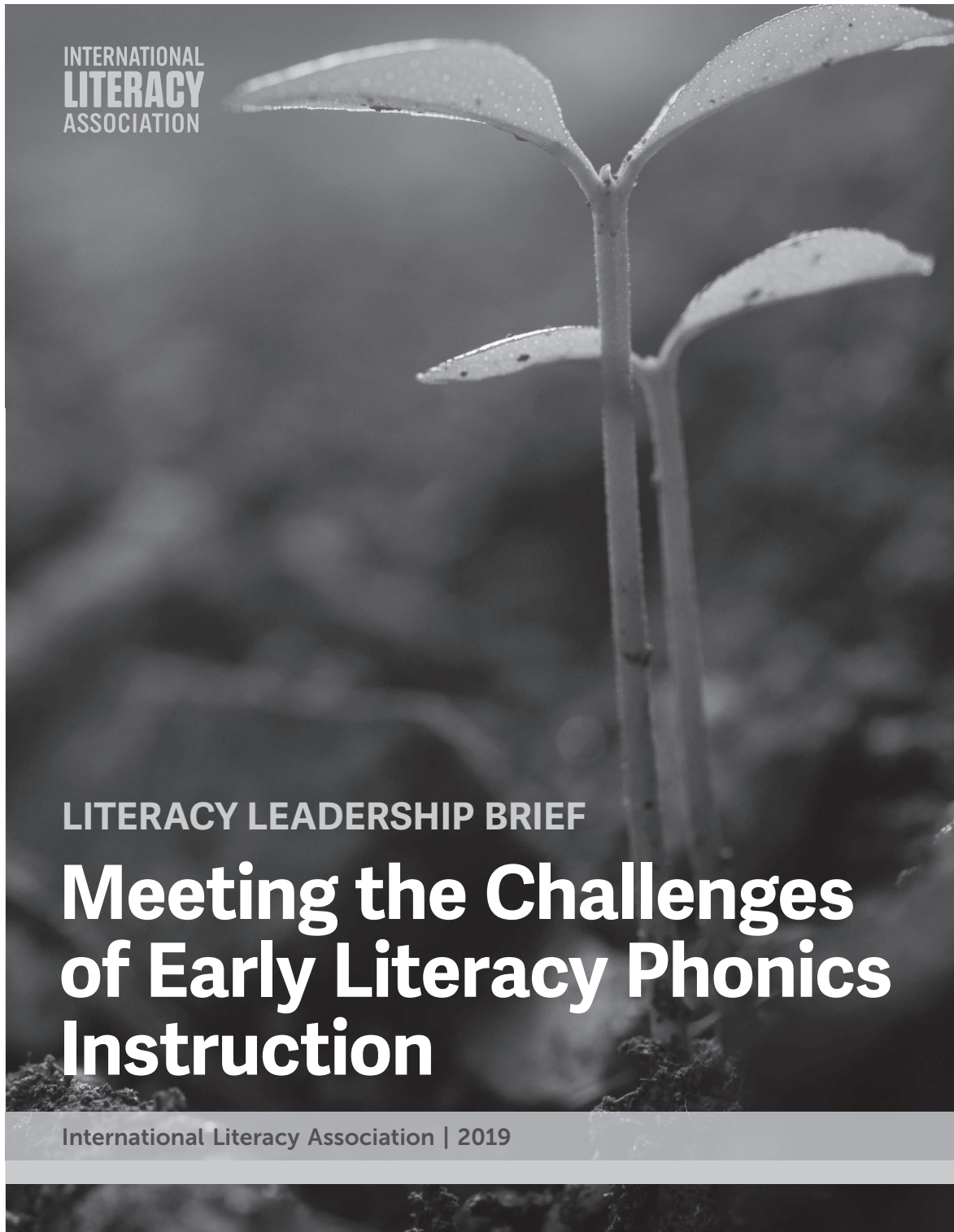
What information in this article did you find particularly useful or interesting?



Text 6

Meeting the Challenges of Early Literacy Phonics Instruction

Wiley Blevins



Learning to read can, at times, seem almost magical. A child sits in front of a book and transforms those squiggles and lines into sounds, puts those sounds together to make words, and puts those words together to make meaning.

But it's not magical.

English is an alphabetic language. We have 26 letters. These letters, in various combinations, represent the 44 sounds in our language. Teaching students the basic letter–sound combinations gives them access to sounding out approximately 84% of the words in English print. Of course, equal amounts of time need to be spent on teaching the meanings of these words, but the learning of these basic phonics skills is essential to becoming a fluent reader.

Research has shown the power of this early instruction in phonics for young students' reading and writing development. Government-funded documents have shown that phonics instruction is helpful for all students, harmful for none, and crucial for some. A recent brain research study out of Stanford explained how beginning readers who focus on letter–sound relationships, or phonics, instead of trying to learn whole words, increase activity in the area of the brain best wired for reading. And the meta-analysis work has detailed the significant effect size of phonics instruction on students' early reading growth.

So why is there a debate when the research evidence has been consistent for decades? It's because how we translate that research into instructional practice varies widely, resulting in practices that are sometimes ineffective or unbalanced and instructional materials that too often have serious instructional design flaws. Some phonics instruction is random, incomplete, and implicit. Other instruction is overdone and isolated, devoid of the extensive application to authentic reading and writing needed for mastery. Neither is as effective as it needs to be.

Explicit and Systematic Phonics Instruction

The question of whether to include phonics instruction has been resolved. The answer is *yes*. The discussion now should be how to include phonics instruction as part of an overall literacy plan that is efficient, effective, and timely for all students. What does that instruction look like? And how do we overcome

The question of whether to include phonics instruction has been resolved. The answer is yes.

the common obstacles teachers often face in delivering that instruction?

Although phonics can be taught in different ways, research supports instruction that is explicit and systematic. *Explicit* means that the initial introduction of a letter-sound relationship, or phonics skill, is directly stated to students. For example, we tell students that the /s/ sound is represented by the letter *s*. This is more effective than the discovery method because it does not rely on prerequisite skills that some students might not have.

Being explicit, however, does not mean that students cannot play with letters and sounds during the instructional cycle. In fact, word awareness activities like word building and word sorts allow students to become flexible in their knowledge of sound-spellings and solidifies that learning.

Being *systematic* means that we follow a continuum from easy to more complex skills, slowly introducing each new skill. Systematic instruction includes a review and repetition cycle to achieve mastery and goes from the known to the new in a way that makes the new learning more obvious and easier for students to grasp. For example, after students learn to read simple short-vowel CVC words like *run*, *cat*, and *hop*, they are often introduced to the skill final-*e* as in the words *hate* and *hope*. This is a conceptual leap for young students where, often for the first time, they learn that two letters can work together to make a sound and these letters are not even beside each other in the word. Not easy!

In systematic instruction, teachers display a known word and compare it to the new to highlight this new concept, as in *hop-hope* or *hat-hate*. This side-by-side minimal contrast makes the learning of the new concept more obvious and easier to grasp. The discussion that teachers can have with students about the two words increases students' word awareness and understanding of how words work. This exemplifies strong phonics instruction: active, engaging, and thought provoking.

Key Characteristics of Effective Phonics Instruction

In addition to being explicit and systematic, strong phonics instruction has the following seven key characteristics.

Systematic instruction includes a review and repetition cycle to achieve mastery and goes from the known to the new in a way that makes the new learning more obvious and easier for students to grasp.

Readiness Skills

The two best predictors of early reading success are alphabet recognition and phonemic awareness. These skills open the gate for reading. Alphabet recognition involves learning the names, shapes, and sounds of the letters of the alphabet with fluency. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are made up of a series of discrete sounds, called phonemes. A range of subskills is taught to develop phonemic awareness, with oral blending and oral segmentation having the most positive impact on reading and writing development in kindergarten and grade 1 and phonemic manipulation tasks playing a crucial role up to grade 3.

Scope and Sequence

A strong scope and sequence builds from the simple to the complex in a way that takes advantage of previous learning. The sequence allows for many words to be formed as early as possible and focuses on teaching high-utility skills. Although there is no “right” scope and sequence, programs that strive to connect concepts and move through a series of skills in a stair-step way offer the best chance at student success.

Blending

This is the main strategy for teaching students how to sound out words and must be frequently modeled and applied. It is simply the stringing together of letter-sounds to read a word. It is the focus of early phonics instruction but still plays a role when transitioning students from reading monosyllabic to multisyllabic words.

Dictation

To best transfer students’ growing phonics skills to writing, dictation (i.e., guided spelling with teacher think-alouds) is critical and begins in kindergarten. Although not a spelling test, this activity can accelerate students’ spelling abilities and understanding of common English spelling patterns and assist students in using these phonics skills in writing. Used in combination with word building and structured and unstructured writing experiences in phonics instruction, students have increased opportunities to “try out” their developing skills to express ideas in written form.

To best transfer students’ growing phonics skills to writing, dictation is critical and begins in kindergarten.

Word Awareness

Word building and word sorts are key activities to increase students' word awareness. In word building, students are given a set of letter cards and asked to create a series of words in a specific sequence. This increases students' ability to work with letter-sounds flexibly and fully analyze words for their component sounds and spellings. In word sorts, students look for common spelling patterns, engage in discussions about what they learn about words from this examination, and increase their ability to notice larger chunks in words (an important skill as students transition from monosyllabic to multisyllabic words).

High-Frequency Words

High-frequency words are the most common words in English. Some are irregular; that is, they do not follow common English sound-spellings. Others are regular and needed by students during reading before they have the phonics skills to sound them out. The top 250–300 words are generally taught in grades K–2. Past grade 2, when the majority of the key high-frequency words have been introduced, students need to be continually assessed on their mastery of these words, as a lack of fluency can impede comprehension. Some words are more difficult to master (e.g., reversals like *no/on* and *was/saw*, *off/for/from*, and words that begin with *wh* or *th*). More instructional time and assessment needs to be given around these words.

Reading Connected Text

The goal of phonics instruction is to develop students' ability to read connected text independently. Controlled, decodable text (also known as accountable text) at the beginning level of reading instruction helps students develop a sense of comfort in and control over their reading growth and should be a key learning tool in early phonics instruction. The tight connection between what students learn in phonics and what they read is essential for building a faster foundation in early reading. This is especially critical when students encounter less-controlled leveled readers during small-group lessons. These accountable (phonics-based) texts need to be reread to build fluency, discussed to develop comprehension, and written about to provide opportunities for students to apply their growing phonics skills in writing.

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The success of these key characteristics of phonics instruction rests both on the shoulders of highly trained teachers with a background in phonics routines and linguistics and in instructional materials that aid teachers in meeting a wide range of students' phonics needs.

Common Causes of Phonics Instructional Failure

The reality is that the hard work of teaching phonics begins after all these characteristics are in place. Why? Common obstacles related to instruction and instructional materials too often stand in the way of maximizing students' learning of basic phonics skills. These range from a lack of application to authentic reading and writing experiences (where the learning "sticks") to a lack of review and repetition resulting in decayed learning. The following are the 10 most common phonics instructional obstacles or pitfalls, all of which teachers have some degree of control over.

Inadequate or Nonexistent Review and Repetition Cycle

We underestimate the amount of time it takes young learners to master phonics skills. When a new skill is introduced, it should be systematically and purposefully reviewed for at least the next 4–6 weeks. The goal must be to teach to mastery rather than just exposure. Only then can students transfer the skill to all reading situations. With the fast pacing of most curricula, a more substantial review and repetition cycle often must be added. This can be achieved through increased opportunities to practice previous skills in blending work, dictation, and the repeated readings of previously read accountable texts.

Lack of Application to Real Reading and Writing Experiences

Students progress at a much faster rate in phonics when the bulk of instructional time is spent on applying the skills to authentic reading and writing experiences, rather than isolated skill-and-drill work. At least half of a phonics lesson should be devoted to application exercises. For students who are below level, the amount of reading during phonics instruction must be even greater.

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*Accountable texts ...
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Inappropriate Reading Materials to Practice Skills

The connection between what we teach and what we have young learners read has a powerful effect on their word reading strategies and their phonics and spelling skills. It also affects students' motivation to read. Having accountable texts as part of the daily phonics lessons provides more substantial decoding practice and helps to scaffold the leap from most phonics lessons to the reading of leveled texts, which are far less controlled for phonics skills. The amount of control (e.g., decodability) and the amount of time needed in this type of text varies on the basis of student needs. Adherence to a specific percentage of decodability is problematic.

Ineffective Use of the Gradual Release Model

Some teachers of struggling readers spend too much instructional time doing the "heavy lifting," such as overmodeling and having students simply repeat (e.g., "parrot" activities). Whoever does the thinking in a lesson does the learning. Students might struggle, but they must do the work and the teacher's role is to provide timely corrective feedback and support.

Too Much Time Lost During Transitions

Phonics lessons often require a lot of manipulatives and materials. Transitional times when materials are distributed or collected should be viewed as valuable instructional moments in which review skills can be addressed (e.g., sing the ABC song, do a phonemic awareness task, review letter-sound action rhymes to focus students' attention on an instructional goal). Every minute of a phonics lesson must be instructive. Planning these transitions is critical for their effectiveness.

Limited Teacher Knowledge of Research-Based Phonics Routines and Linguistics

Teachers with a background in phonics or linguistics are better equipped to make meaningful instructional decisions, analyze student errors, and improve the language and delivery of instruction. Also, teacher attitudes toward phonics instructional materials (e.g., decodable text) and routines (e.g., sorts, word building, blending) matter.

Cumulative assessments help teachers determine which skills truly have been mastered [and are] a critical phonics instructional tool.

Inappropriate Pacing of Lessons

Some teachers spend too much time on activities they enjoy or are easier for students and less time on the more challenging or substantive activities that increase learning. Lessons should be fast paced and rigorous. They should focus on those activities that more quickly move the needle in terms of student learning, such as blending practice, dictation, word awareness activities, and reading and writing about accountable texts.

No Comprehensive or Cumulative Mastery Assessment Tools

Assessment of phonics skills must be done over an extended period of time to ensure mastery. Weekly assessments focusing on one skill often give “false positives.” That is, they show movement toward learning but not mastery. If the skill is not worked on for subsequent weeks, learning can decay. Cumulative assessments help teachers determine which skills truly have been mastered. They are a critical phonics instructional tool.

Transitioning to Multisyllabic Words Too Late

Most curricula focus on monosyllabic words in grade 2, yet the stories students read at that grade are filled with more challenging, multisyllabic words. More emphasis needs to be given to transitioning to longer words at this grade (e.g., going from known to new words like *can/candle* and teaching the six major syllable types). This work can begin at the end of grade 1 to provide a closer alignment between phonics instruction and reading demands.

Overdoing It (Especially Isolated Skill Work)

Some curricula overemphasize phonics (especially the isolated skill-and-drill type of work) while ignoring other key aspects of early reading needs (e.g., vocabulary and background knowledge building) that are essential to long-term reading progress. Modifying reading time to provide a better balance is important, because all these skills plant the seeds of comprehension as students encounter increasingly more complex texts.

Phonics instruction is an essential part of early reading and writing instruction. Students need to learn how to efficiently decode words to increase their word recognition skills. The more words students recognize automatically, the better their

reading fluency, which has a powerful effect on their comprehension of text. And that's the point. Phonics instruction is designed to increase students' ability to read and make meaning from text. However, it needs to be done in a way that is most effective and efficient. It is paramount that teachers and creators of curriculum materials take an objective and thorough look at how we improve that instruction to maximize student learning.

MOVING FORWARD

- Embrace early phonics instruction as integral to elementary literacy plan.
- Incorporate explicit and systematic phonics instruction that directly addresses skills, follows a continuum of skill complexity, and includes a review and repetition cycle that leads to eventual skill mastery.
- Assess phonics instruction to ensure key characteristics are in place, including blending, dictation, word awareness, and high-frequency words.

ILA RESOURCES

Advocating for Children's Rights to Read

This manual informs teachers and reading/literacy specialists, administrators, school and public librarians, families and caregivers, and policymakers how to enact the rights in classrooms, communities, and the world.

The Case for Children's Rights to Read

The goal of ILA's Children's Rights to Read campaign is ensuring every child has access to the education, opportunities, and resources needed to read. This companion resource identifies why the 10 fundamental rights were selected.

Literacy Glossary

Curated by a team of literacy experts, this interactive resource defines the shared language of literacy research and instruction.

Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017

This updated resource provides an evidence-based benchmark for the development and evaluation of literacy professional preparation programs.

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International Literacy Association: Literacy Research Panel 2018–2019

Principal Author

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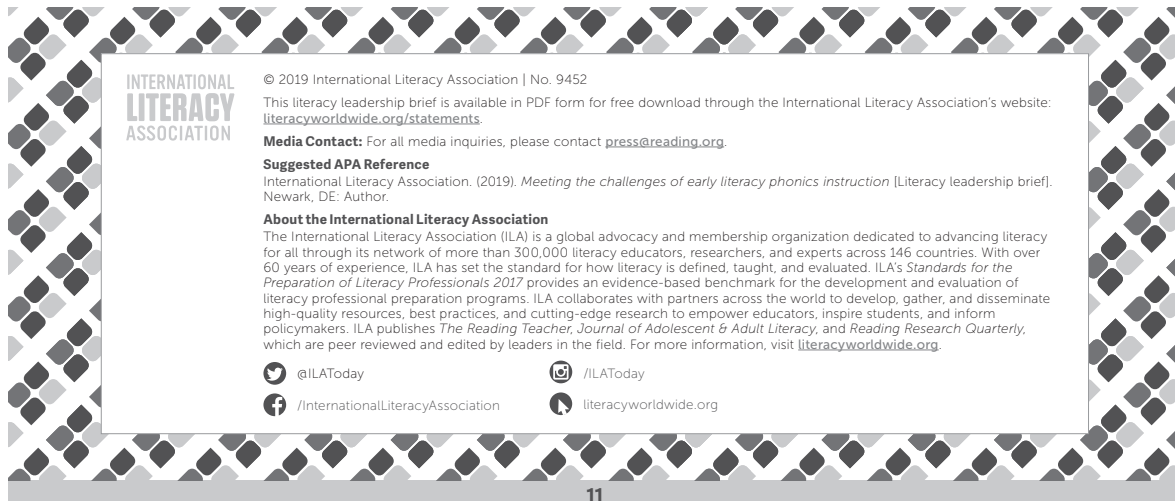
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11



Text 6: Questions

What are three key characteristics of effective phonics instruction?

In this text, Blevins lists 'Common Causes of Phonics Instructional Failure'. Which of these practices have you witnessed in your work as a Subject Advisor?

What information in this article did you find particularly useful or interesting?



Reflection:

What have you **LEARNED** today from the videos and articles in this session?

Sometimes, unlearning old ideas is more difficult than learning new things.

Have you **UNLEARNED** anything today / has something you thought was true before been changed or altered during this session?



Podcast: Sold a Story

Before Listening



Episode Summary: *Sixty years ago, Marie Clay developed a way to teach reading she said would help kids who were falling behind. They'd catch up and never need help again. Today, her program remains popular and her theory about how people read is at the root of a lot of reading instruction in schools all across the world. But Marie Clay was wrong.*

Have you ever heard of Marie Clay? What do you know about her?



While Listening

What information in this podcast did you find particularly useful or interesting?



After Listening

Why do you think this podcast episode begins and ends with Dan Corcoran's story?

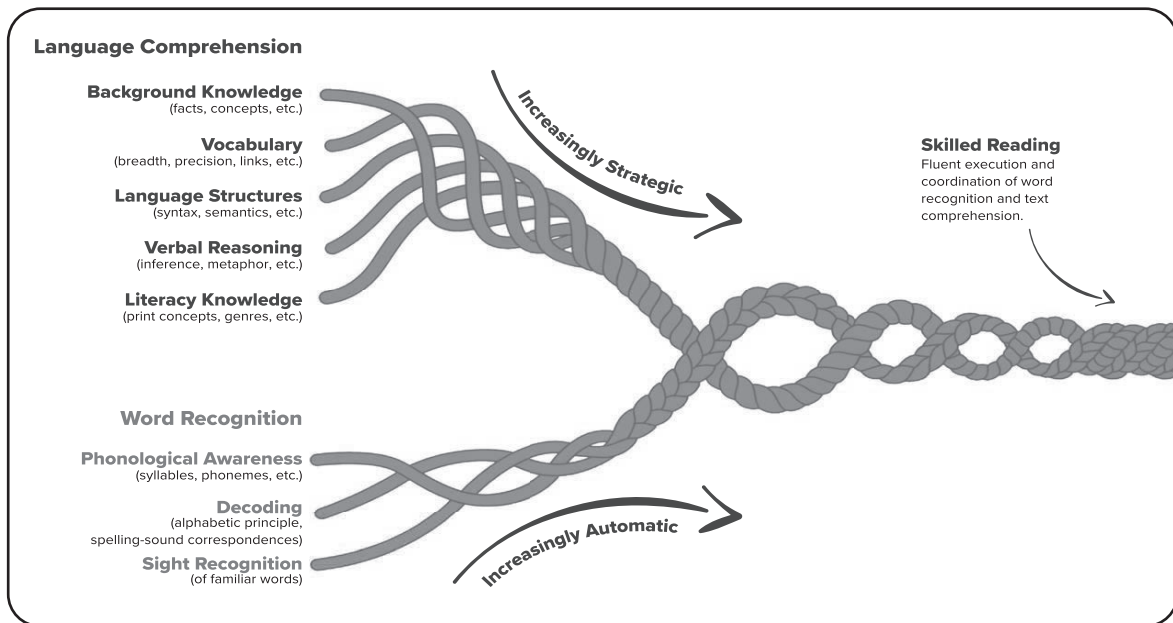
Marie Clay wanted students to sound like fluent readers from the beginning. Based on the evidence about how children learn to read, why is this impractical and maybe even undesirable?

What did you learn in this episode about how people become skilled readers?



Reviewing The Components of Skilled Reading: The Reading Rope

We have watched, read and listened to a lot of information so far. Let's pause and summarise what we have learned. Fill in the table below with a short summary of how / why this component is included in the reading rope. Think about what the science of reading says about how this component contributes to skilled reading as a whole!



Language Comprehension:	
Background Knowledge	
Vocabulary	
Language Structures	
Verbal reasoning	
Literacy knowledge	
Word Recognition:	
Phonological Awareness	
Decoding	
Sight Recognition	

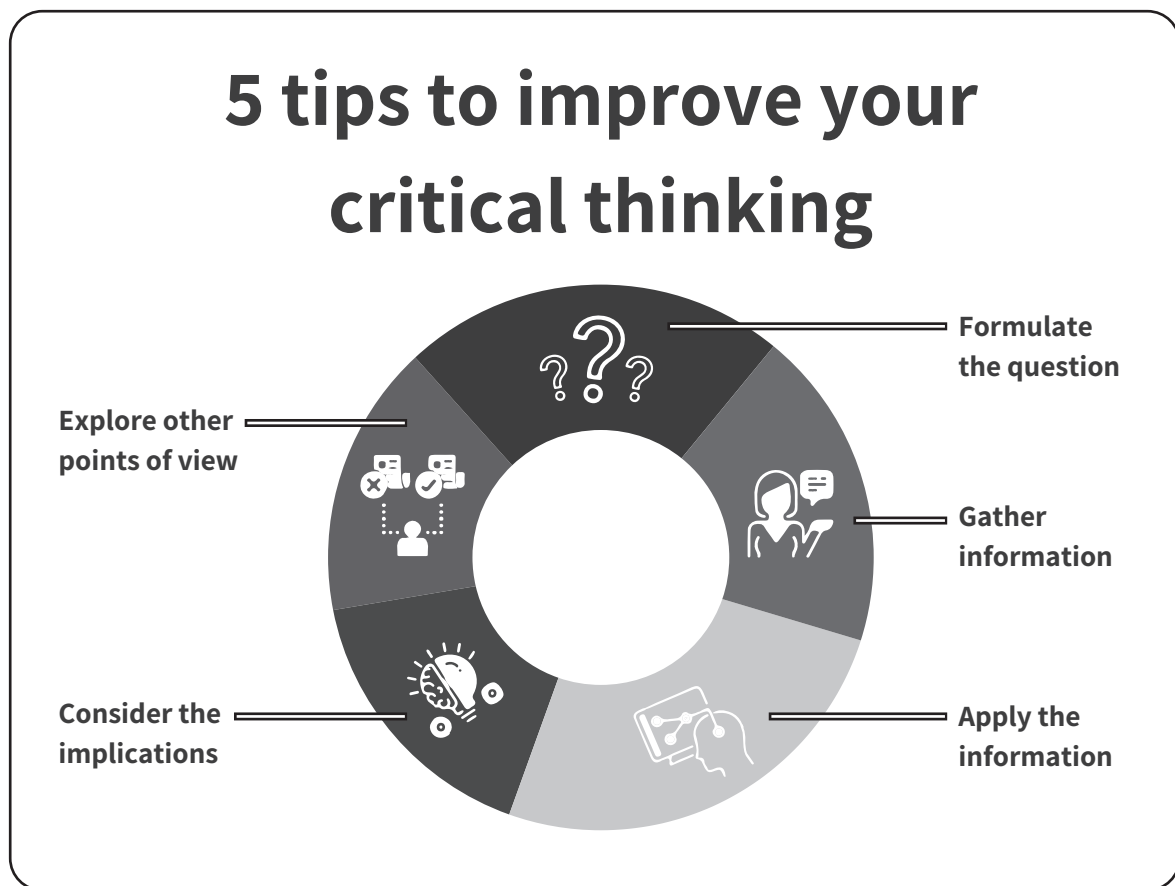


Applying Critical Thinking: PSRIP Core Methodologies

Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better do better.

-Maya Angelou

As the graphic below shows, part of critical thinking is to gather information and apply the information we have gathered. During this training, we have gathered lots of information on how children learn to read – and some of the theories that are widespread in education that can actually be harmful for children.



Today we ask the questions: Do the PSRIP materials teach reading in the best way, according to the available research? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the PSRIP's approach to teaching reading (and writing)?

As the custodians of the PSRIP materials, it is important to always keep these questions in mind. It is only through analysis, critique, and non-defensiveness that these materials can be continuously strengthened and improved!

Think about the information you have gathered during this training on what the research says about how children learn to read. Based on this information, what do you think are the strengths of the PSRIP's approach to reading instruction?

Remember that critical thinkers question sources and quality of information. Using the evidence base on how children learn to read, what are some of the weaknesses of the PSRIP's approach to reading instruction?



Closing Reflection

What is one important thing you feel you have either learned or unlearned during this training?

In her reporting, Emily Hanford talks about the many mixed emotions that educators feel when they first begin to learn about the science of reading research (upset, overwhelmed, wary, angry, excited, relieved, 'aha!'). What did it feel like to read the research on the science of reading during this training?

What did it feel like to critique the PSRIP materials? Please explain.

****YOUR TRAINER WILL COLLECT THIS RESPONSE****

In this training, we learned that critical thinkers:

- Research something when they don't have all the answers
- Question the quality and reliability of sources
- Back up an argument with evidence

Is there anything you feel like you need more information / sources about in terms of how children learn to read? Please be specific so we can try to include in our next training!

Some thoughts to leave you with...

One way to ensure that all children will be successful in the 21st Century is by ensuring they are fully literate by the end of the third grade.

In order to be successful in the 21st Century, one needs to be able to read and write, but also to learn, unlearn, and relearn.

Literacy isn't just about reading, writing, and comprehension. It's about access to a culture, professionalism, and social capital.

