

Implementing Structured Literacy for Adolescents: Grades 6 - 12

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National Center on
Improving Literacy

The National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL) is a partnership among literacy experts, university researchers, and technical assistance providers, with funding from the United States Department of Education.

Our mission is to increase access to, and use of, evidence-based approaches to screen, identify, and teach students with literacy-related disabilities, including dyslexia.

<https://improvingliteracy.org/kit/identifying-school-based-supports-students-or-risk-dyslexia>

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National Center on Improving Literacy

NCIL Intensification Framework

Strategic Integration

Reading Content

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

Cognitive Processing

- Memory
- Self-regulation
- Self-efficacy

What?



Intensification



Instructional Design

- Explicit and systematic instruction
- Instructional scaffolding
- Pre-teaching prerequisites
- Example selection and sequencing
- Judicious review and mastery

How?

Instructional Delivery

- Time
- Duration
- Grouping
- Pacing

Instructional Density

Dynamic and Responsive
Data-Based Individualization

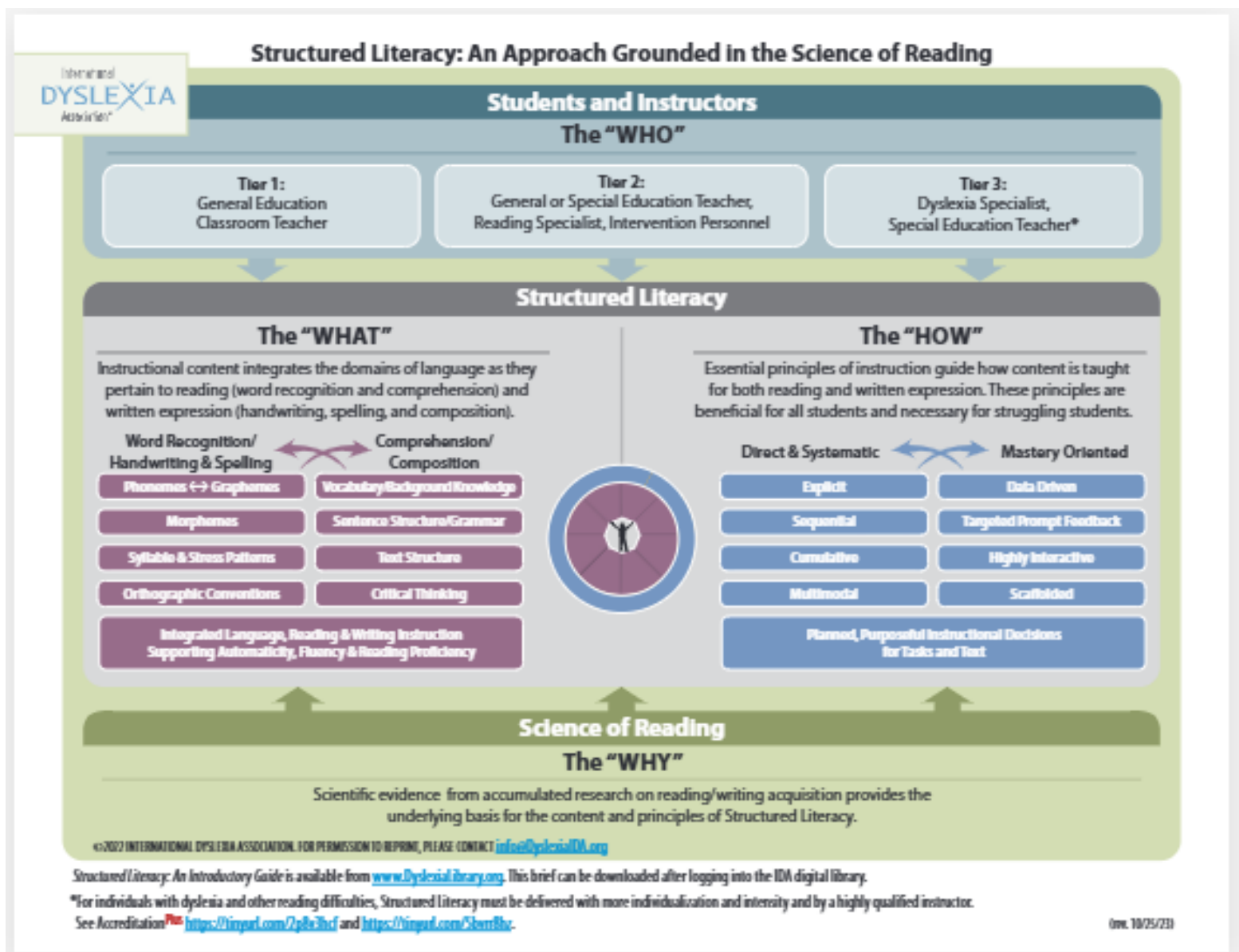
Assessment



- Daily or weekly mastery data
- Every other week or monthly progress monitoring data



<https://app.box.com/s/3jcd7klybyzcqx2v0f7odrjcg40t47ht>



75th Anniversary Edition of Perspectives Highlighting Structured Literacy
<https://dyslexiaida.org/idas-75th-anniversary-edition-of-perspectives/>





Structured Literacy Defined

STRUCTURED LITERACY'S ORIGIN STORY

In 2014, The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) coined the term *Structured Literacy* to differentiate the evidence-based reading instruction outlined in IDA's Knowledge and Practice Standards (KPS) from instruction lacking scientific evidence (e.g., whole language and balanced literacy).

The term was quickly embraced, resonating with educators, parents, and reading scientists. For the next decade, IDA conducted webinars and presentations and published fact sheets, infographics, briefs, and articles to advance and deepen knowledge about Structured Literacy's instructional content and practices. Nevertheless, concerns emerged that the term might become another educational buzzword—a Rorschach ink blot into which anyone could project any interpretation, idea, or practice. This led IDA to refine its Structured Literacy Wheel, to create the Structured Literacy InfoMap, and to develop a precise definition of Structured Literacy. We are pleased to unveil this definition.

IDA'S STRUCTURED LITERACY WORKING DEFINITION

Structured Literacy is a comprehensive, integrated approach to reading and writing instruction that directly and systematically builds on and develops oral language while explicitly teaching the structure of written language. Using this evidence-based approach, educators integrate the teaching of the foundational and higher-order skills and knowledge needed to develop proficient reading comprehension and written expression.

Going Deeper - Structured Literacy is an instructional approach, not a program. However, to deliver this comprehensive instruction, educators often systematically integrate one or more programs. Using this approach, educators teach and develop the domains of oral language (i.e., phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics) and their representation in written language (i.e., orthography). With explicit, diagnostic, and data-driven teaching and practice, students develop the knowledge, skills, and fluency needed for proficient reading and writing.

The dynamic interplay between Structured Literacy's integrated content (WHAT is taught) and its powerful teaching principles (HOW content is taught) benefits all students, including advanced and linguistically diverse learners. Structured Literacy instruction is, however, essential for those who need extra support as they learn to read and write.

dyslexiaida.org

IDA'S STRUCTURED LITERACY WHEEL



IDA'S STRUCTURED LITERACY INFOMAP



For a free download of IDA's Structured Literacy Wheel and InfoMap, visit → shopida.org

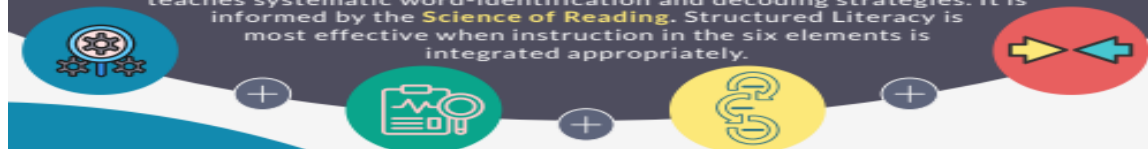
WHY "WORKING?"

Upon completing a final polish of the Structured Literacy Wheel & InfoMap (currently being beta tested), IDA will revisit the Structured Literacy Working Definition to ensure alignment across these materials. We anticipate completing this work in 2025. Given this and because IDA responds to ongoing advances in reading science, we suggest that entities establishing policies based on IDA's Structured Literacy Definition adopt language stating such policies are founded on this definition "as updated by the International Dyslexia Association from time to time."

© IDA: 6-25-24

Structured Literacy Instruction FEATURES

Structured Literacy* is an approach to reading instruction that explicitly teaches systematic word-identification and decoding strategies. It is informed by the **Science of Reading**. Structured Literacy is most effective when instruction in the six elements is integrated appropriately.



A Structured Literacy approach includes instruction in six evidence-based elements. These elements — phonology, sound-symbol association, syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics — work together to provide students with the tools they need to learn to read.

Structured Literacy instruction is individualized to meet each student's needs. The instruction is based on careful and continuous assessment. The content presented must be mastered to the degree of automaticity.

For each element, the teaching sequence begins with the easiest and most basic concepts and progresses methodically to the more difficult. It is okay to teach more than one element at a time or integrate the elements in instruction.

Structured Literacy teaching requires direct teaching of concepts with a fast pace of student-teacher interaction to keep students engaged. It is not assumed that students will naturally deduce these concepts on their own.

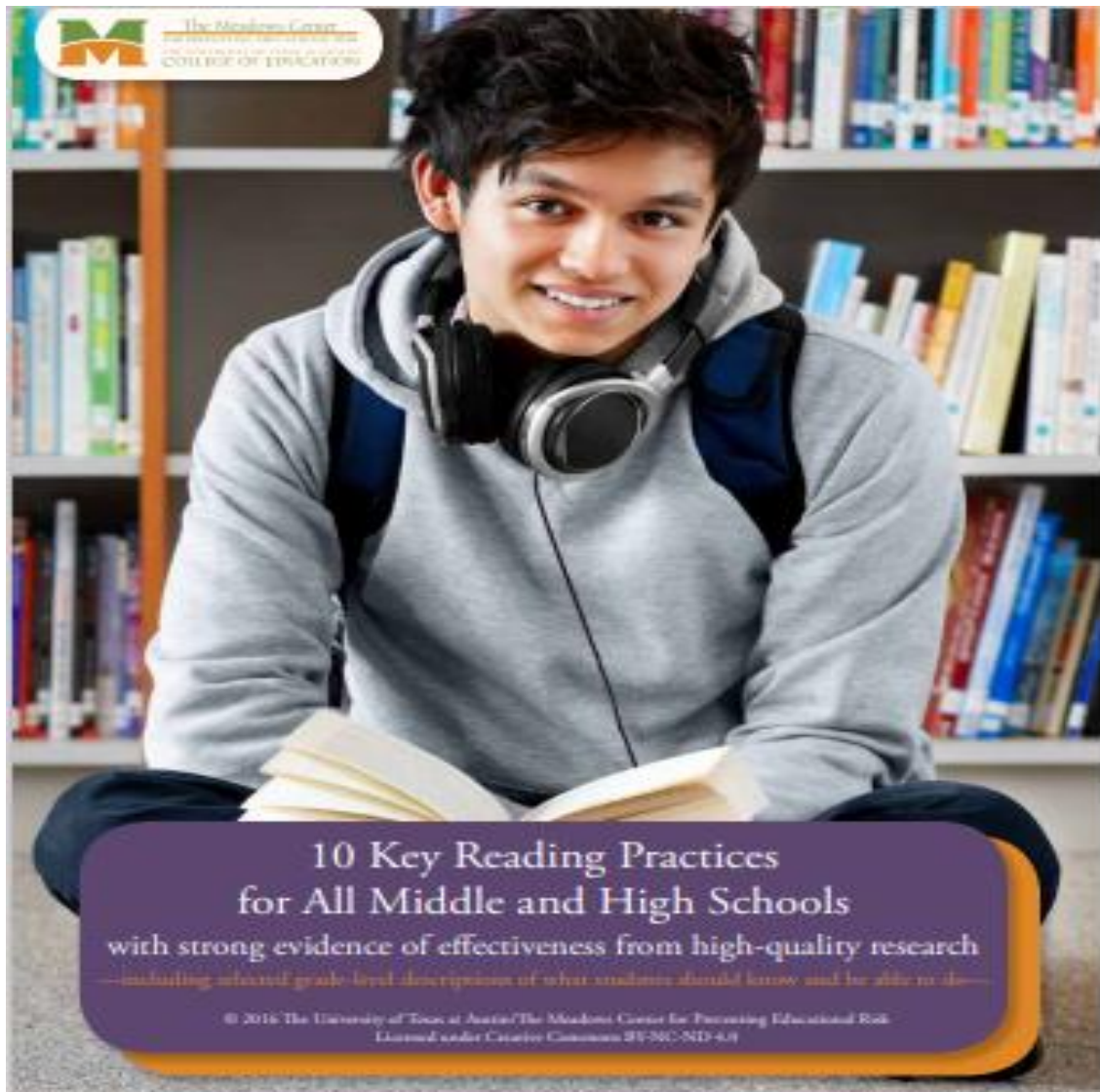
*The phrase *Structured Literacy* was coined by the International Dyslexia Association.

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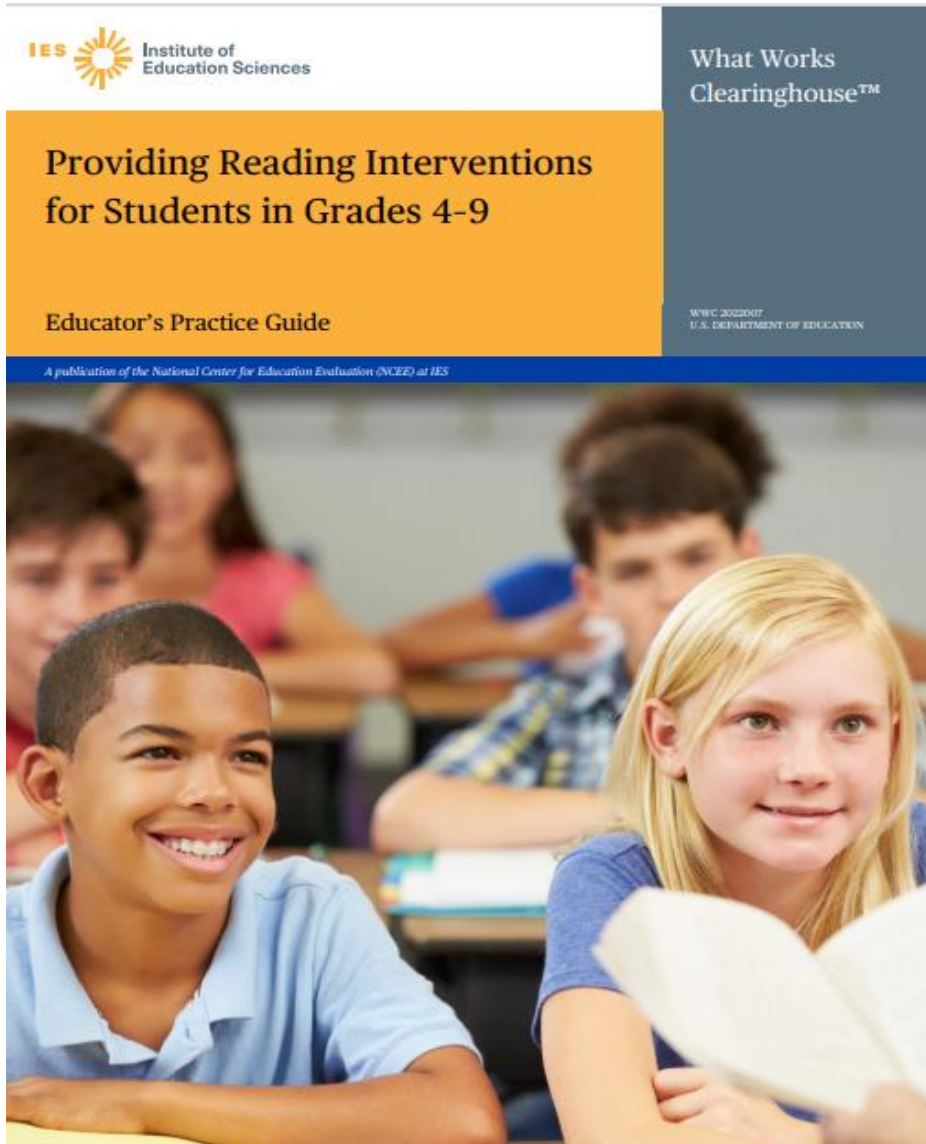
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https://meadowscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/10Keys_Secondary_Web1.pdf





<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/Docs/PracticeGuide/WWC-practice-guide-reading-intervention-full-text.pdf>



Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Middle School

Home > Toolkit > Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Middle School (PRISMS) Toolkit

My Training

Introduction Educator Implementation Tools Professional Learning Modules
PLC Facilitator Resources Administrator and Leader Resources

Introduction



Providing Reading Interventions
for Students in Middle School

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/reading-intervention-grades-6-8>



Recommendation 1: Build students' decoding skills so they can read complex multisyllabic words

Recommendation 1

Example 1.1. Teacher demonstrating how to identify prefixes, suffixes, and vowel combinations to decode a multisyllabic word

The teacher refers to the following steps that are posted in the classroom:

1. Look for prefixes and suffixes. Circle prefixes and suffixes in the word.
2. Underline the remaining single vowels and vowel or vowel-consonant combinations.
3. Loop under each word part as you say it.
4. Say the whole word by blending the parts together, making it into a word you recognize.

Teacher: Today we are going to learn a routine for breaking longer words into parts so we can easily sound them out. In this routine there are four steps. In the first step, we circle the prefixes and suffixes in the word. The first word is unreasonable. I am going to circle un- because it is a prefix and -able because it is a suffix. Remember un- means not and -able means capable of being.

unreasonable

Teacher: In Step 2, I am going to underline the vowel sounds that are left. I am going to underline ea and o. I am doing this because each syllable has a vowel sound.

unreasonable

Teacher: In Step 3, I am going to use my pencil to loop under each word part as I say it: un rea son able. Now, in Step 4, I am going to blend the parts together: unreasonable. Unreasonable means not capable of reason or explanation.

unreasonable

The teacher provides a **procedure** for the students to **deconstruct** the word and **attack** it through identification of the **morphemes**, and then identification of the **vowels** to be divide the word into its component parts (syllables and morphemes).





ESHALOV

O'Connor et al. (2015)

Every Syllable Has At Least One Vowel



Flexible

Vadasy et al. (2006)

Notice the vowels, find the syllables, read them, and put the parts together.



Peeling Off

Lovett et al. (2000)

Circle the prefixes and suffixes. Say the prefixes and suffixes. Say the root. Say the word.



OVERT

Archer et al. (2003)

Circle the prefixes. Circle the suffixes. Underline the vowels. Say the parts of the word. Say the whole word. Make it a real word.

Williams, 2024



Let's take a few minutes to
divide these words into syllable
types and into morphemes.

defenestration

absquatulate

logorrhea

psithurism

pusillanimous

pulchritude

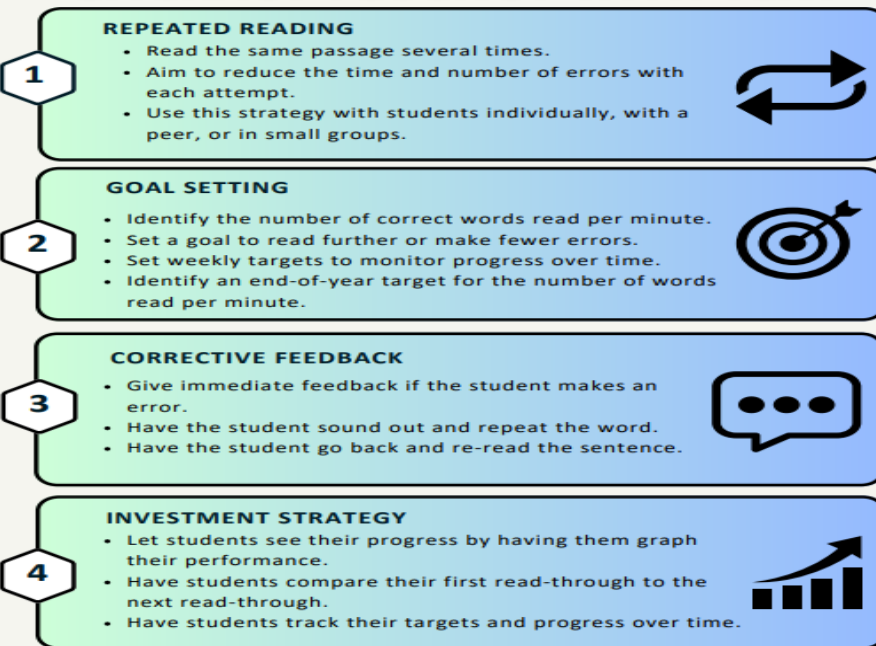


Recommendation 2: Provide purposeful fluency-building activities to help students read effortlessly

<https://www.improvingliteracy.org/resource/4-steps-to-teach-literacy-fluency-with-text>

HOW-TO

4 STEPS TO TEACH LITERACY FLUENCY WITH TEXT



For more information, visit [improvingliteracy.org](https://www.improvingliteracy.org).



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Recommendation 3: Routinely use a set of comprehension-building practices to help students make sense of the text

Table 3.1. Parts of Recommendation 3

Recommendation 3
Routinely use a set of comprehension-building practices to help students make sense of the text.
Part A: Build students' world and word knowledge so they can make sense of the text.
Part B: Consistently provide students with opportunities to ask and answer questions to better understand the text they read.
Part C: Teach students a routine for determining the gist of a short section of text.
Part D: Teach students to monitor their comprehension as they read.



From Durkin (1978) to Capin et al. (2025)

With the Durkin study through the University of Illinois, she observed and evaluated reading comprehension instruction in 3rd grade through 6th grade classrooms. Her findings revealed that less actual comprehension instruction occurred and more attention was paid to assessment of knowledge. Almost no instruction in comprehension skill development was observed.



With Capin and colleagues' study, a follow up to Durkin's study was conducted. Sixty-six studies from 1980 to 2023 were reviewed with the following findings.

- 1) Only 23% of instructional time was spent on providing comprehension skills instruction.
- 2) A lack of time in text explained some of this.
- 3) Most instructional time was spent with the IRE process – Initiate-Response-Evaluate (Conradi-Smith (2025); read and inquire as to a fact, then evaluate response).
- 4) Students lacked conditional knowledge (knowledge needed to apply what was learned).



What do these findings mean for us?



Recommendation 3, Part A: Build students' world and word knowledge so they can make sense of the text

<https://www.improvingliteracy.org/resource/explicit-vocabulary-instruction-to-build-fair-access-for-all-learners>

We should consider morphology here as well.

Example Vocabulary Lesson

Before

Teacher

The title of this book is *The Grouchy Ladybug*. **Grouchy** means grumpy or angry. Someone who is grouchy is not happy.

Prompts

- What does grouchy mean?
- Show me with your face what grouchy looks like.
- Look at the book cover again. How would you describe the ladybug on the cover?

During

Teacher

When discussing story elements, like the main character, use the target word to describe the ladybug.

Example

"The grouchy ladybug is grouchy, mean, and not polite."

Discuss

Teacher Prompt

Prompts like the following can be used to promote additional discussion and interaction.

- "Take a moment and share with your partner about a time when you felt grouchy. Now, who can tell me a time when you felt grouchy?"
- "When you're grouchy, you're in a grumpy, bad mood. Tell me how that feels."
- "If someone is grouchy, how are they acting? What do they do? What do their face and body look like?"

Student Response

Encourage students to use the target word and to use full sentences in their responses.

- "I felt grouchy this morning when my sister woke me up."
- "When I'm being grouchy, it feels like I'm not happy about anything."
- "Grouchy people never smile, and they just sit there all slouchy."

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Recommendation 3, Part A: Build students' world and word knowledge so they can make sense of the text

Vocabulary Activities Selection Chart (pp. 212-213; Flanigan, Hayes, Templeton, Bear, Invernizzi, and Johnston 2011)

What specifically do I want my students to know about the word or concept? I want my students to:	Four Square Map or Frayer Model	Concept of Definition Map	Vocabulary Web	Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy	Compare/Contrast Chart or Venn Diagram	Semantic Feature Analysis	Semantic Gradient	Semantic Map	Concept Sorts
Compare and contrast two or more concepts in depth					X	X			X
Know the defining features and non-features of one concept in depth	X								
Develop a deep and elaborate understanding of one word or concept	X	X	X					X	X
Differentiate shades of meaning among related words							X		
Organize related concepts by main ideas, subtopics, and details								X	X
Summarize and connect related concepts					X	X			
Self-select words and "notice" interesting words in reading				X					
Self-select words and "notice" interesting words in reading									
Review word definitions in a motivating format									





Recommendation 3, Part A: Build students' world and word knowledge so they can make sense of the text

- 1) World Knowledge – must develop world knowledge (background knowledge) to help students understand what they are reading.
- 2) Essential words – identify words that are critical and conceptually central for understanding the text but are likely to be difficult for students.
- 3) Use context – teach students how to derive meanings of unknown words using context.
- 4) Teach morphology – teach prefixes and suffixes, isolation of the base or root, and Greek combining forms.



Recommendation 3, Part B: Consistently provide students with opportunities to ask and answer questions to better understand the text they read

The Question-Answer-Relationships

In the Text		In My Head	
			
Right There	Think and Search	Author and Me	On My Own
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The answer is usually located in one sentence and is EASY TO FIND. The reader will find some of the same words in the answer that are in the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The answer is located in more than one sentence or paragraphs. The reader must PUT different parts TOGETHER to find the answer. The information is stated in the text and the reader answers the question by PUTTING it TOGETHER. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The answer is IMPLIED and is not stated in the text. The reader must access PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF INFORMATION provided by the author and make an inference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The answer is not located in the text. The reader can even answer the question WITHOUT reading the text. You need to use your OWN EXPERIENCES to answer the questions.
On the Line	On Several Lines	Between the Lines	Beyond the Lines
Name... List... Identify... Who is/are... Where is... What is... When is... How many... When did... Who did... Where did... What did...	Give examples of... Retell... What made... Why did... The reason for... Tell ways these are alike... Tell how these are different... What is the reason for... Summarize... Explain...	Show how... Make... State what is next... Imagine what if... The solution might be... Judge... Consider... Originate...	What is another word for... What would you do if...
RI.KID_QAR.pdf		Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) Reading Rockets	



Recommendation 3, Part C: Teach students a routine for determining the gist of a short section of text

Stark et al., 2025 research found that a large percentage of 6th grade students were unable to provide the gist from what they had read. Twenty-three percent of 286 6th graders correctly responded. Of those that were incorrect, some responses: were left blank, came directly from the text, had unspecified subjects, missing or incorrect subjects, and incorrect or extraneous supplemental information (supporting details).

How does this inform our instruction?

[Modeling and Think Aloud with The Gradual Release Method](#)

[Paragraph Shrinking](#)

<https://www.readingrockets.org/classroom/classroom-strategies/think-alouds>



Recommendation 3, Part C: Teach students a routine for determining the gist of a short section of text

Resource 3C.1. Routine for generating a gist statement

1. Identify and mark the most important person (referred to as the *who*), place, or thing (referred to as the *what*) in a section of text.
2. Mark and then list the important information about the most important person, place, or thing.
3. Synthesize or piece together the important information to formulate a gist statement.
4. Write the gist statement in your own words.
5. Check that the gist statement includes all the important information in a short, complete sentence that makes sense.



Recommendation 3, Part C: Teach students a routine for determining the gist of a short section of text

Fundamentals of Paraphrasing & Summarizing

Cue Card #11

Diagram for Parts of a Paragraph

Topic <input type="checkbox"/>		
Main Idea <input type="checkbox"/>		
Detail <input type="checkbox"/>	Detail <input type="checkbox"/>	Detail <input type="checkbox"/>

Fundamentals of Summarizing and Paraphrasing

OH #38

Fundamentals of Paraphrasing & Summarizing

Cue Card #12

The TM-to-D Process

- 1. Find the TOPIC (T)**
Q: What is this paragraph about?
A: This paragraph is about _____.
(in one or two words)
- 2. Find the MAIN IDEA (M)**
Q: What does this paragraph tell me about the topic?
A: It tells me _____.
- 3. Find the DETAILS (D)**
Q: What information in this paragraph tells me more about the main idea?
or
Q: What's one piece of information that's related to the main idea?
A: One detail is _____
A: Another detail is _____

Fundamentals of Summarizing and Paraphrasing

OH #45

Fundamentals of Paraphrasing & Summarizing

Cue Card #13

The D-to-MT Process

- 1. Find the DETAILS (D)**
Q: What are several pieces of related information?
A: The details are: _____.
- 2. Think of the MAIN IDEA (D)**
Q: What phrase or statement can I use to summarize or group these details?
A: The paragraph tells me that _____.
- 3. Think of the TOPIC (T)**
Q: What is this paragraph about?
A: This paragraph is about _____.
(in one or two words)

Fundamentals of Summarizing and Paraphrasing

OH #59



Recommendation 3, Part D: Teach students to monitor their comprehension as they read

Van Zeijts and colleagues (2024) essentially found that 2nd graders were overloaded with too many stops within text reading to recall and comprehend the text before them.

What do we need to consider for our own practice with comprehension monitoring for older students?



Recommendation 3, Part D: Teach students to monitor their comprehension as they read

[Teachers' Guide: Comprehension Monitoring to Check... | Reading Universe](#)




Strategy	Example
Identify where the difficulty occurs	"I don't understand the second paragraph on page 76."
Identify what the difficulty is	"I don't get what the author means when she says, 'Arriving in America was a milestone in my grandmother's life.'"
Restate the difficult sentence or passage in their own words	"Oh, so the author means that coming to America was a very important event in her grandmother's life."
Look back through the text	"The author talked about Mr. McBride in Chapter 2, but I don't remember much about him. Maybe if I reread that chapter, I can figure out why he's acting this way now."
Look forward in the text for information that might help them to resolve the difficulty	"The text says, 'The groundwater may form a stream or pond or create a wetland. People can also bring groundwater to the surface.' Hmm, I don't understand how people can do that... . Oh, the next section is called 'Wells.' I'll read this section to see if it tells how they do it."



Recommendation 3, Part D: Teach students to monitor their comprehension as they read

<https://sites.google.com/email.wm.edu/structureyourreading/home>

STRUCTURE Your Reading

 **GET IN GEAR**  **GO**  **LOOK BACK**

G **4. Use strategies while reading. What tools will help me? (3)**

O **5. Check comprehension. (1)** **Clarify confusing parts. (1)** **Confirm predictions. (1)**
Do I understand? *How can I figure it out?* *Are my guesses right?*

L **6. Tell your personal reaction. What do I think and feel? (2)**

O **7. Uncover critical content. (15) (2)** **8. Review the reactions of others. What do others think and feel? (2)**
What are the key ideas? *What else do I want to know?*

K Complete assignment

B **9. Explain your success. How did strategies help me? (1)**

A **C** **K**

Score: /50 4.0
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Recommendation 4: Provide students with opportunities to practice making sense of stretch text (i.e., challenging text) that will expose them to complex ideas and information

1. Prepare for the lesson by carefully selecting appropriate stretch texts, choosing points to stop for discussion and clarification, and identifying words to teach.
2. Provide significant support as the group works through a stretch text together.
3. After students demonstrate comfort with reading stretch texts with the group, provide students with electronic supports to use when independently reading stretch text to assist with pronunciation of difficult words and word meanings.

[pp. 71-75](#)



Recommendation 4: Provide students with opportunities to practice making sense of stretch text (i.e., challenging text) that will expose them to complex ideas and information

Fisher and Frey Rubric

[el201306_Fisher-Frey-Rubric.pdf](#)

Achieve the Core Review of Text

<https://achievethecore.org/page/2725/text-complexity>

Scarborough's Reading Rope

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N3_kNF4B9pd_seuFjhpdD07_jLDgqeYP8/view?usp=sharing





**Do you have
any
questions?**



Please complete our
brief evaluation form.

*Thank you for engaging
in today's session!*



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