Building Strong Literacy Foundations

Session 1 – Uniting the Reading Brain with Essential Skills

Presenters:

Calico Clark and Marianne Vande Pol

Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional and unceded territories of the Indigenous Peoples of British Columbia, home to 198 distinct Nations. Across Canada, we also recognize the 46 treaties and agreements that reflect ongoing relationships with the land.

We are grateful to the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples for their care and teachings about the Earth.
This acknowledgment reminds us of our responsibilities to these relationships and the ancestral lands where we live, work, and learn.

Learning Objectives

- Understand how the brain learns to read
- Explore foundational skills: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.
- Gain practical tools to enhance literacy instruction

Why Literacy Matters

The right to equal education includes the right to read

On November 9, 2012, the Supreme Court of Canada released a unanimous decision recognizing that

learning to read is not a privilege, but a basic and essential human right.

Why Literacy Matters in BC Schools

What is Literacy?

- Literacy is more than just reading and writing; it includes critical thinking, communication, and the ability to interpret and create meaningful information in various formats.

Importance of Literacy

- Foundation for lifelong learning and success.
- Essential for academic achievement, employability, and active participation in society.
- Builds confidence and fosters personal growth.

Impact on BC Communities

- Improved literacy rates contribute to healthier, more informed, and economically stable communities.

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

The Science of Reading IS:

- A vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing.
- Based on research that has been conducted over the last five decades across the world, and it is derived from thousands of studies in multiple languages.

- An abundance of evidence to inform:
  - how proficient reading and writing develop;
  - why some have difficulty; and
  - how we can most effectively assess and teach …

therefore, how to improve student outcomes through prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties.

Structured Literacy: Meeting the Needs of All Learners

Structured literacy:

- an evidence-based instructional approach
- comprehensive - addressing listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- characterized by <u>what</u> content is taught and <u>how</u> content is taught

A comprehensive approach that meets the needs of all learners

Structured Literacy: an approach that meets the needs to all learners

WHAT is taught:

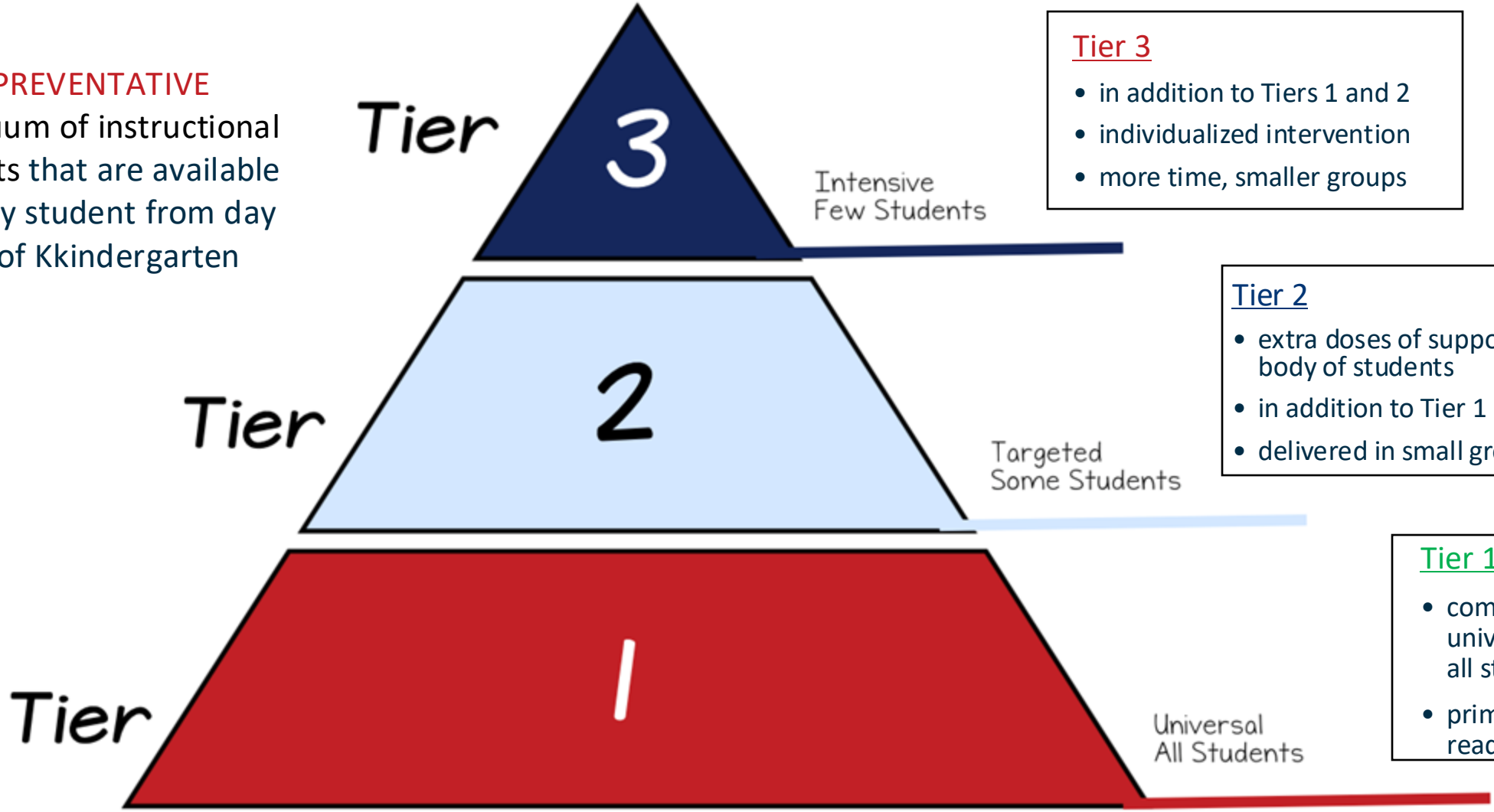
- Both foundational skills & Higher-level literacy skills

HOW it is taught:

- Systematic and Cumulative: simple to complex/follows a scope and sequence
- Explicit
  - Direct instruction
    - → "Today we are learning to…"
- Continuous student-teacher interaction
- Not assuming all students can infer concepts
- Careful and considered practice
- Prompt and specific feedback (corrective if needed)

MTSS - Multi-Tiered System of Supports

A PREVENTATIVE continuum of instructional supports that are available to every student from day one of Kkindergarten



Tier 3

- in addition to Tiers 1 and 2
- individualized intervention
- more time, smaller groups

Tier 2

- extra doses of support for a small body of students
- in addition to Tier 1
- delivered in small groups

Tier 1

- comprehensive, universal instruction for all students
- primary prevention of reading failure

The Simple View of Reading

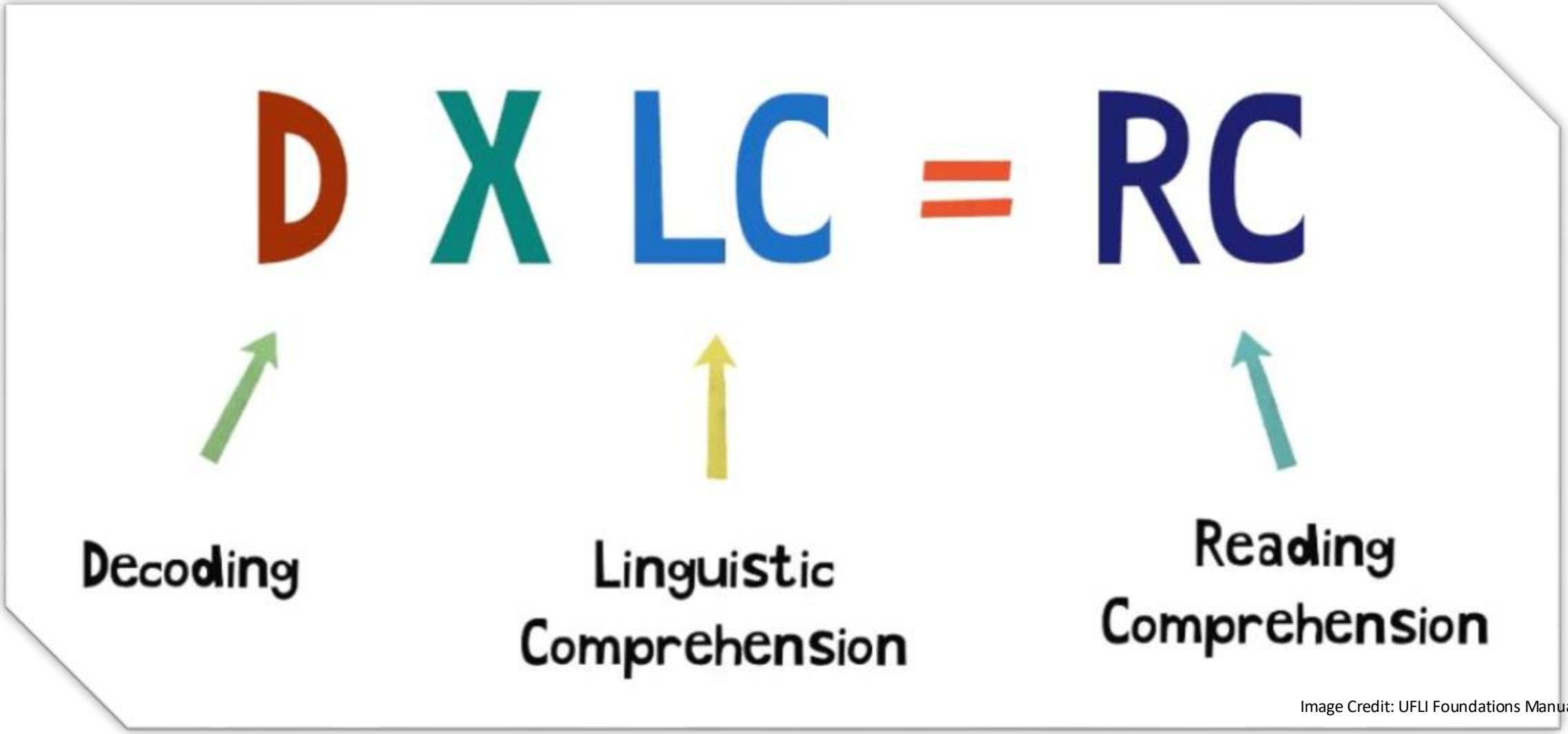
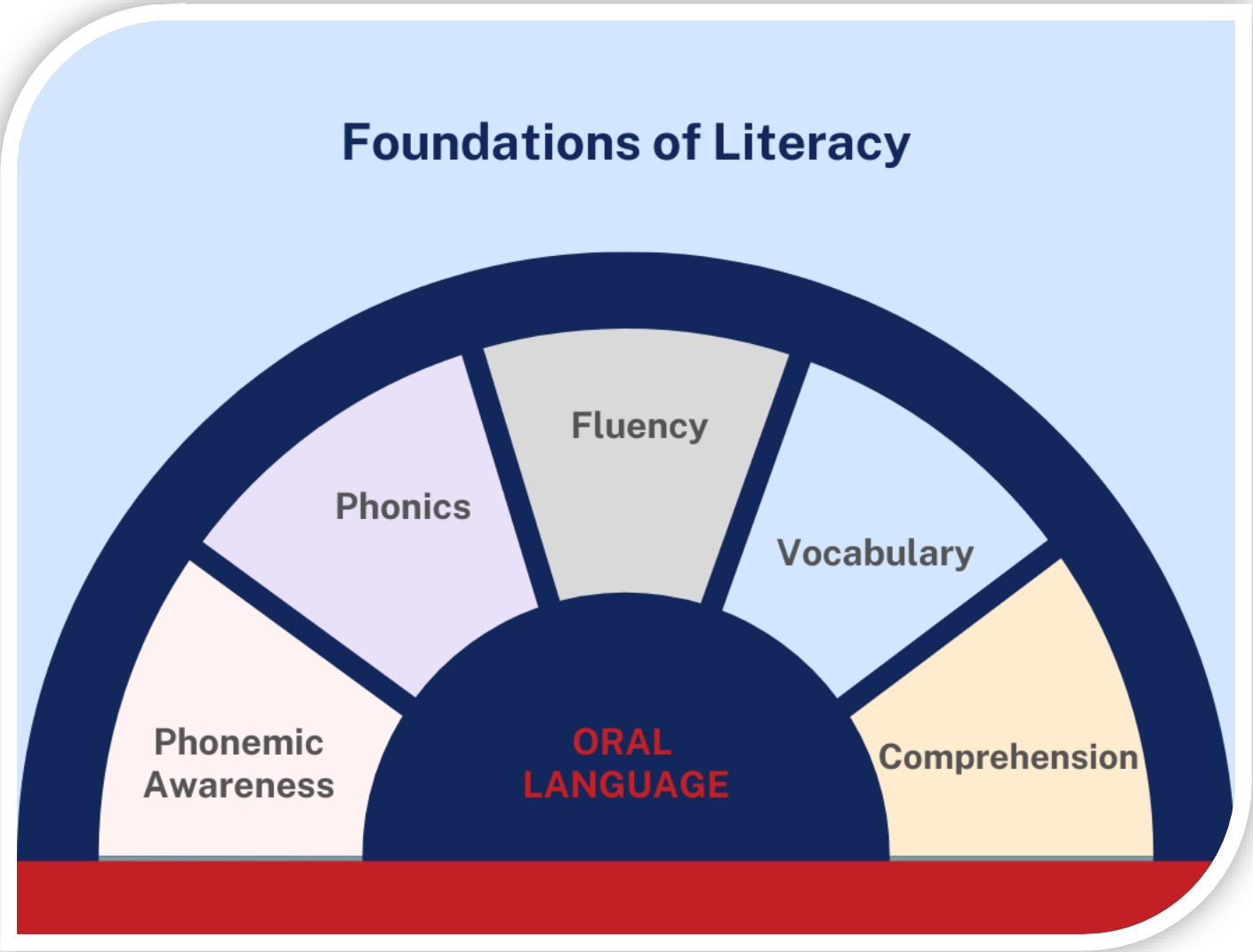


Image Credit: UFLI Foundations Manual

Foundational Skills for Reading

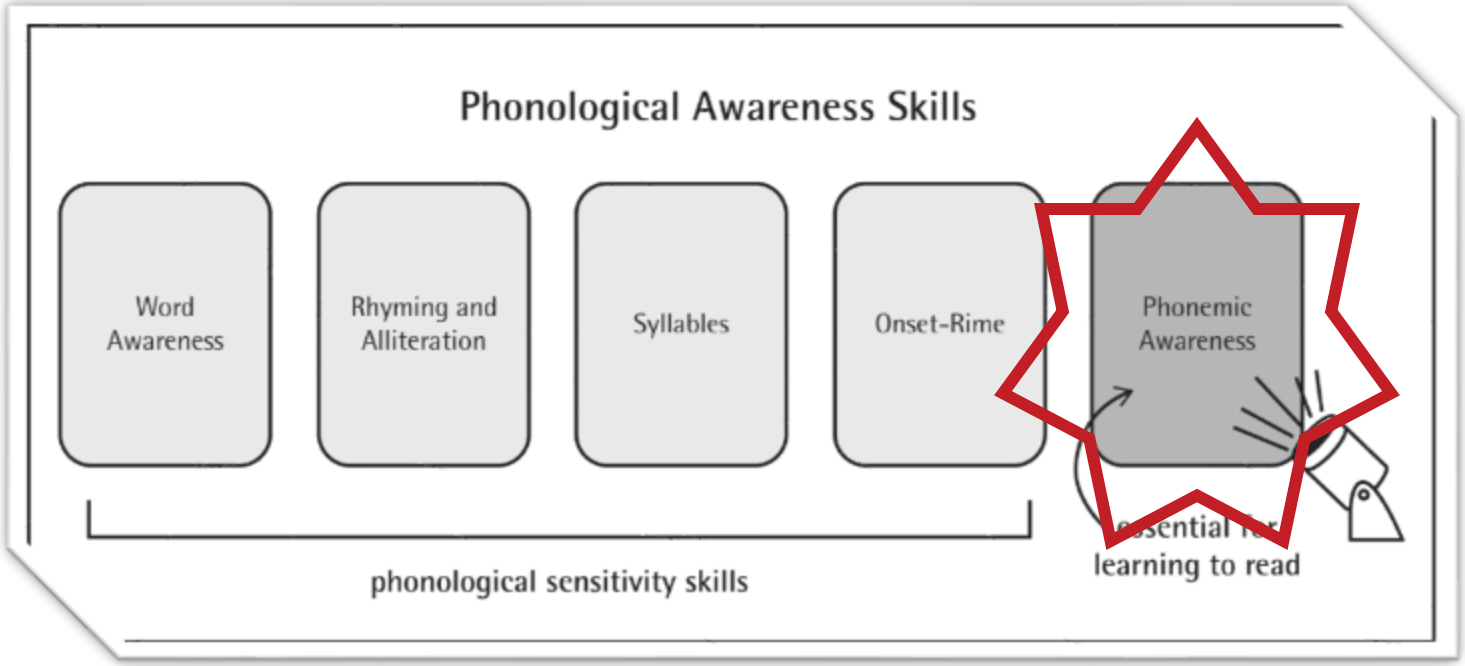


Proficiency in these foundational skills is necessary to all students to be reflective, critical and independent readers

National Reading Panel, 2000

Phoneme Awareness

Is the awareness that words are made up of individual sounds



* Can be taught without students first mastering phonological sensitivity skills (rhyme, segmenting syllables) *

Reminder

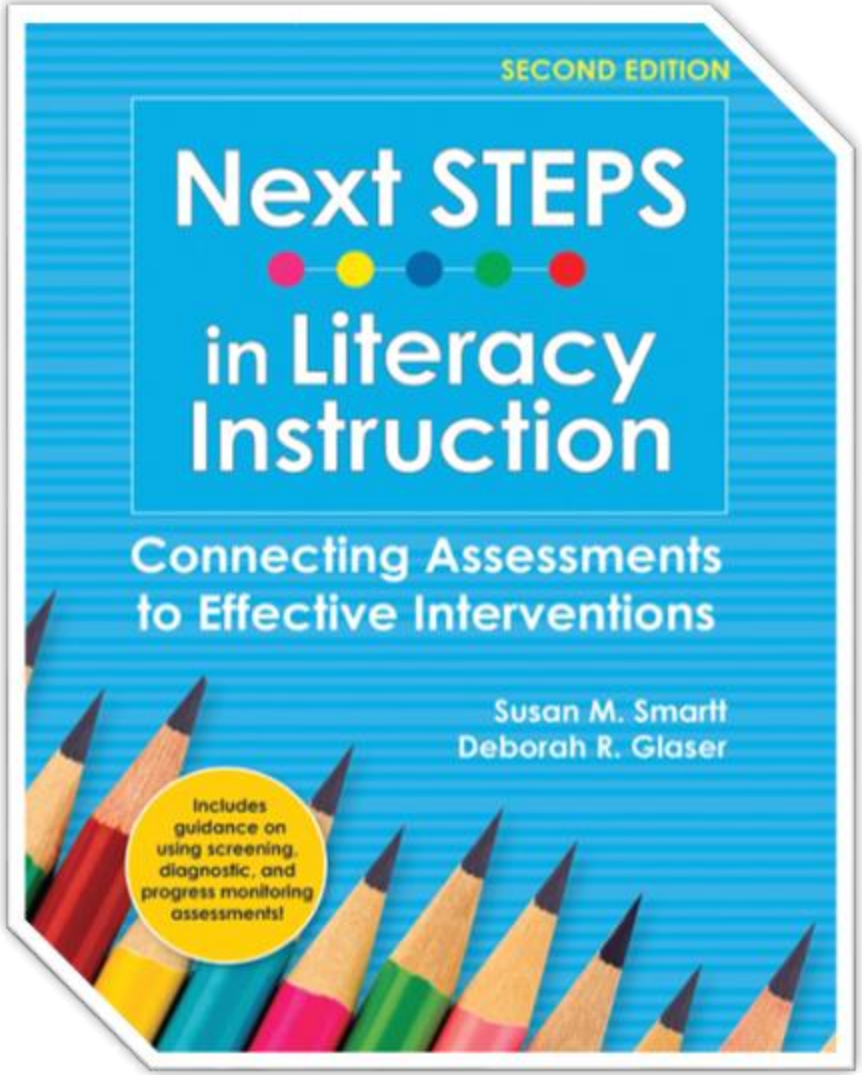
“Phonemic awareness is the most potent predictor of success in learning to read"

It is more highly related to reading than tests of general intelligence, reading readiness, and listening comprehension.”

Stanovich, 1986, 1994

"Teaching phonemes along with letter names and letter formation supports students' development of phoneme awareness.

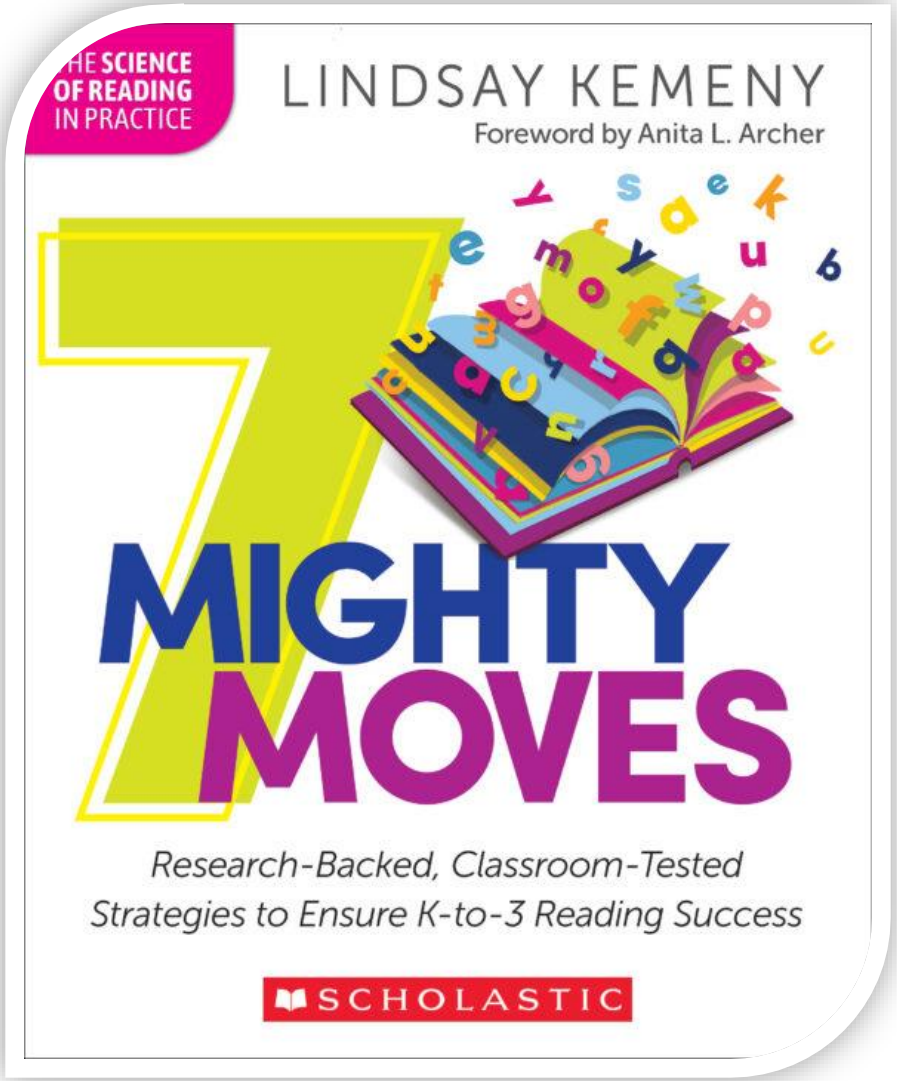
This **combined instruction is more effective** than teaching awareness solely through segmenting and blending auditorily." (p. 55)



Guiding Principles - How?

- Explicit, systematic, nothing to chance/discover
- Multiple opportunities throughout day - sprinkling
- Model & support
- Abundance of practice
- Brief (max 20 hours per year, or less than 30 minutes/week)

  (Tied to PHONICS)

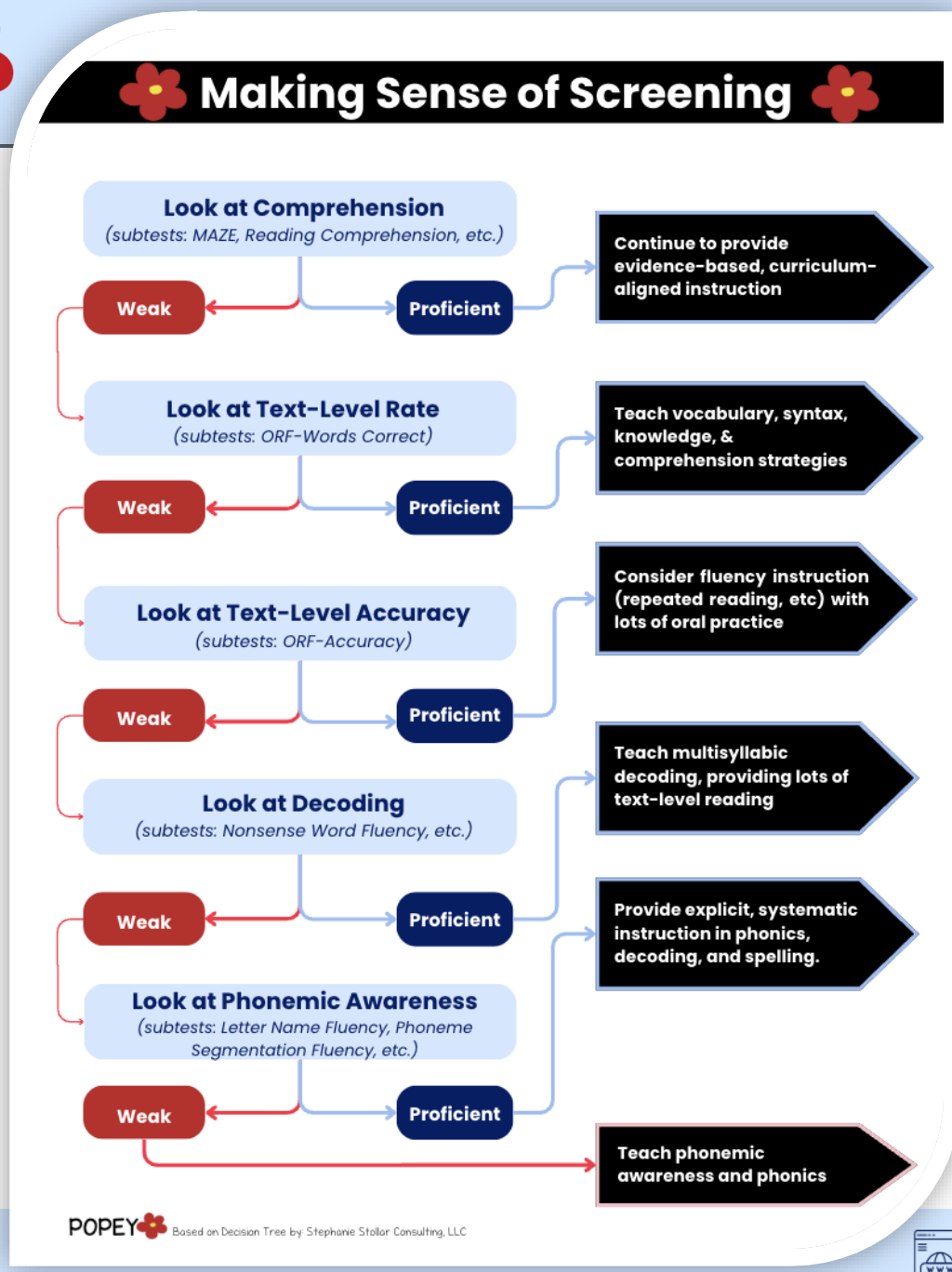


Reminder…

Erhi et al. suggest that “phonemic awareness is not taught for its own sake but rather for its value in helping children understand and use the alphabetic system to read and write”.

Further, that it ought not to be taught **“blindly in isolation ad nauseam without any connection to reading and writing”** (2001).

Erhi et al. , 2021



A weakness in the area of phoneme awareness may exist for older struggling readers, and needs to be addressed.

Quick Share

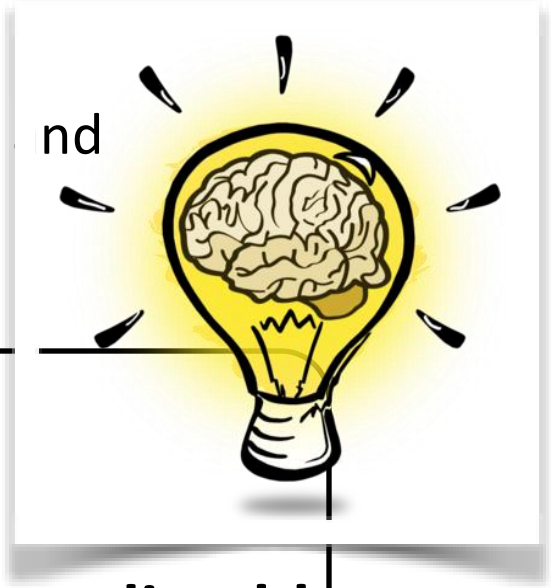
Turn and talk at your table groups:

- What are you currently doing to develop phonemic awareness for your students?

- What is one thing you might get started with right away?

Readiness Skills

The two best predictors of early reading success are phonemic awareness and a student's understanding of the alphabetic principle.



Alphabetic Principle

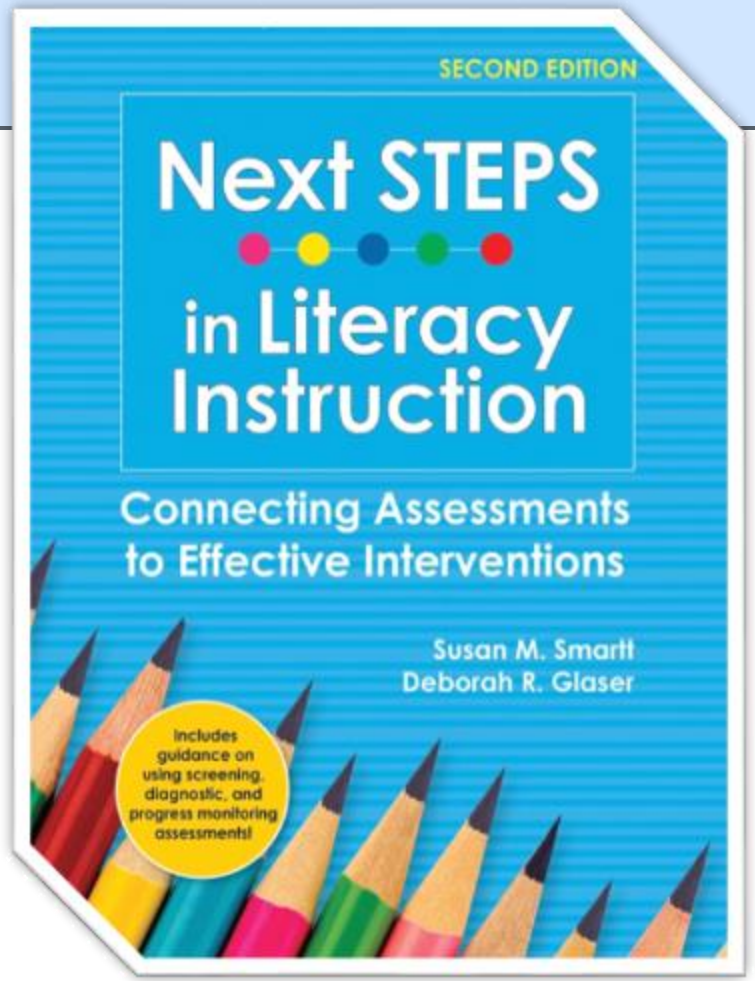
The understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between sounds and letters.

"these skills open the gate for reading." - Wiley Blevins

Phonics

"Phonics is the linchpin, embracing elements of print to represent oral language within a highly dependable, systematic structure."

- Smartt & Glaser, 2023, p. 83



Phonics refers to knowledge of letter sounds and the ability to apply that knowledge in decoding unfamiliar printed words.

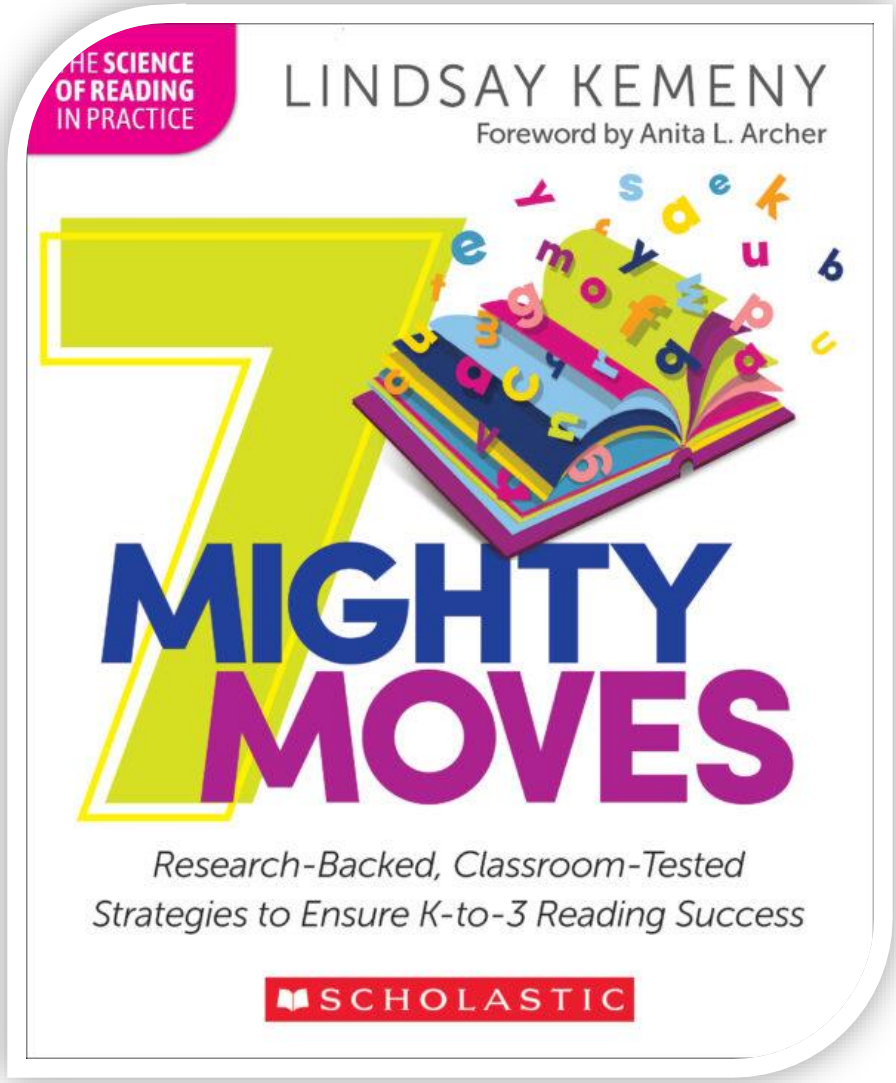
Phonics: Instruction

Keep in mind:

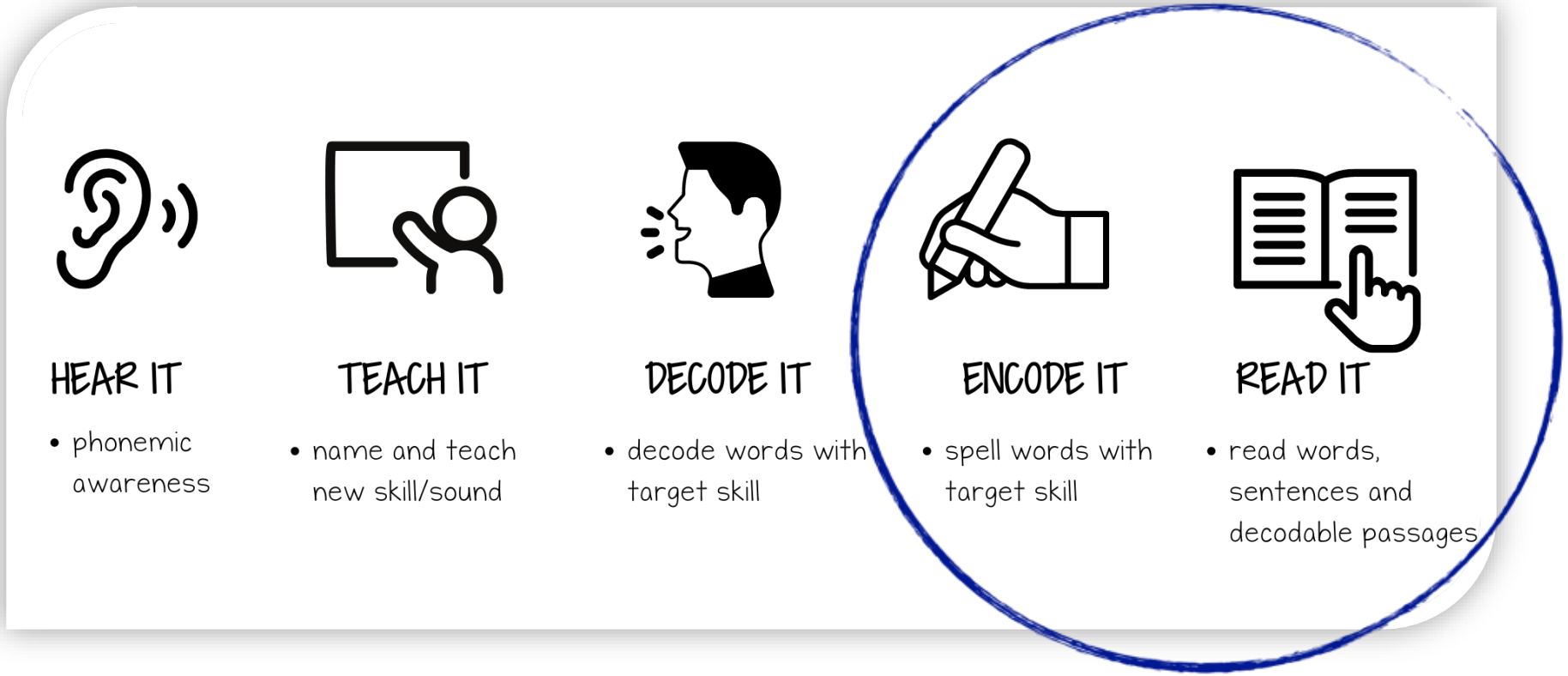
- Systematic: Move from simple to complex

  *** Following a scope and sequence

- Explicit: "Today I want to teach you…"
- Keep students engaged by:
  - ➢ Inviting student responses
  - ➢ Have students come to the board to find a word, highlight a phonics skill in a word



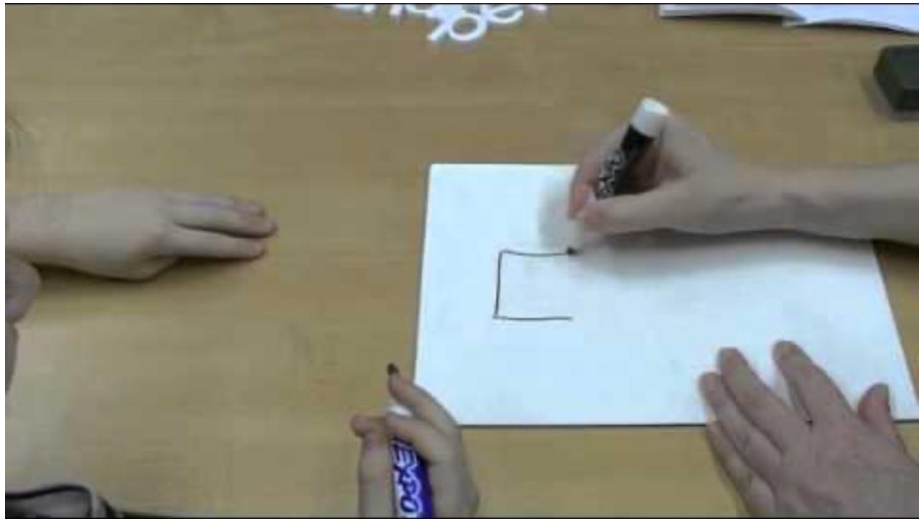
Phonics Instruction



The last two steps should be approximately 50% of your lesson time.

Blevins states “students progress at a much faster rate in phonics when the bulk of instructional time is spent on applying the skill to authentic reading and writing. experiences” (2017).

Ideas for Instructional Strategies:



- Understand “the code” yourself
- Consider using a Systematic and Explicit phonics program
- White boards will be your best friend!
- Keep lessons lively (Perky Pace), and stick to suggested times
- Don’t forget to unpack word meaning
- Try multi sensory methods
- Use Elkonin (sound) boxes to support encoding

Elkonin Box Demonstration

Sources of Insight

- **Screening:**

Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) – Kindergarten & 1st Grade

- Though not a direct phonics skill, it is a strong predictor of early reading success.

Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) – Mid-K to 2nd Grade

- Assesses knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and blending skills.

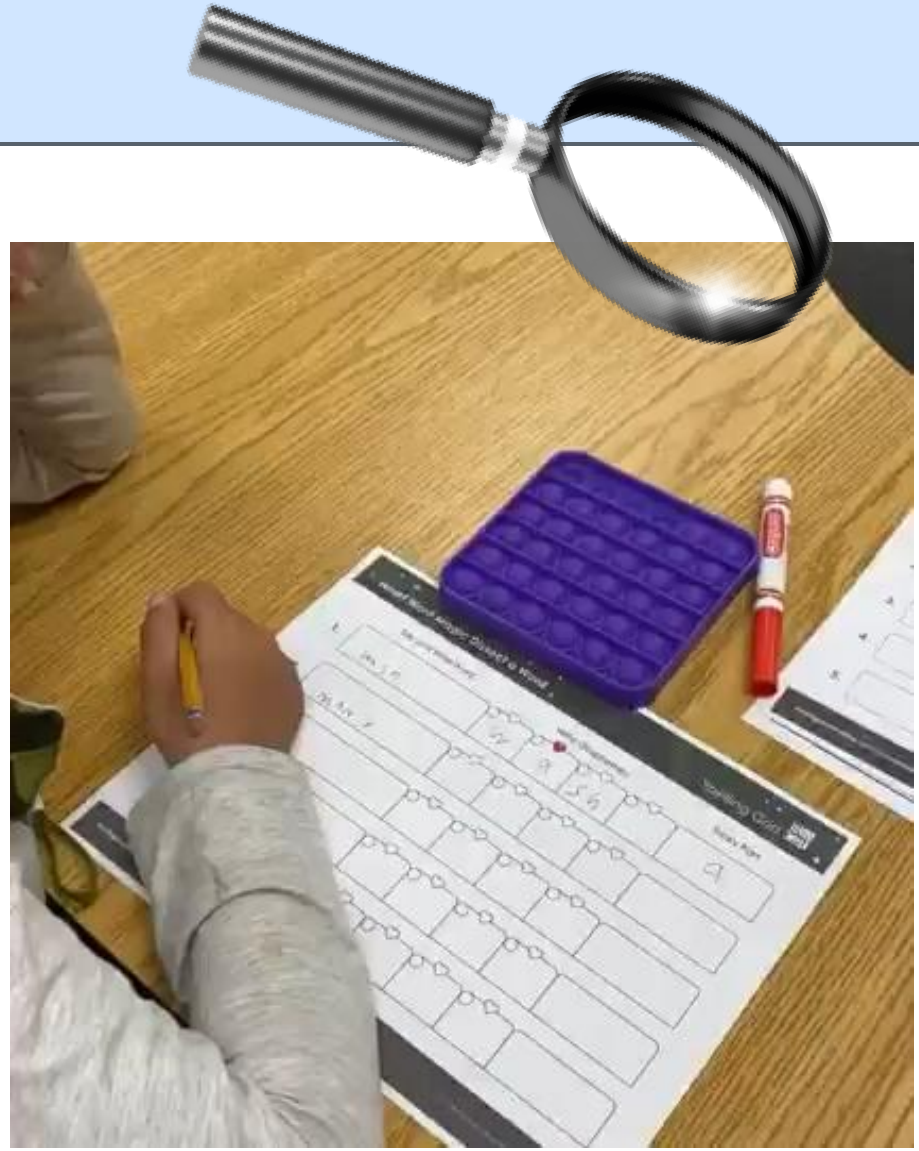
Two scoring types:

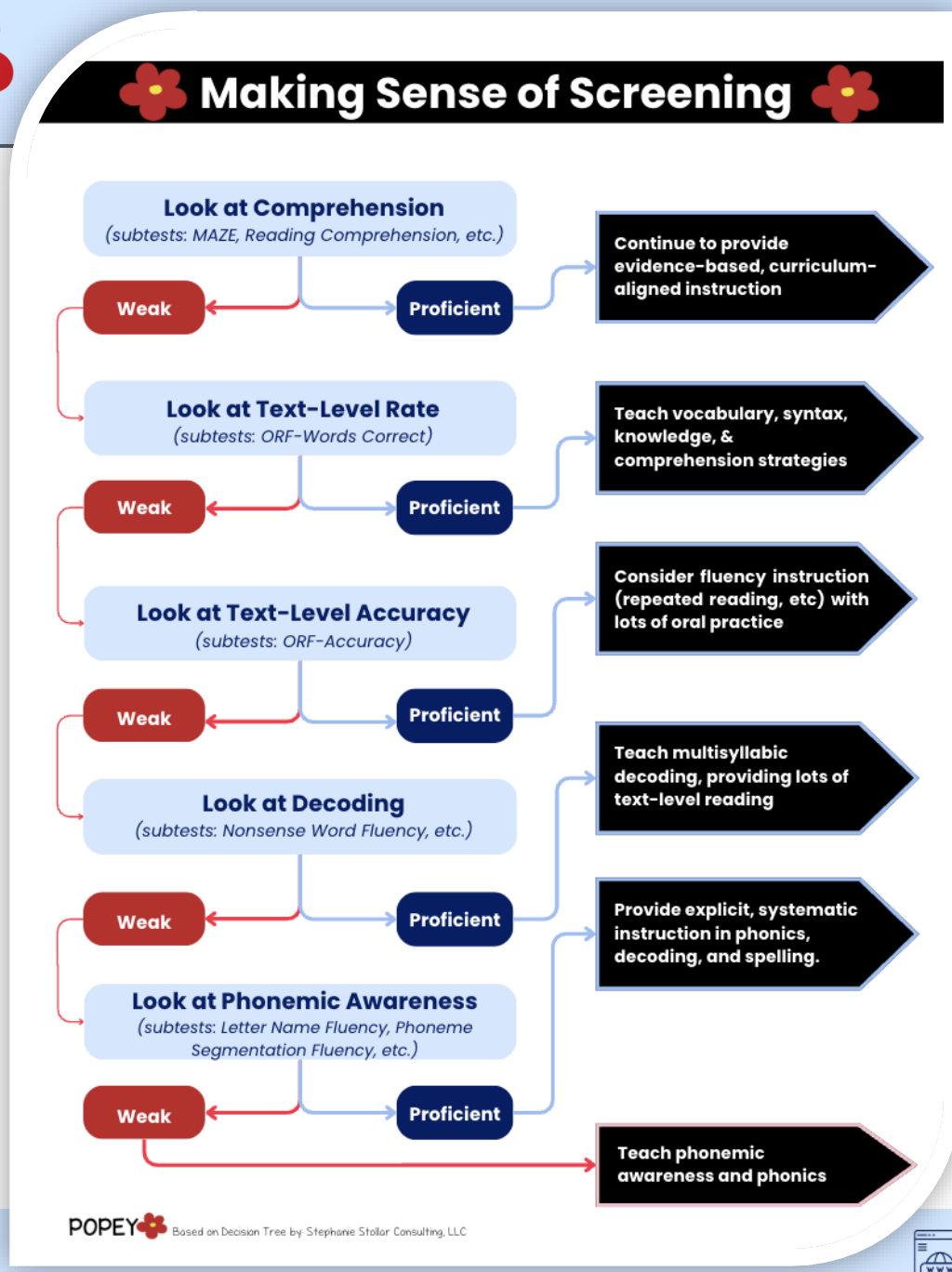
Correct Letter Sounds (CLS) and **Whole Words Read (WWR)**

Word Reading Fluency (WRF) – 1st to 3rd Grade

- Measures a student's ability to read real words accurately and fluently within one minute.
- Assesses automaticity in recognizing common phonics patterns.

- **Word mapping** reveals a child's phonics skills by assessing their ability to segment sounds, match them to letters, blend them into words, and spell accurately.





A weakness in the area of phonics may exist for older struggling readers, and needs to be addressed.

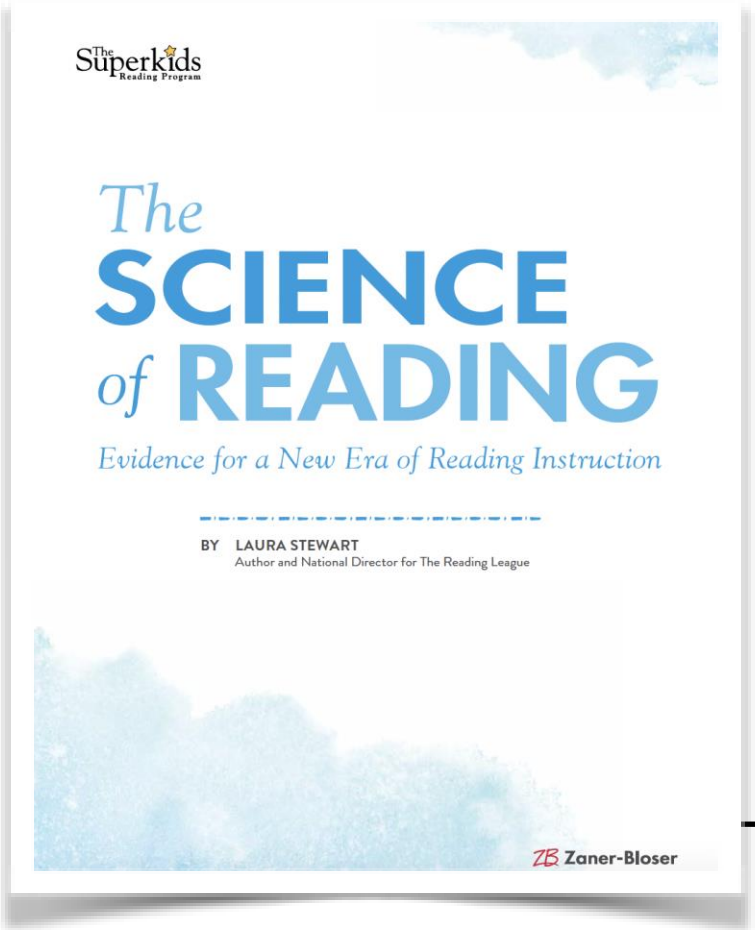
Quick Share

Turn and talk at your table groups:

- What are you currently doing to develop phonics for your students?

- What is one thing you might get started with right away?

Word, Sentence or Phrase…



- Read the article on your own (15 minutes)
- Find a partner and discuss your reflections, connections, and wonderings in pairs of 2 (5 minutes)
- Join another pair to make a quadrant and share your biggest takeaways from the article (5 minutes)

As you read – Highlight a sentence, phrase, word to share

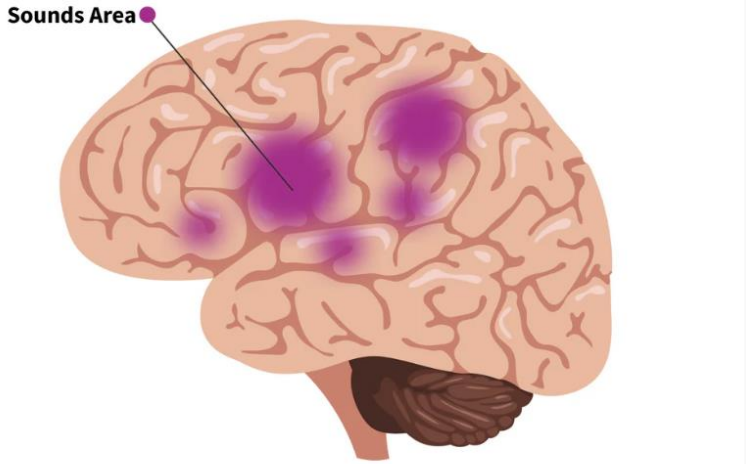
Sentence Phrase Word

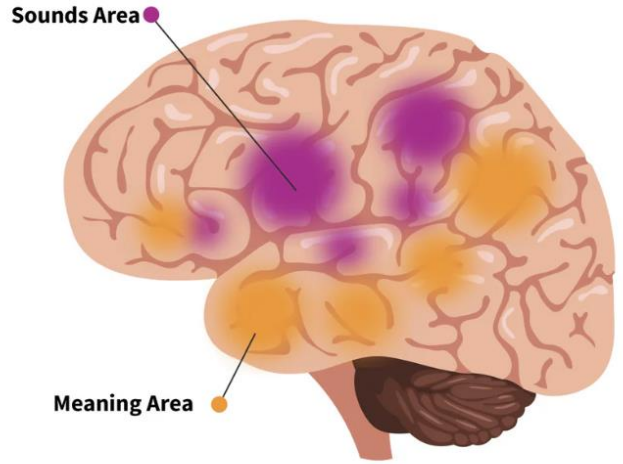
- ☐ Choose a **sentence** that was meaningful to you, that you felt captures a core idea of the text.

- ☐ Select a **phrase** that moved, engaged or provoked you.

- ☐ Choose a **word** that captured your attention or struck you as powerful.

How the Brain Learns Spoken Language





The Sounds Area

As babies hear a language, their brains track sound patterns and store the most common ones on the left side (Kuhl, 2011, 2015).

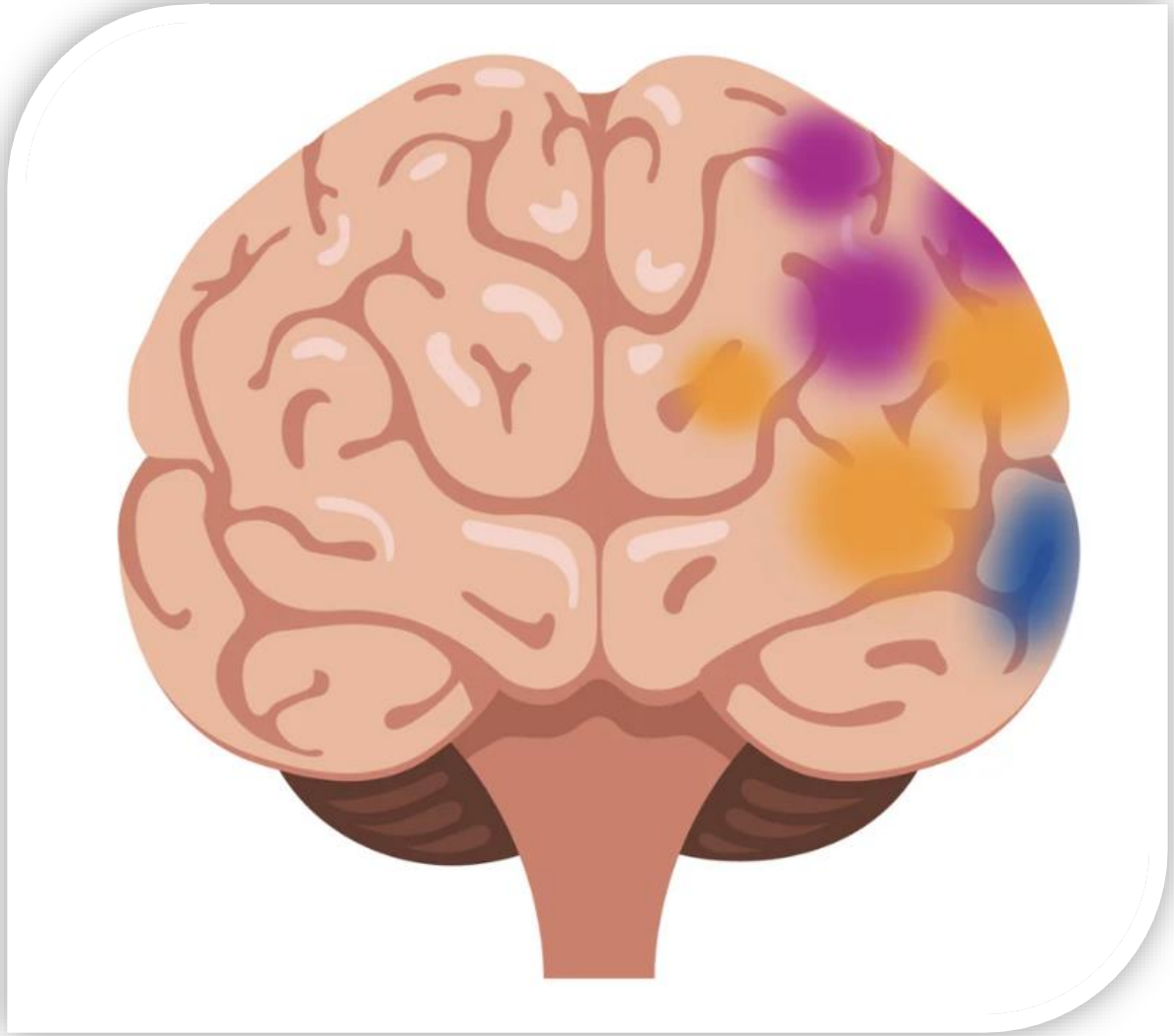
The Meaning Area

After coding sounds, babies start learning words. Their meanings are stored on the left side of the brain, near the sound area.

Listening

As we hear language, the left side of the brain processes sounds and meaning.

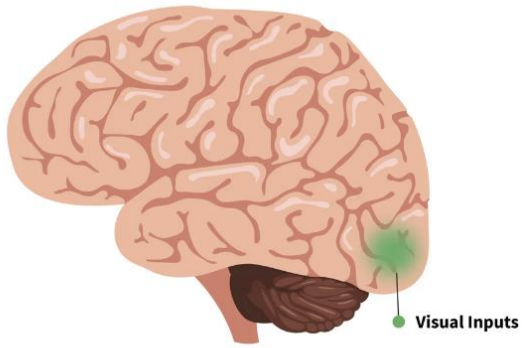
Skilled Reading

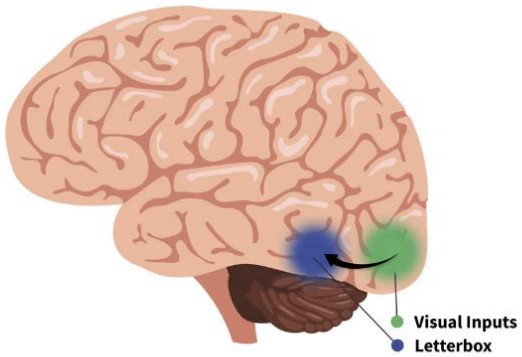


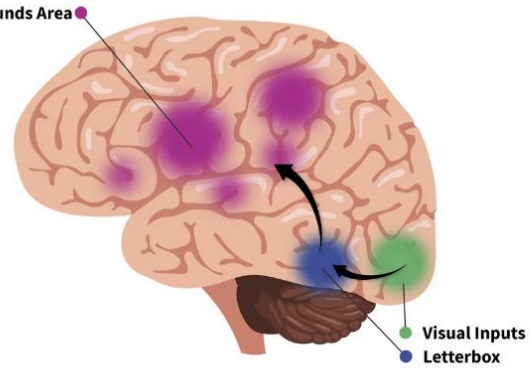
Skilled readers use the same left-brain areas as listening does.

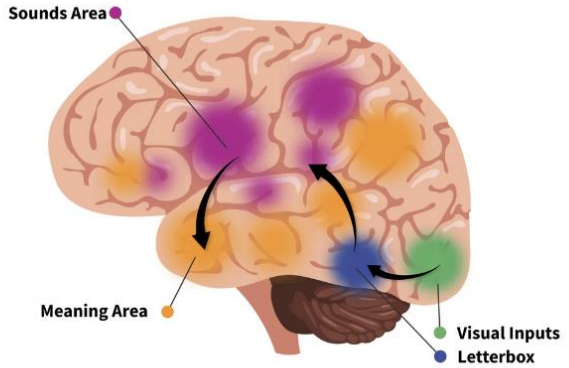
(Dehaene, 2013b)

The Reading Brain









Visual Input

Reading begins as a visual input.

Letterbox

When the brain sees a letter that represents a sound, the letter box is activated.

Sounds Area

Next, the “sounds area” of the brain is activated.

Meaning Area

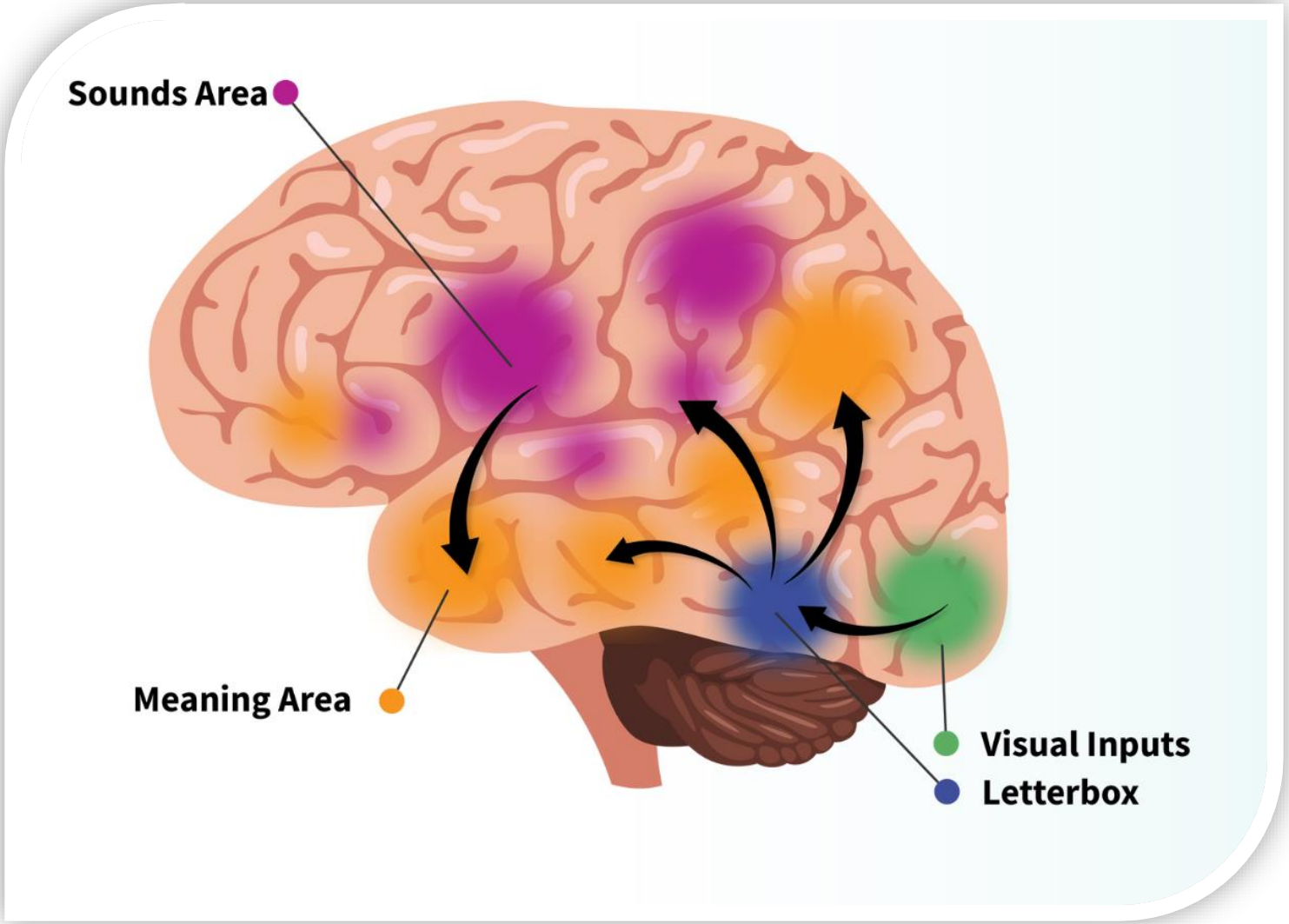
Students then use their auditory mental dictionaries (lexicons) to recognize the meaning of the word, and the “meaning area” of the brain is activated.

Evidence for a New Era of Reading Instruction
Dehaene, 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c

Fluent Reading: A Second Pathway Is Formed

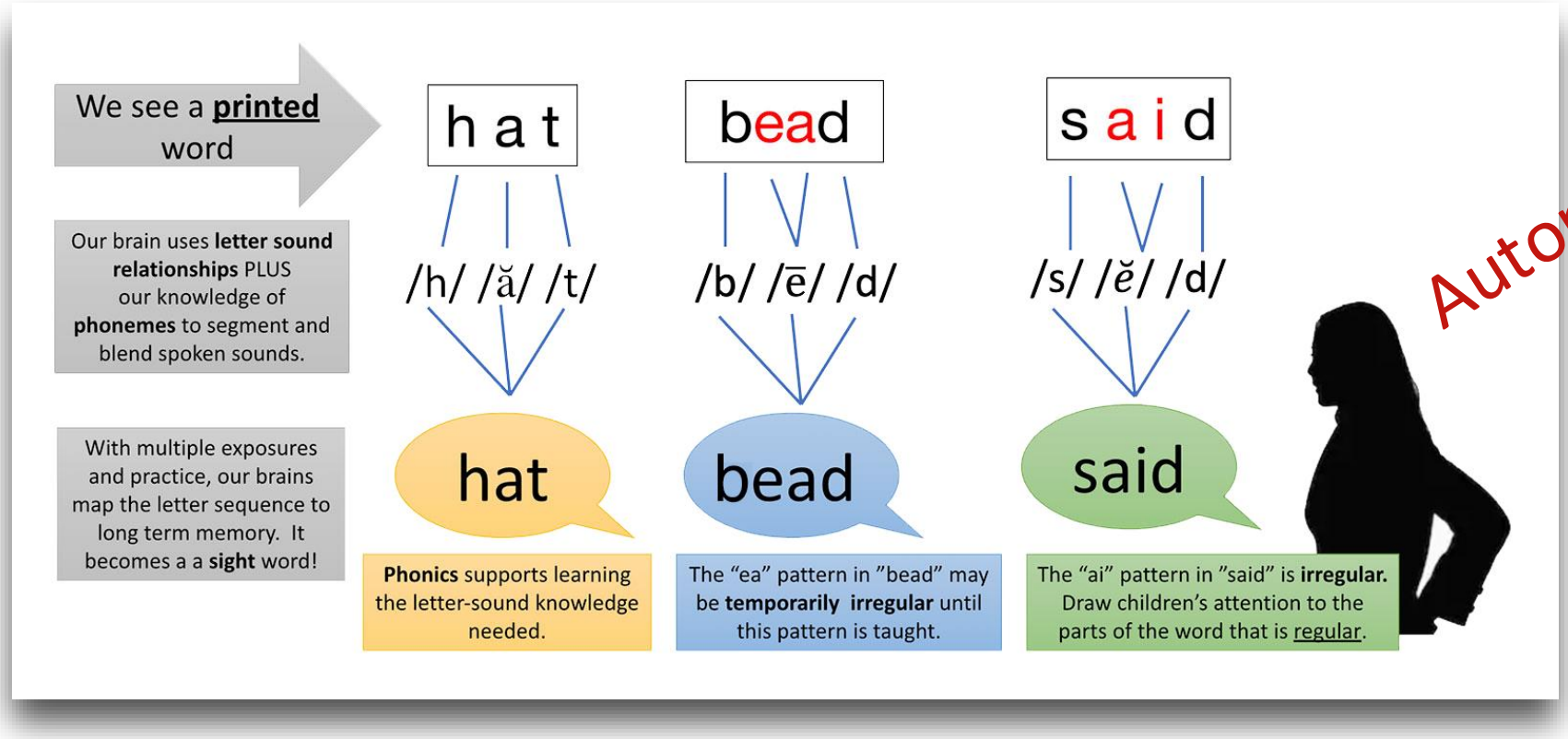
With practice sounding out words, the brain develops a second pathway directly from the letterbox to the meaning area.

Fluent readers process sounds and meaning in parallel.



The role of Orthographic Mapping – “Sight Words"

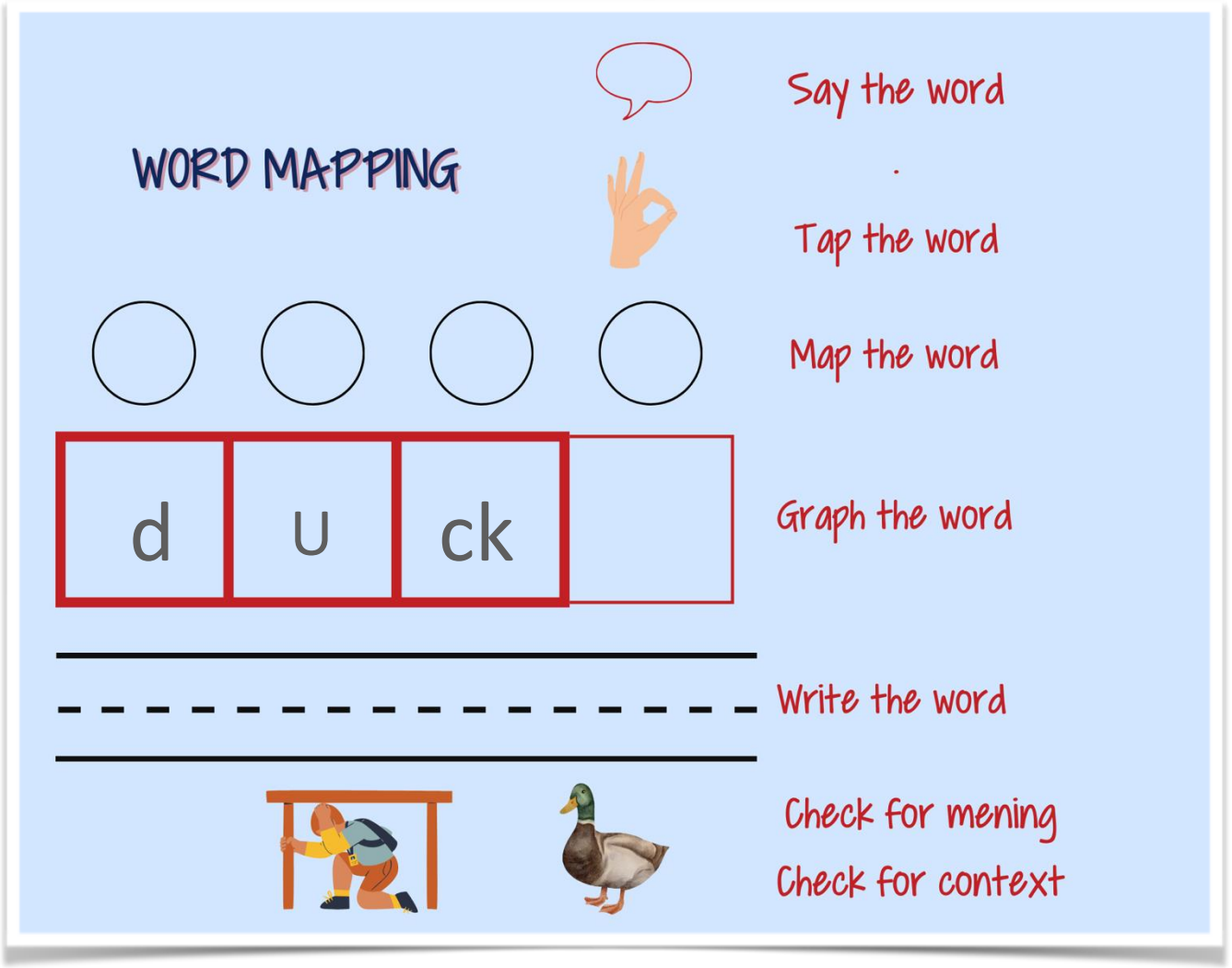
The process of storing a word permanently in memory for instant retrieval is called orthographic mapping.



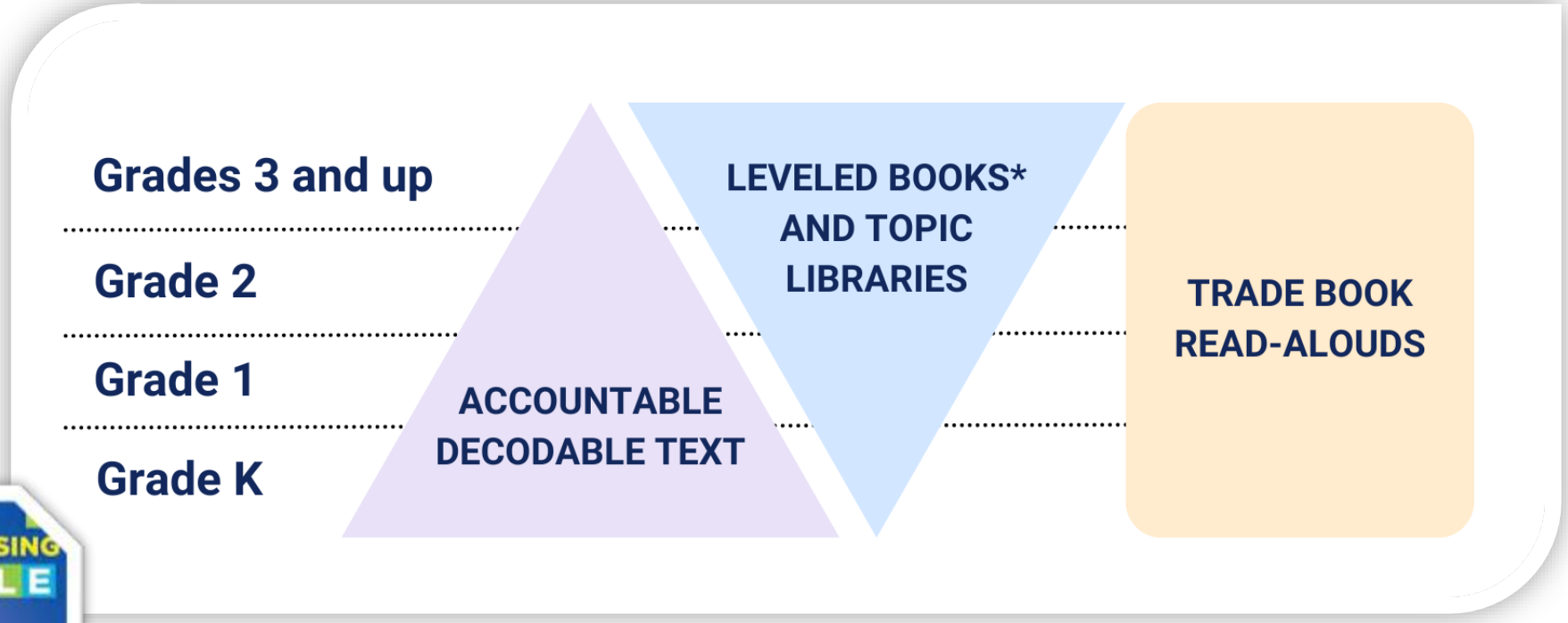
Creating a sight word involves forming permanent connections between a word’s letters, its pronunciation, and its meaning in memory.

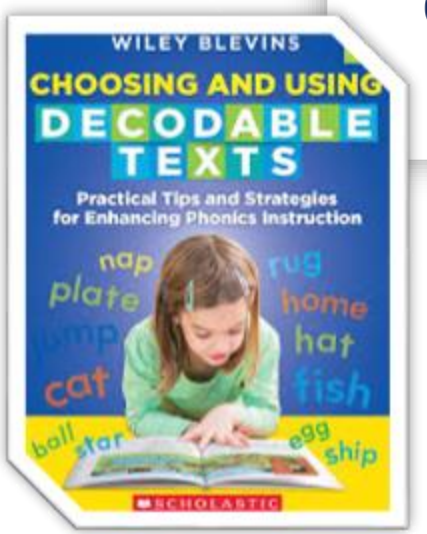
Word Mapping: Supporting the Cognitive Progress

Word mapping is a physical way to represent the relationship between the phonemes and graphemes.



Decodable Text





Important to remember that students need access to a

variety of texts for different instructional purposes

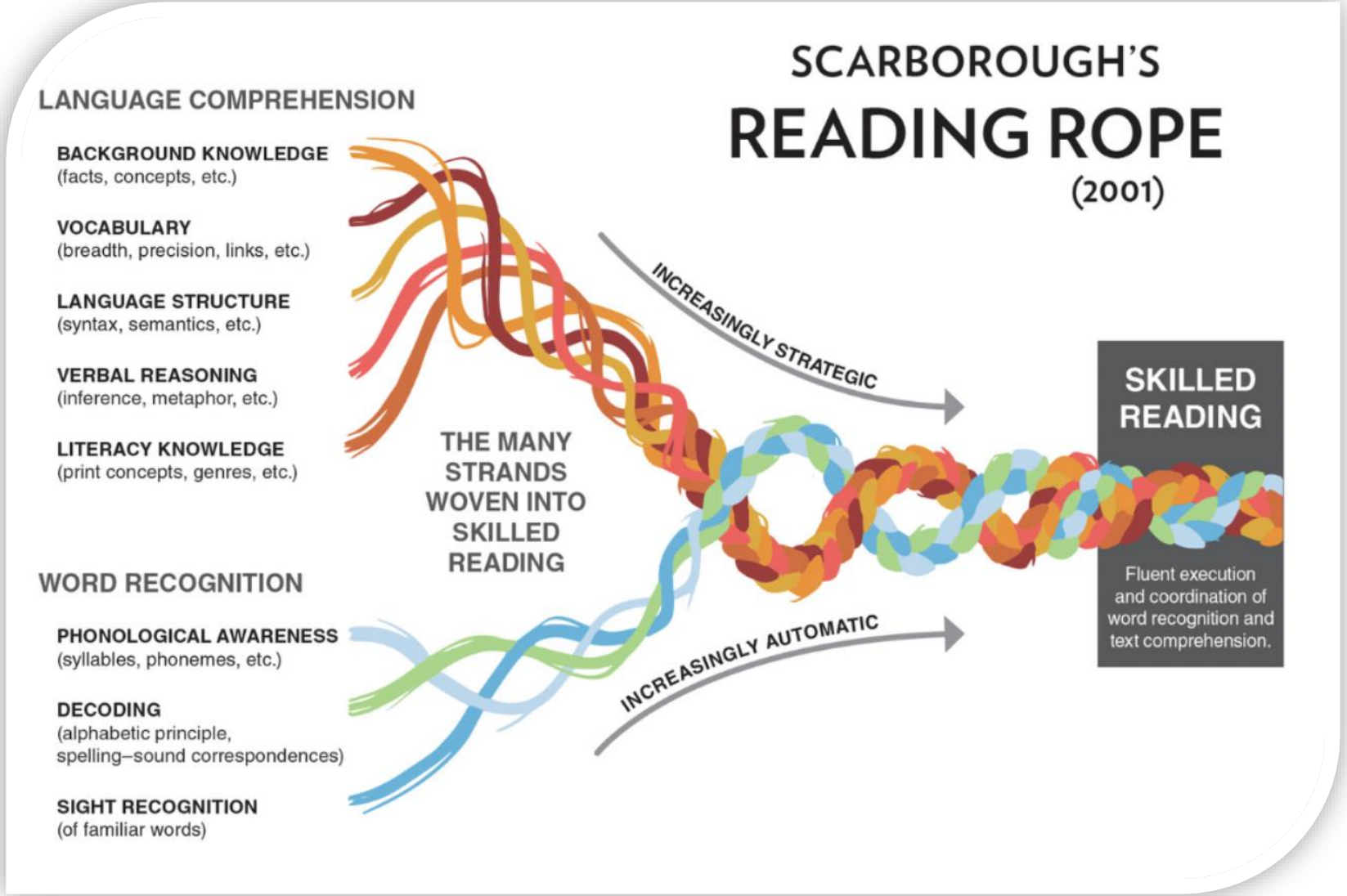
Decodable Text: Exit Ticket for Lunch!

Using decodable text is important because…

Using decodable text is important but…

Using decodable texts is important so…

Scarborough's Reading Rope



Why Teach Vocabulary?

- A rich vocabulary supports learning about the world, new ideas, and enjoying the beauty of language
- A rich vocabulary enhances what an individual wants to say and write

Vocabulary knowledge is strongly related to reading proficiency and tightly related to reading comprehension: primary, intermediate, high school and adults.

Active Processing Looks and Sounds Like…

Children are more likely to learn when they can actively engage with a word and its meaning, rather than passively receiving information from the teacher

- Discussing images related to a new word
- Discussing and exploring objects ie. a thermometer
- Using movement - demonstrating migration by walking from one side of the room to the other
- Thinking of real-life examples - a time when you felt exuberant
- Discussing multiple meanings of a word - season (your food), season (winter, spring)
- Thinking about/noticing meaningful parts of words (morphology) - tricycle, triangle, tripod
- Using new vocabulary in writing

How do we Learn New Words?

When we engage in conversation

What can this look like in the classroom?

- Regularly and intentionally using sophisticated language throughout the day for students of all ages
- The more interesting words we use around students the more words they will pick up and use themselves

What it Means to Really Know a Word…

- I can share an informal explanation
- I can use a synonym or antonym
- I can give categorical information
- I can recognize nuances between similar words
- I can recognize word parts (morphological understanding)
- I can connect to personal experience
- I can recognize multiple meanings - bark/bark

Effective Strategies: Frayer Model

What does it feel like:

1. ice cube
2. snow
3. winter day

The word in a sentence:

Brrr! It is getting <u>cold</u>.

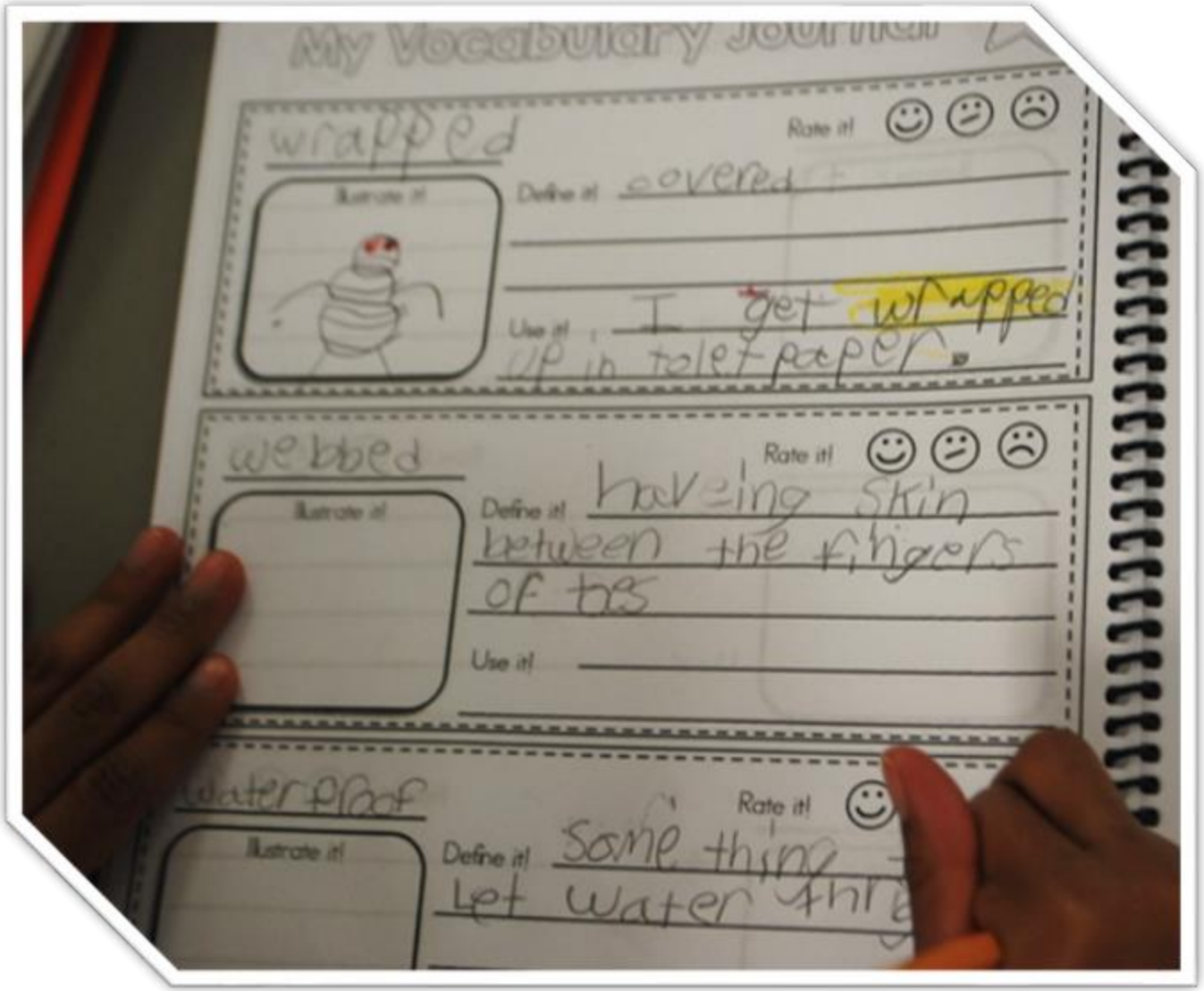
c o l d

Write three synonyms:

1. freezing
2. chilly
3. icy

Draw a picture of the word:

Practical Tips and Activities



- Word of the Day.
- Vocabulary Journals.
- Interactive games (e.g., vocabulary bingo, word associations).

Creating a Word Rich Environment

- Labeling items in the classroom.
- Integrating new vocabulary into daily conversations.
- Encouraging curiosity about words.

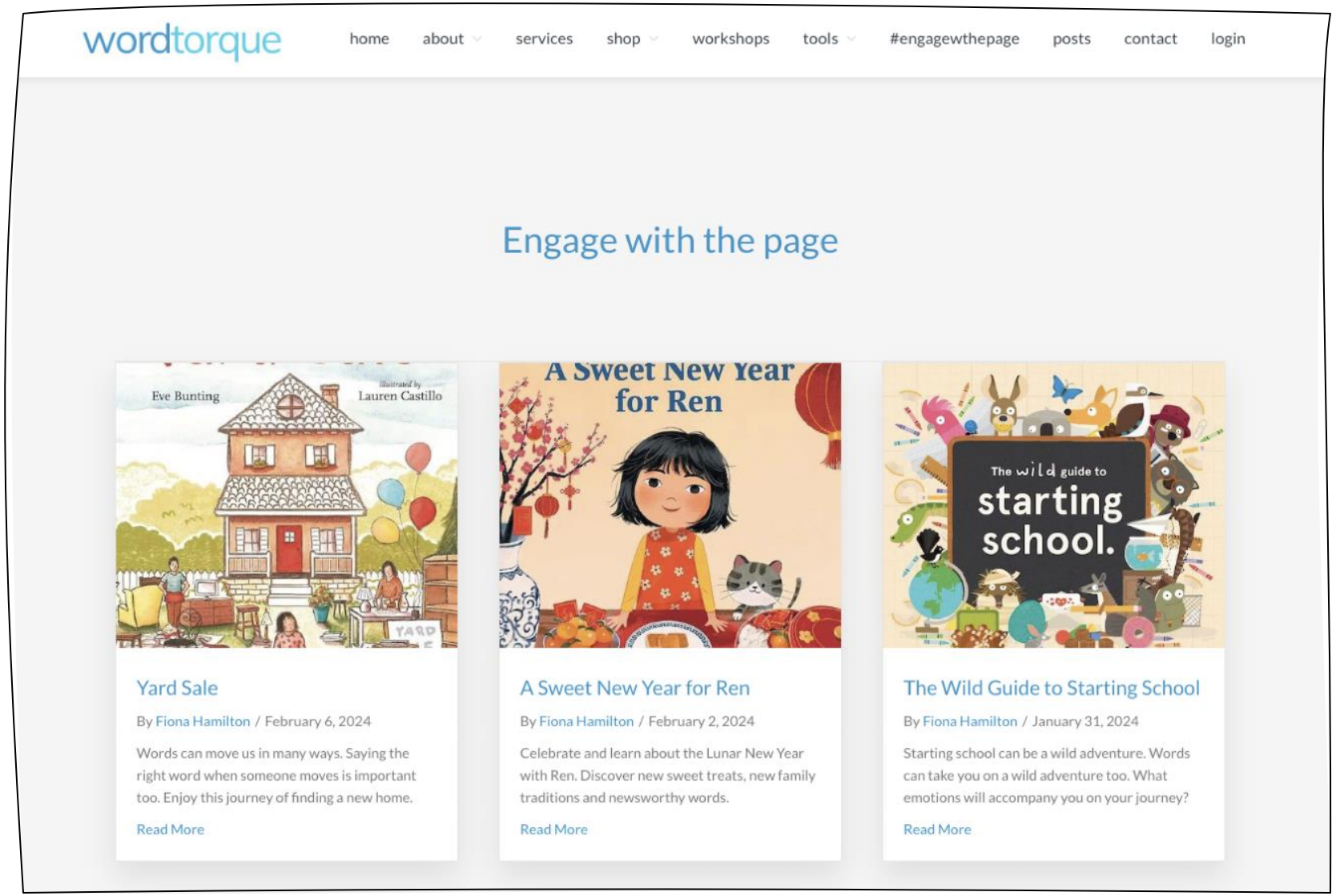
Read Aloud

There are more rare words found in children's picture books than in the average conversation between two college educated adults.

Hays and Ahrens (1988)

Into the Classroom…

To inspire
WORD STUDY



Into the classroom…

ReadWorks Article-A-Day™

Build knowledge, vocabulary, and stamina with a routine that students love.

Sets of 6 to 9 articles that are related by topic

Nonfiction topics to build knowledge

For grades Kindergarten to 8th

Research-based classroom routine with writing & oral sharing

All you need is 10 minutes each day for the routine. Students will gain the most by reading **4 or more articles** from an Article-A-Day set each week and doing the routine for **15 or more weeks** in the school year. Article-A-Day can be done digitally, printed, or projected!

Plan an entire year with our K-6 Scope & Sequences: https://www.readworks.org/scope-and-sequence

Step 1: Set the purpose for the routine

- *"Words are where humans store knowledge. So we will build our knowledge by reading these articles. We will also increase our vocabulary, improve our reading stamina, and enjoy reading every day."*

Step 2: Students read or listen to an article

- If students cannot read independently, they can listen to the audio, or you can read the article aloud.

Step 3: The "Book of Knowledge"

- Students write or type two or three things that they learned from the article and would like to remember in their Books of Knowledge.
- If students cannot write yet, they can draw their responses.

Step 4: Share Knowledge!

- Ask a few students to share with the class what they learned from reading.
- Create a "Class Book of Knowledge where you record this information. You can do this in Assignments & Progress or on chart paper.

To inspire

CONTENT AREA READING

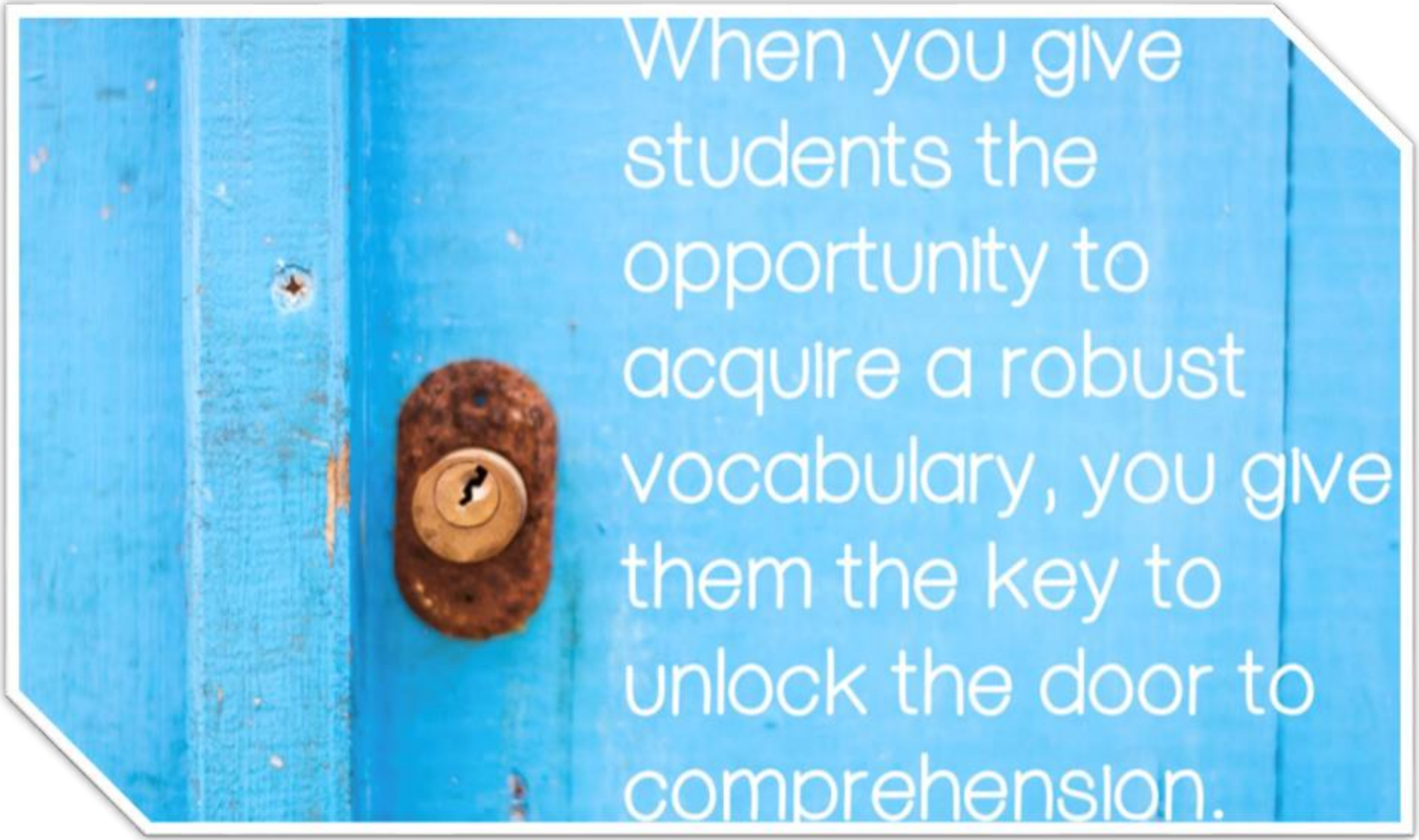
Build Background Knowledge

&

Vocabulary

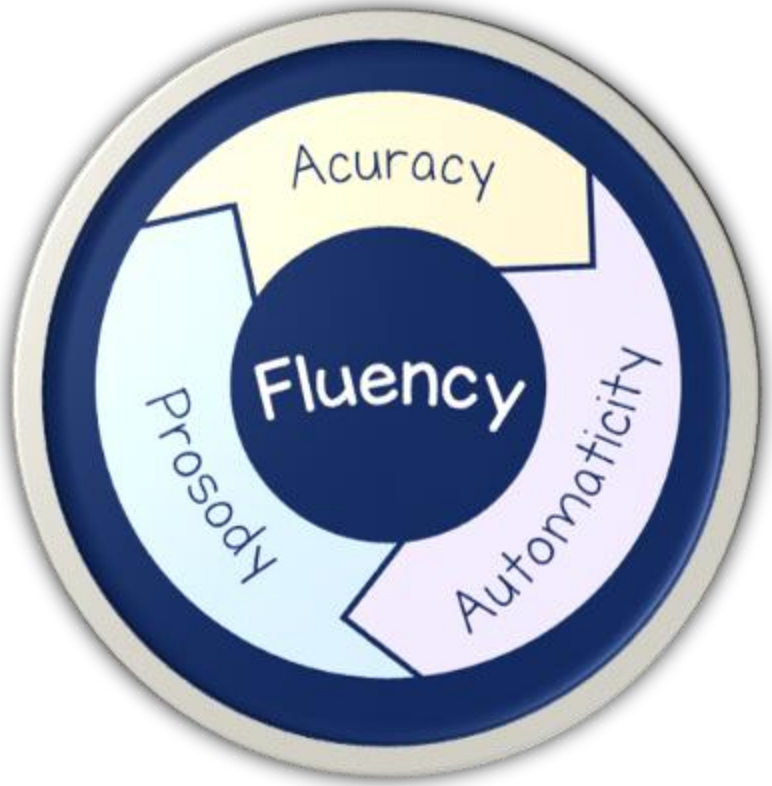
Read Works: Article A Day

Key Takeaways



Fluency

Fluency refers to the development of three components: accuracy, automaticity and prosody and provides the bridge between word recognition and comprehension (Duke & Cartwright, 2021)



1. Accuracy refers to identifying or reading letter names/sounds and words correctly.

2. Automaticity can be considered in two levels:
   - word level (ability to read words quickly and effortlessly)
   - text level (ability to read connected text including sentences, passages and books quickly and effortlessly)

3. Prosody refers to a readers natural voice and expression

Building Fluency

Accuracy: we can build accuracy through decoding as part of explicit and systematic phonics instruction.

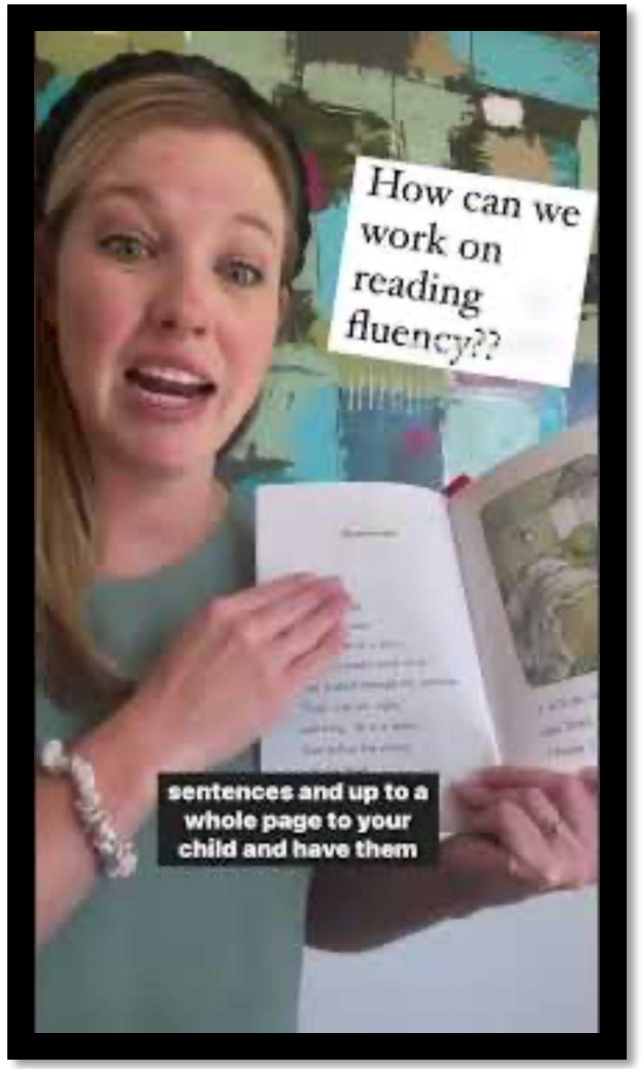
Automaticity: reading words with automaticity is a result of orthographic mapping (Ehri, 2014).

We can build word level automaticity through blending drills and Beat the Clock and other word reading activities including word mapping.

Text level automaticity is achieved through reading practice of connected text. Such practice can include repeated reading, choral reading and echo reading.

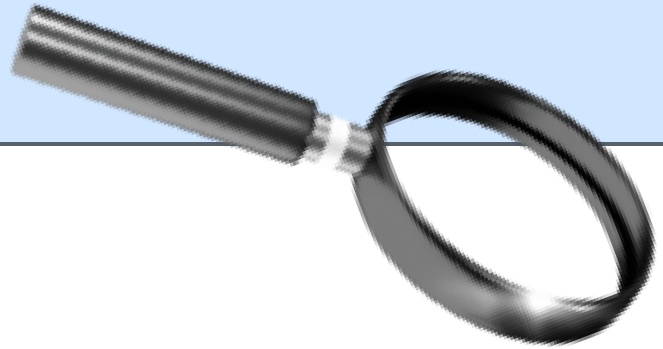
Prosody is built through teacher modeling of fluent reading during read alouds and can also develop through repeated reading and activities like readers theatre

Ideas for instructional Strategies:



- Remember…fluency is not an isolated skill
  - subskills: phonemic awareness, sound-symbol knowledge, automaticity at letter or word level
- Small Group instruction affords specific, immediate feedback
- Model, model, model!!!
- Whole Group Reading including:
  - Read aloud, cloze reading, choral reading, echo reading
- Partner Reading
- Reader's Theatre
- Beat the Clock Timed Reading
- Repeated Reading – Fluency Triangles

Sources of Insight



<u>All Universal Screeners include fluency measures!</u>

- **Bridges Decoding & Comprehension** – Frees mental energy for understanding.
- **Signals Foundational Skill Gaps** – Reveals phonics or vocabulary weaknesses.
- **Predicts Future Reading Success** – Strong fluency links to academic growth.
- **Quick & Reliable** – One-minute tests provide fast, accurate data.
- **Guides Instruction** – Helps target accuracy, speed, and expression.

The Simple View of Reading - Comprehension

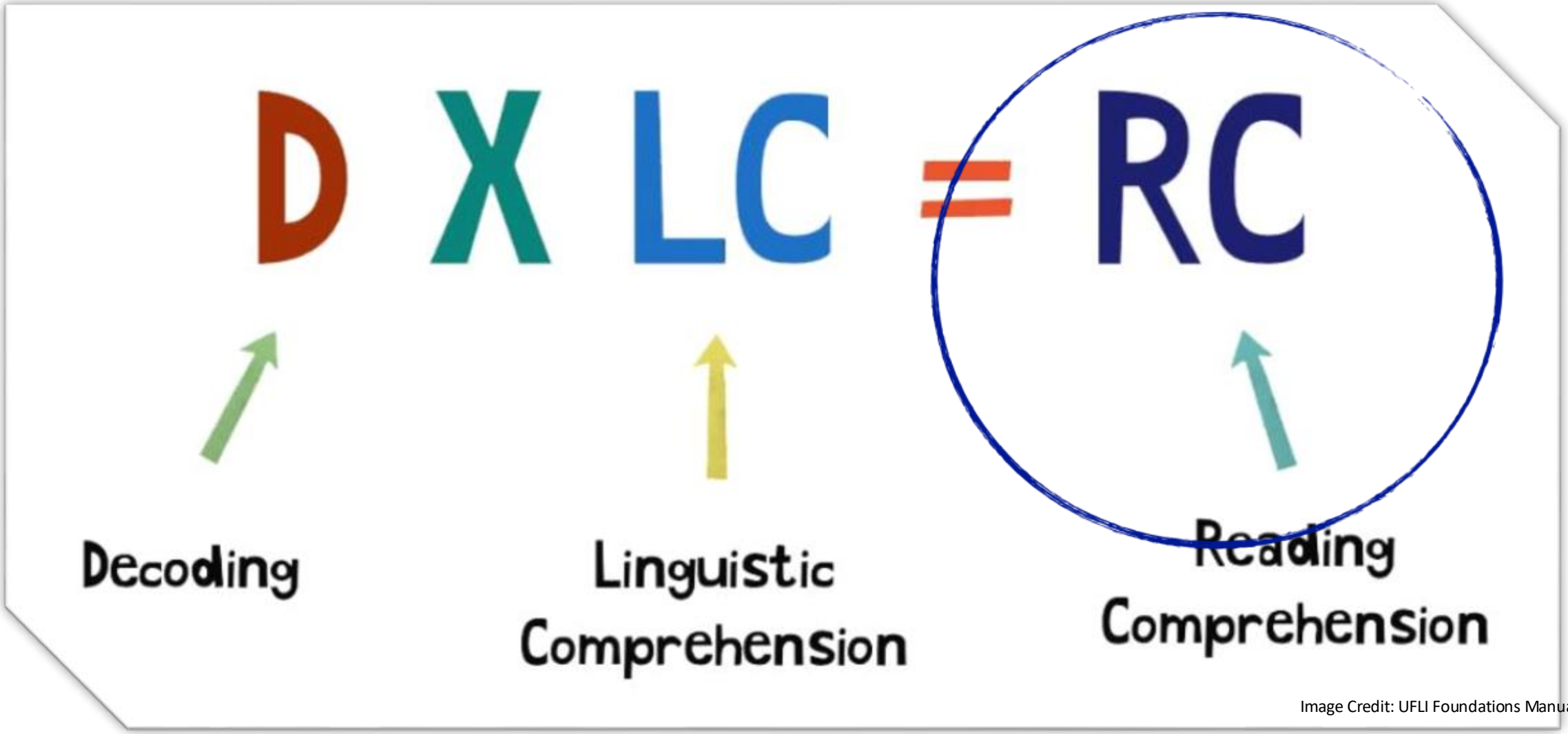


Image Credit: UFLI Foundations Manual

Skilled Comprehenders use these Strategies

We can explicitly model these comprehension skills and engage students in conversations that allow them to practice comprehension.

Reading Comprehension

"There is no comprehension strategy powerful enough to compensate for the fact that you can't read the words" (Archer, 2001)

- Reading comprehension is complex and is not a single "skill" or set of strategies
- Instead, we can think of it as an *outcome*

Archer, 2001

An Invitation

What is one thing you might:

- Start
- Stop
- Keep

Image Credit: Six Shifts Facebook Page

THE Reading Tree

"We envision learning to read is like growing a tree.
The decoding skills of phonemic awareness and systematic phonics are akin to the roots supporting the part of the tree we see, comprehension and the joy of reading."

Sources

Books & Articles

- A Fresh Look at Phonics - Blevins, 2016
- 7 Mighty Moves - Kemeny, 2023
- A Teacher's Guide to Vocabulary Development Across the Day: Wright, 2021
- Bringing Words to Life - Beck, McKeown, Kucan
- Reach All Readers – Geiger, 2024
- Next Steps in Literacy Instruction – Smart & Glaser, 2024

Digital Resources

- The Six Shifts
- Engage with the Page
- Read Works: Article A Day
- Science of Reading Defining Guide
- Six Shifts: Are You Teaching the Key Comprehension Strategies Students Really Need

Digital Resources: cont'd

Stephanie Stollar Reading Science Academy

Maryanne Wolf

Reading Rockets: The Active View of Reading

Reading Rockets: Models of Reading

Beyond the Simple View of Reading

International Dyslexia Association Ontario

Shanahan on Literacy

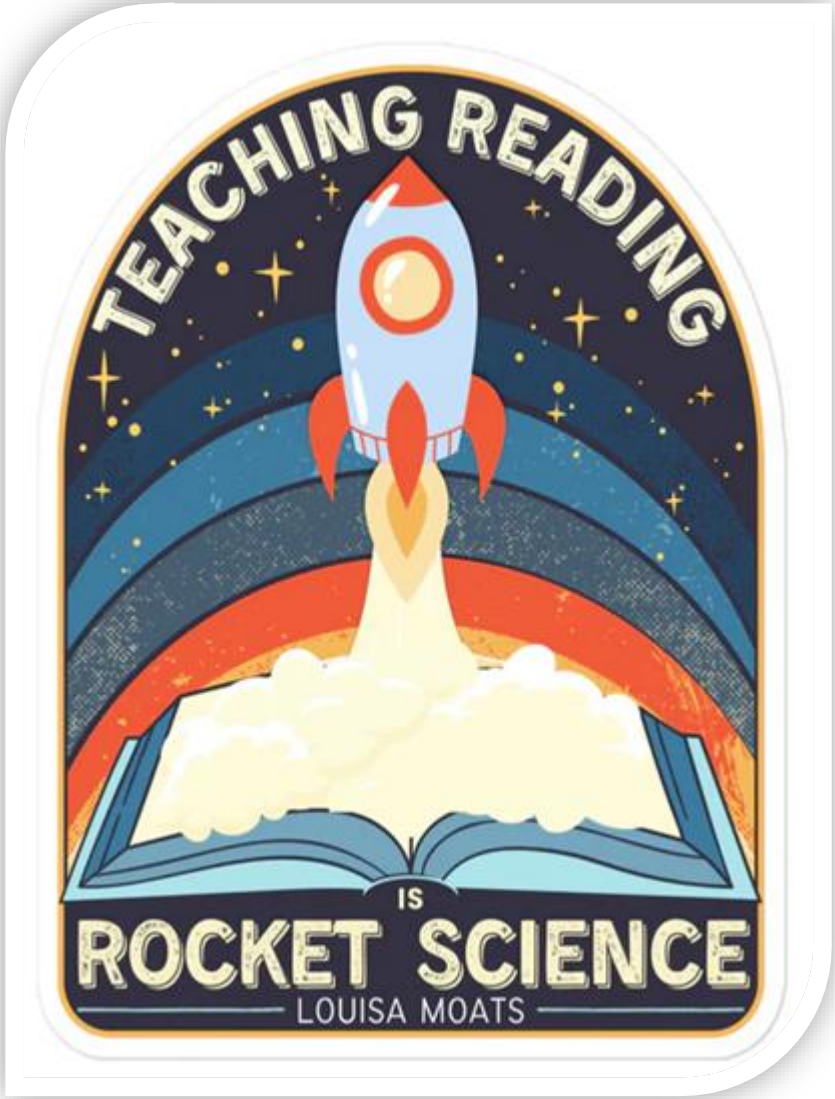
How We Learn To Read - Harvard Medical School

Evidence for a New Era of Reading Instruction

Logic of English

Word of the Day

Thinking Routine: Word Sentence Phrase



Thank you for your dedication and passion!

Your hard work inspires and makes a lasting impact!

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