



Provincial Outreach
Program for the Early
Years

We will start in ...



Supporting Dyslexic & Diverse Readers in the Classroom

April 25, 2025

11:00-12:30

*Handouts available at – popey.ca/workshop-resources

Connect with us online!



@POPEYBC



@popeybc

Jen Kelly

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POPEY's Approach

POPEY shares research and knowledge around how we learn to read, the reading brain, and the foundational skills that support learning to read and write.

In workshops, POPEY offers a collection of evidence-based strategies for teachers to consider.

Teaching reading is not a one-size fits all model – no two districts are the same, just as no two students are the same.

POPEY meets teachers where they are at.

We invite teachers to consider implementing evidence-based instructional techniques to ensure literacy success for their diverse learners.

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Not either / or



Decodable texts	vs.	Authentic literature
Research	vs.	Classroom practice
The art of teaching	vs.	The science of teaching
Individual student needs	vs.	Whole class efficiency
Direct instruction	vs.	Discovery Learning
Practice-in-isolation	vs.	Practice-in-context
Mastery of skills	vs.	Joy of Reading
Structure	vs.	Choice
Urgency	vs.	Joy

@TheSixShifts

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De-mystifying the Science of Reading

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

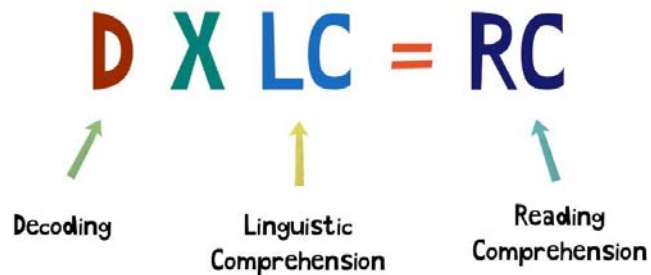
De-mystifying the Science of Reading

The Science of Reading **Is**:

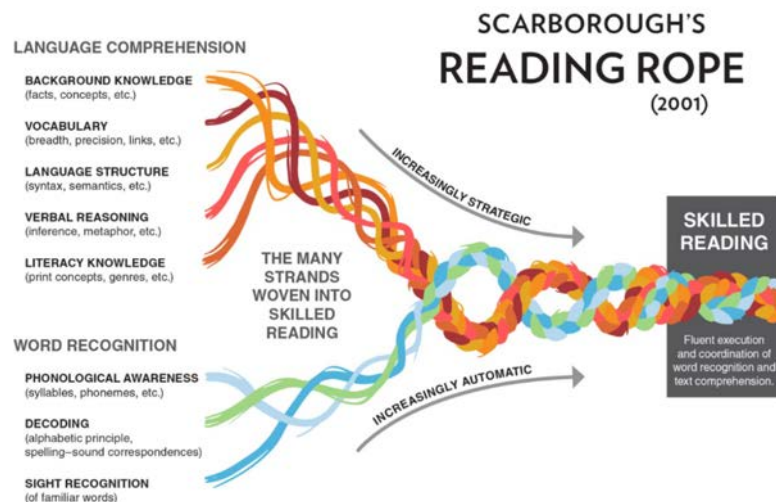
A vast, interdisciplinary body of **scientifically-based research** about reading and issues relate to reading and writing

The 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.

The Simple View of Reading



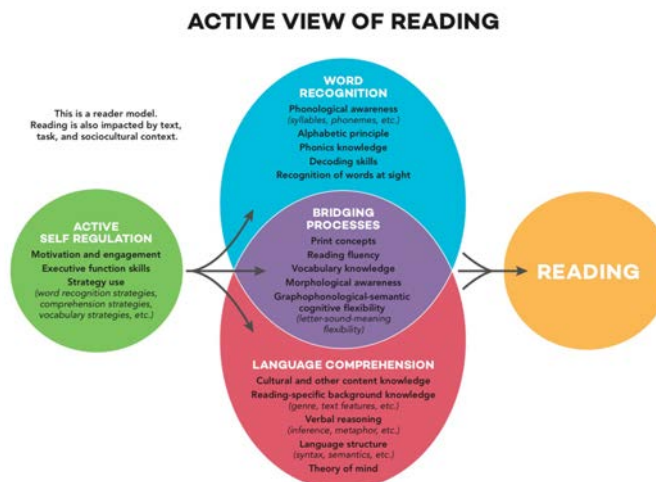
Scarborough's Reading Rope



[Reading Rockets: Models of Reading](#)

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Active View of Reading



[Reading Rockets: The Active View of Reading](#)

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Let's unpack together...

At your table groups, take a look at the three representations of reading:

- Notice what is similar
- Notice what is different
- What's new, interesting or affirming to you?

It is worth noting that:

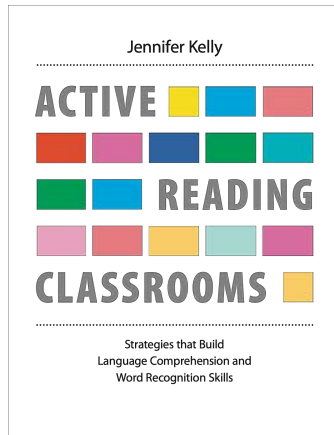
All three of these are models/representations of reading, not of reading instruction or learning to read. They describe the process of reading, the abilities one must marshal to read. But they have little to say about what a school district or even a classroom teacher needs to do to raise reading achievement –

Shanahan, 2023

[Shanahan on Literacy](#)

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The Active View of Reading: How it differs from other models



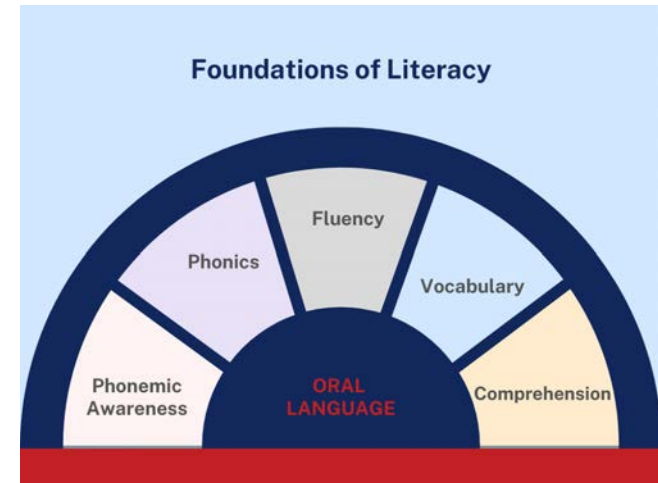
Highlighted in Active Reading Classrooms:

- Bridging processes – strengthen both word recognition and language
- Self regulation – students are not passive participants in reading
- Highlights the importance of cultural knowledge as part of the way we understand language around us

Active Reading Classrooms – Kelly, 2023

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Foundational Skills for Reading



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

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

Structured literacy:

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



A comprehensive approach that meets the needs of all learners

[International Dyslexia Association Ontario](https://www.ida-dyslexia.org/)

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

WHAT is taught:

- Both foundational skills
- AND
- Higher-level literacy skills

HOW it is taught

- Systematic and Cumulative
 - Organized, from 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)

I Do. We Do. You Do.

[International Dyslexia Association Ontario](https://www.ida-dyslexia.org/)

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Phonemic Awareness

Over nearly four decades of research, "phonemic awareness has consistently been found to be the strongest precursor to, and predictor of, reading achievement" (Kenner, et al).



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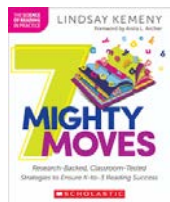
Phonemic Awareness: Instruction

Keep in mind:

- Short and frequent sessions
- Focus primarily on blending and segmenting (phoneme-level skills)
- Begin to add letters to this work
- Often integrated into phonics lesson

Ideas for instructional Strategies:

- Use manipulatives to keep it playful
 - Elkonin boxes + bingo chips
 - Pop It fidget toys
 - Race cars + tracks
 - Unifix cubes
- Encourage gestures
 - Hand choppers
 - Tap down arm
 - Finger/thumb tap
- Word Chains – build phonemic awareness and phonics skills at the same time



7 Mighty Moves – Kemény, 2023

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Phonemic Awareness: Application

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).

Letter Sound Recognition & Alphabetic Principle

Alphabet recognition and phonemic awareness are the two best predictors of early reading success. Blevins states that "these skills open the gate for reading" (2017).



Letter Sound Recognition & Alphabetic Principle

- Consider the way we teach articulation of letter sounds
- Consider the order in which we teach letters

How many word can you make from these letters:

s, m, t, d, l

vs

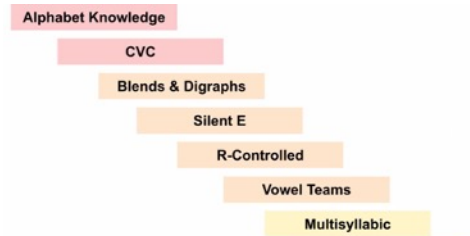
s, m, a, t, d



Phonics

Mesmer and Griffith (2005)

define phonics as "a system for encoding speech sounds into written symbols". Phonics is the way sounds and letters are connected. Students with phonics knowledge understand the relationship between letters, patterns of letters and sounds.



Phonics Instruction



HEAR IT

- phonemic awareness



TEACH IT

- name and teach new skill/sound



DECODE IT

- decode words with target skill



ENCODE IT

- spell words with target skill



READ IT

- read words, sentences and decodable passages

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).

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

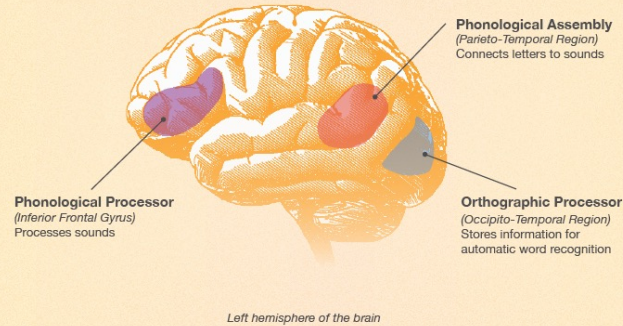
Ideas for instructional Strategies:

- Understand "the code" yourself
- Consider using a Systematic and Explicit phonics program
- White boards will be your best friend!
- Keep lessons lively, and stick to suggested times
- Don't forget to unpack word meaning
- Try multi sensory methods
- Use Elkonin (sound) boxes to support encoding
- Weekly progress monitoring is critical!



The Reading Brain

REGIONS OF THE BRAIN ASSOCIATED WITH READING



[Evidence for a New Era of Reading Instruction](#)

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The role of orthographic mapping in learning to read

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

Orthographic mapping is the **cognitive process** that supports a reader to recognize words instantly as sight words where they no longer need to decode or segment each sound to read a word.

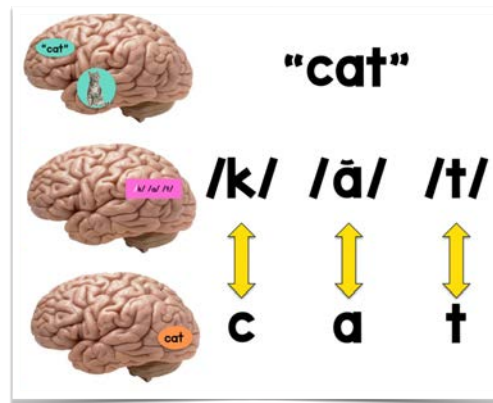
[Sarah's Teaching Snippets](#)

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The role of orthographic mapping in learning to read

Each word has three forms:

- Meaning
- Phonology (sound)
- Orthography (spelling)

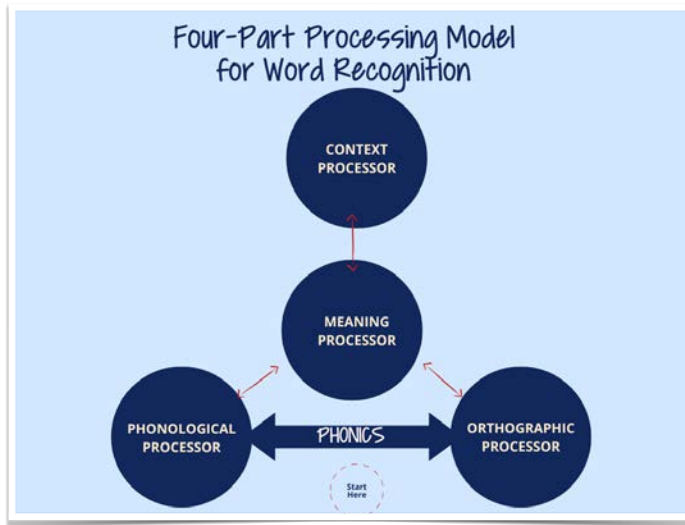


[Sarah's Teaching Snippets](#)

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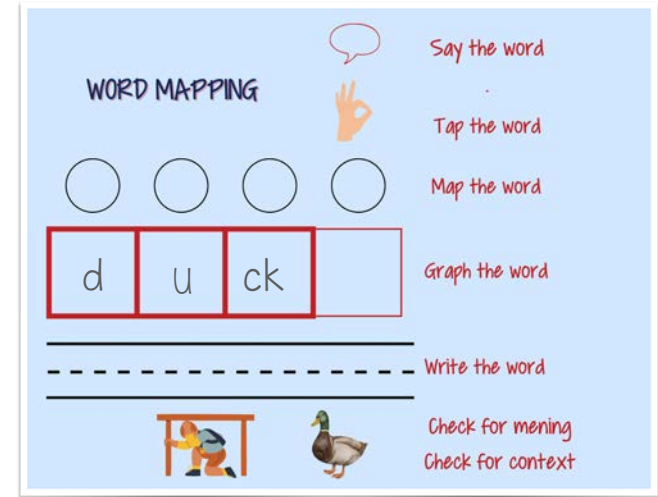
Four Part Processing Model for Word Recognition



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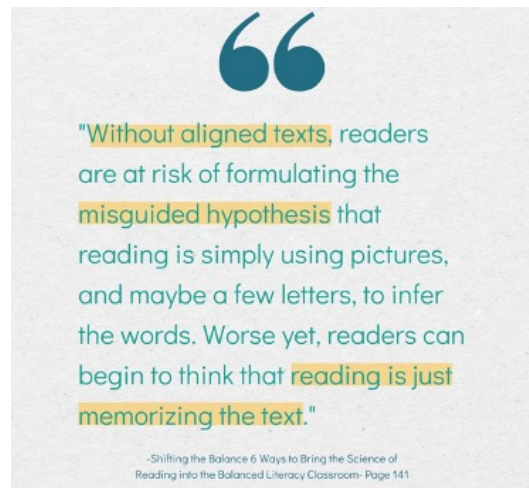
Word Mapping: supporting the cognitive process of orthographic mapping

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



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Decodable Text: A teaching tool to support phonics instruction



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Blank lined area for writing practice.

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Decodable Text

Grades 3 and up

Grade 2

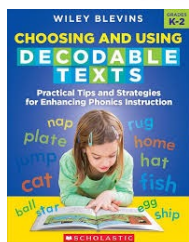
Grade 1

Grade K

LEVELED BOOKS*
AND TOPIC
LIBRARIES

ACCOUNTABLE
DECODABLE TEXT

TRADE BOOK
READ-ALOUDS



Important to remember that students need access to a variety of texts for different instructional purposes

Choosing and Using Decodable Texts: Practical Tips and Strategies for Enhancing Phonics Instruction – Blevins – 2021

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Fluency

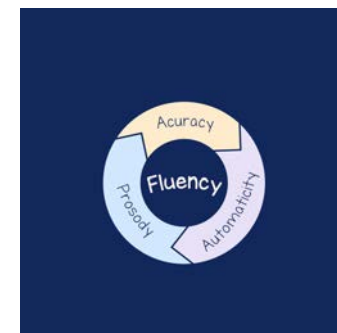
Fluency refers to the development of three components: accuracy, automaticity and prosody and provides the bridge between word recognition and comprehension (Duke & Cartwright, 2021)

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

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)

Prosody refers to a readers natural voice and expression



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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

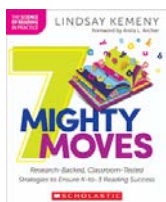
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Building Fluency

Keep in mind:

- More than just reading fast
- Don't teach phonics in isolation
- Avoid "round robin" reading
- Be mindful of how you use independent reading time



7 Mighty Moves – Kemény, 2023

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

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An invitation

What is one thing you might:

- Start
- Stop
- Keep



Shifting the Balance – Burkins & Yates, 2021

Image Credit: Six Shifts Facebook Page

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Sources

Books & Articles

Active Reading Classrooms - Kelly, 2023

A Fresh Look at Phonics - Blevins, 2016

Shifting the Balance - Burkins & Yates, 2021

7 Mighty Moves - Kemény, 2023

Digital Resources

[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](#)

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