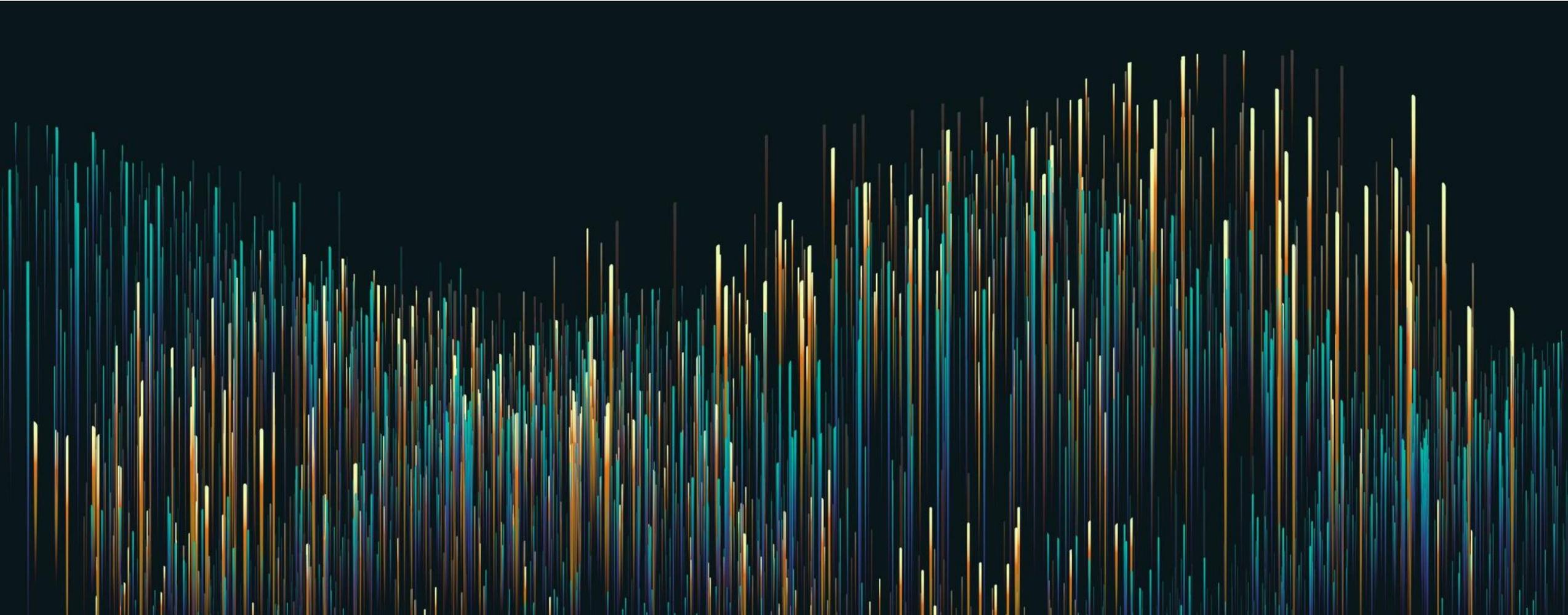


Understanding Early Literacy Screening Data: Connecting Data to Action

April 23rd, 2025

David Fainstein, PhD, NCSP





Welcome!

Shape of our Session

- ✓ Linking assessment to instruction to bolster literacy skill development
- ✓ Translating screening results to actionable instructional strategies
- ✓ What can I “try next week” after I gather screening data?



Visiting Questions from Session 2

Assessment is the collection of data to make decisions.

- Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1997



Instructional Decisions

Educators make a lot of decisions each day:

- 7 decisions per instructional minute – Shavelson & Borko, 1979
- 1500 decisions – Philip Jackson, 1990
- In 2025, anecdotally, I think you're making even more decisions



Instructional Architecture

“If the developers of curriculum materials **anticipated some of the needs that teachers face in inclusive classrooms**, such as students who read below grade level or who have organizational or attention-deficit problems, and if they then designed accommodations for these needs into the materials, that would **free up teachers to devote more time to teaching and less time to adapting the curriculum**” – Kame’ennui & Simmons, 1999

Instructional Architecture

We use literacy screening assessment data commensurate with the type of questions that screeners can answer:

- 1. Who is at risk for experiencing reading difficulty?*
- 2. What areas of literacy are they struggling in?*

We can design and structure instruction to give our future selves a break: **make less instructional decisions on-the-fly by making a few critical decisions based on screening data**

Using Benchmarks: Example 1

1. Who is at risk for experiencing reading difficulty?

Screening data shows us that **all** students here have at least some risk of future reading difficulty

Student	WRF	NWF	ORF	MAZE
AB	Red	Red	Red	Red
BC	Red	Red	Red	Red
CD	Red	Red	Red	Red
CE	Red	Red	Red	Yellow
EF	Red	Yellow	Red	Red
FG	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow
GH	Yellow	Green	Red	Red
HI	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red
IJ	Green	Red	Green	Red
JK	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
KL	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Red

Using Benchmarks: Example 1

2. What areas of literacy are they struggling in?

Screening data shows us that **all** students here are at-risk in at least two areas of literacy development

Student	WRF	NWF	ORF	MAZE
AB	Red	Red	Red	Red
BC	Red	Red	Red	Red
CD	Red	Red	Red	Red
CE	Red	Red	Red	Yellow
EF	Red	Yellow	Red	Red
FG	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow
GH	Yellow	Green	Red	Red
HI	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red
IJ	Green	Red	Green	Red
JK	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
KL	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Red

Using Benchmarks: Example 2

1. Who is at risk for experiencing reading difficulty?

Screening data shows us that **some** students here have at least some risk of future reading difficulty

Student	WRF	NWF	ORF	MAZE
AB	Red	Red	Red	Red
BC	Yellow	Red	Green	Red
CD	Green	Red	Red	Red
CE	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
EF	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow
FG	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
GH	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
HI	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
IJ	Green	Green	Green	Green
JK	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
KL	Green	Green	Green	Green

Using Benchmarks: Example 2

2. What areas of literacy are they struggling in?

Screening data shows us that **some** students here are at-risk in at least two areas of literacy development, and some only in one

Student	WRF	NWF	ORF	MAZE
AB	Red	Red	Red	Red
BC	Yellow	Red	Green	Red
CD	Green	Red	Red	Red
CE	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
EF	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow
FG	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
GH	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
HI	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
IJ	Green	Green	Green	Green
JK	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
KL	Green	Green	Green	Green

Using Screening Data to Make Decisions

Student	WRF	NWF	ORF	MAZE
AB	Red	Red	Red	Red
BC	Red	Red	Red	Red
CD	Red	Red	Red	Red
CE	Red	Red	Red	Yellow
EF	Red	Yellow	Red	Red
FG	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow
GH	Yellow	Green	Red	Red
HI	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red
IJ	Green	Red	Green	Red
JK	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
KL	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Red

Example 1: most of my students are at-risk

- ✓ Look at the components of your core literacy time: *What program am I using? Does it meet the needs that the screening data indicates? Is everyone receiving all of core literacy time?*
- ✓ Add well-structured literacy lessons on areas for concern: *Am I using a systematic program? Are there instructional routines which activate background knowledge, use judicious review, and provide many opportunities to practice?*

Guiding Principle: make less instructional decisions on-the-fly by making a few critical decisions based on screening data

Using Screening Data to Make Decisions

Student	WRF	NWF	ORF	MAZE
AB	Red	Red	Red	Red
BC	Yellow	Red	Green	Red
CD	Green	Red	Red	Red
CE	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
EF	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow
FG	Green	Yellow	Green	Green
GH	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
HI	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
IJ	Green	Green	Green	Green
JK	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
KL	Green	Green	Green	Green

Example 2: some of my students are at-risk

- ✓ Look at the components of your core literacy time: *What program am I using? Does it meet the needs that the screening data indicates? Is everyone receiving all of core literacy time?*
- ✓ Add well-structured literacy lessons on areas for concern: *Am I using a systematic program? Are there instructional routines which activate background knowledge, use judicious review, and provide many opportunities to practice?*

Guiding Principle: make less instructional decisions on-the-fly by making a few critical decisions based on screening data



These are two sides of the same coin: instructional adjustment takes place anyway!

Best Practice in Practice

We take action when we identify students as at-risk. Virtually every classroom will have some students at-risk, and we adjust our instruction to meet student needs.

The level of instructional adjustment that takes place is tied to the level and quantity of student risk

Many Strands Are Woven into Skilled Reading

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 correspondence

Sight Recognition

of familiar words

increasingly strategic

increasingly automatic

Skilled Reading

Fluent execution and coordination of language comprehension and word recognition

*Figure 1.9 Reading Rope
(Scarborough, 2001)*

Instructional Strategies: Top Priority

There is nothing quite so powerful as a comprehensive reading program that **WORKS**



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Free Resource

Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines

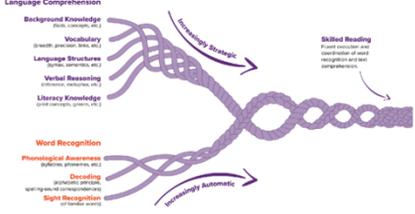
When reviewing curricula for Tier I instruction, it is essential to ensure they do not include instructional practices that are not aligned with the scientific evidence base of how children learn to read.

The Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines are designed to highlight any non-aligned practices, or “red flags,” that may be present in the areas of:

- ✔ Word Recognition
- ✔ Language Comprehension
- ✔ Reading Comprehension
- ✔ Writing
- ✔ Assessment

The Reading Rope is a visual metaphor for the development of skills over time (Scarborough, 2005). It breaks out the subcomponents of word recognition and language comprehension to explore their development as they intertwine and become increasingly strategic and automatic over time to develop fluent, skilled reading.

The Simple View of Reading and Reading Rope are helpful to understand and refer to as you evaluate Tier 1 curricula, aligned intervention materials, and your suite of assessments.



Red Flags
Research findings from the science of reading have revealed approaches to teaching reading that are less effective and could impair the acquisition of skilled reading for many students. These approaches are labeled in this document as **Red Flags**.

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Preview of select pages.

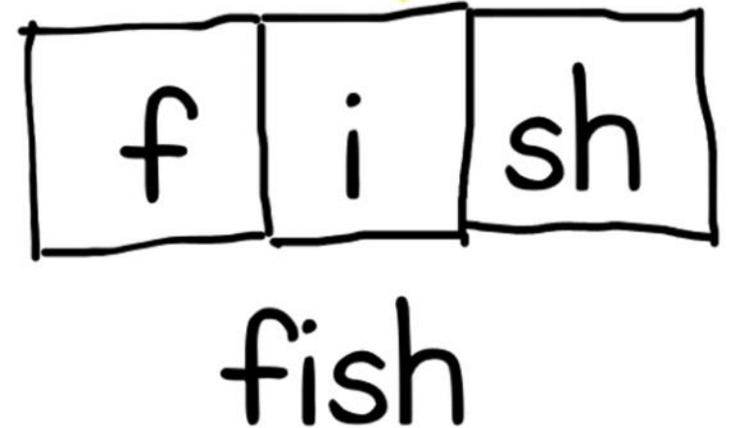
Instructional Strategies: Phonemic Awareness

Discrete instructional strategy for a discrete skill:

- ✓ Elkonin boxes
- ✓ +5-minutes of practice with many opportunities to respond



-  Count the sounds in the word with the students.
-  Draw one box for each sound.
-  Use chips to represent sounds at first.
-  Insert the letter(s) for each sound, and say each letter sound.
-  Write the word beneath the boxes, and read the whole word.



Instructional Strategies: Decoding-Encoding

Discrete instructional strategy for a discrete skill:

- ✓ Teaching morphology directly
- ✓ +10-minutes of practice with many opportunities to respond



Word Matrix- *word family map*

		ful	ness
un	help	s ing ed	
		er	s

Instructional Strategies: Fluency

Discrete instructional strategy for a discrete skill:

- ✓ Pair up students to read connected text together
- ✓ +15-minutes of practice



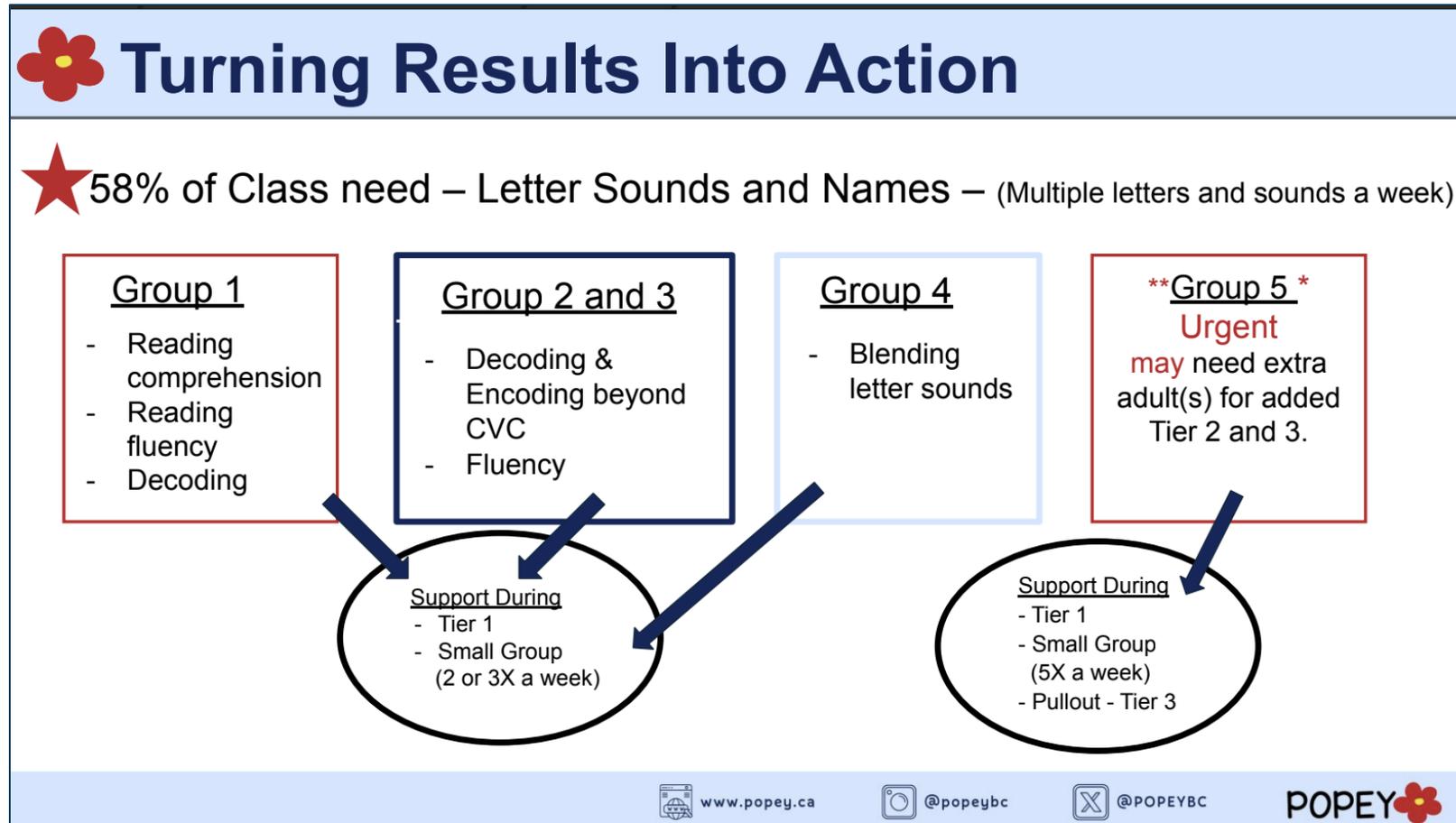
Instructional Strategies: Architecture

POPEY has these resources for you, for free, already!

<p style="text-align: center;"> Structured Literacy Block Checklist (K-3) </p> <p>Daily Components</p> <p>I. Opening/Phonological Awareness (5-10 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Rhyming, segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds.<input type="checkbox"/> Activities: songs, oral games, or quick activities. <p>2. Phonics Instruction (15-20 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Explicit teaching of letter-sound relationships (alphabetic principle).<input type="checkbox"/> Practice decoding real and nonsense words. Multi-sensory engagement (e.g., tiles, sand, air writing). <p>3. Word Study (10-15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Focus on spelling patterns, high-frequency words, and morphology.<input type="checkbox"/> Activities: word sorts, building words, or dictation. <p>4. Vocabulary Development (5-10 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Direct instruction of 1-2 tiered words daily.<input type="checkbox"/> Use visuals, context sentences, and student-friendly definitions. <p>5. Small Group Instruction (20-30 minutes)</p> <p>Differentiated small group sessions targeting specific needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Decoding and word recognition.<input type="checkbox"/> Comprehension strategies.<input type="checkbox"/> Fluency practice. <p>6. *** Independent Reading (10-15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Book bags would include decodable books aligned with phonics skills already mastered, plus student selected high interest books.<input type="checkbox"/> The teacher monitors and supports as needed. <p>7. Writing (20-30 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Modeled, shared, and independent writing opportunities.<input type="checkbox"/> Focus on encoding, sentence construction, and grammar. <p style="text-align: right;">POPEY </p>	<p>8. Read-Aloud (10-15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> High-quality, diverse texts.<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion of comprehension strategies: predicting, summarizing, and connecting. <hr/> <p>Weekly Components</p> <p>9. Fluency Practice (2-3 times per week)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Repeated reading, partner reading, or choral reading of decodable texts.<input type="checkbox"/> Focus on accuracy, rate, and expression. <p>10. Assessment and Progress Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Weekly or biweekly phonics, fluency, or comprehension checks.<input type="checkbox"/> Adjust instruction based on data. <p>11. Enrichment/Intervention (As Needed)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Additional time for targeted skill development. <hr/> <p>Teacher Reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Have I included all literacy components today?<input type="checkbox"/> Were activities accessible and engaging for all learners? Did<input type="checkbox"/> I differentiate for diverse abilities and needs? <p>NOTES:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">POPEY </p>
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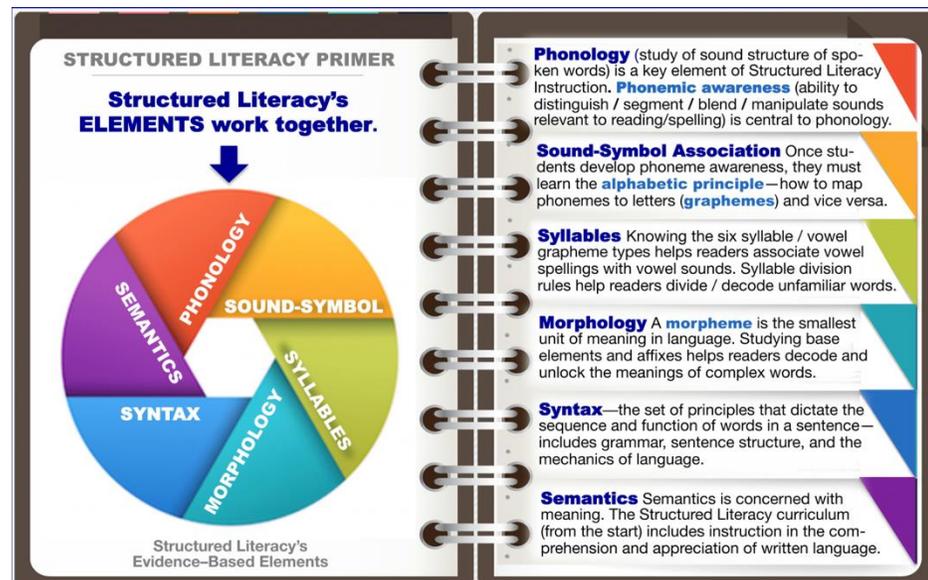
Instructional Strategies: Architecture

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A Note on Comprehensiveness

An explicit, systematic, and **comprehensive** reading program is shown across decades of research with students from diverse lived experiences and backgrounds to be the most effective way to prevent reading difficulty when we've used screening instruments (Fien et al., 2021, Gillon et al., 2024)). And, very importantly, we improve **the protective factor of literacy** for all learners when we intervene early (Gaab & Petscher, 2022).



I'd Love to Hear From You!

Let me help where I can help, it would be a delight to continue the conversation:



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[website]

Questions

Please direct questions to **Lisa Thomas** in the Chat

