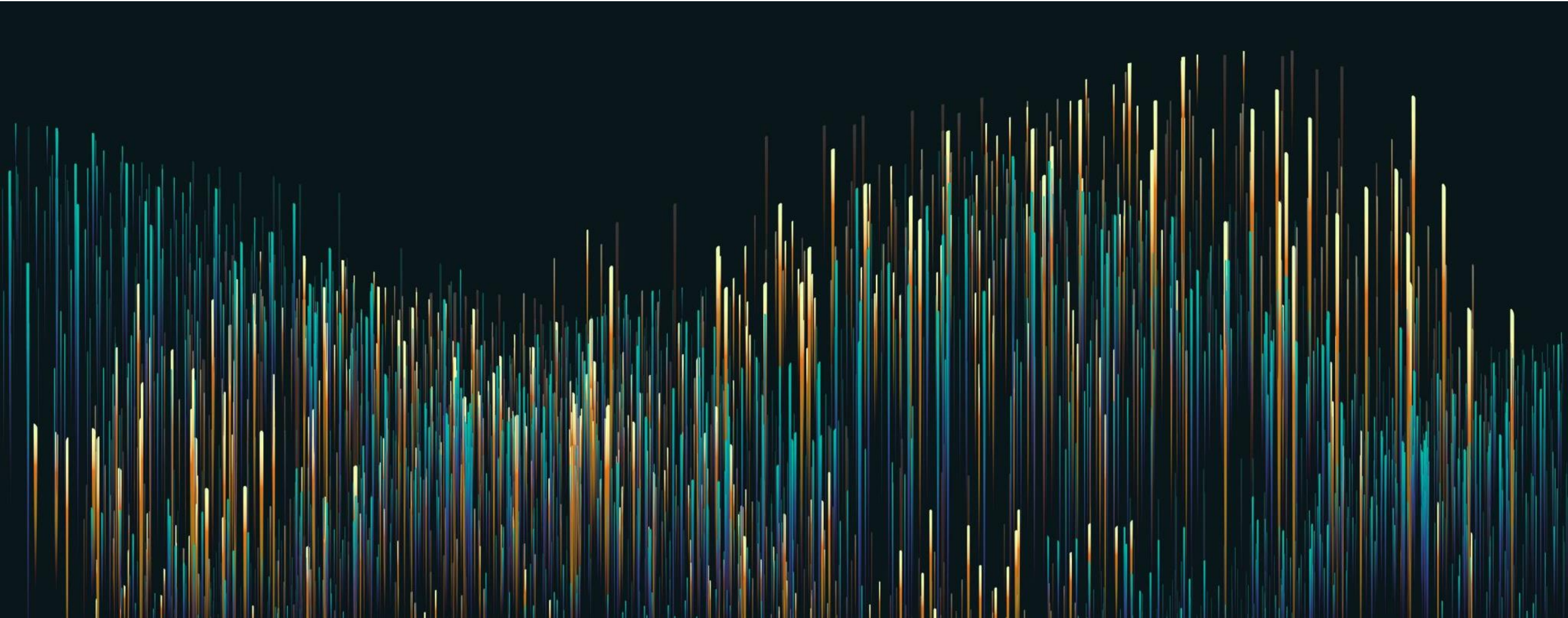


# Understanding Early Literacy Screening Data: Connecting Data to Action

April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 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?



The background of the slide is a dark, monochromatic scene filled with numerous three-dimensional question marks. These question marks are of varying sizes and are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and a tunnel-like perspective. At the bottom center of the image, there is a bright, glowing light source, possibly representing a city skyline or a distant horizon, which casts a warm, golden light upwards, illuminating the lower portions of the question marks and creating a strong contrast with the dark background.

# 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				
BC				
CD				
CE				
EF				
FG				
GH				
HI				
IJ				
JK				
KL				



# 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				
BC				
CD				
CE				
EF				
FG				
GH				
HI				
IJ				
JK				
KL				

# 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				
BC				
CD				
CE				
EF				
FG				
GH				
HI				
IJ				
JK				
KL				

# 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				
BC				
CD				
CE				
EF				
FG				
GH				
HI				
IJ				
JK				
KL				

# Using Screening Data to Make Decisions

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

## 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				
BC				
CD				
CE				
EF				
FG				
GH				
HI				
IJ				
JK				
KL				

## 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



## 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

# Many Strands Are Woven into Skilled Reading

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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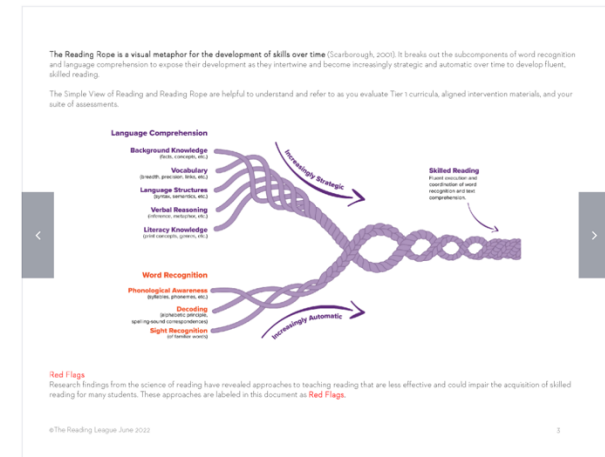
## Free Resource

### 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








Preview of select pages.

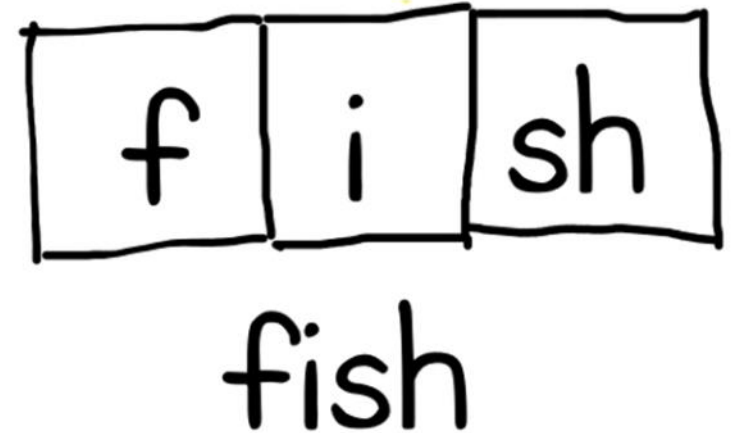
# Instructional Strategies: Phonemic Awareness

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





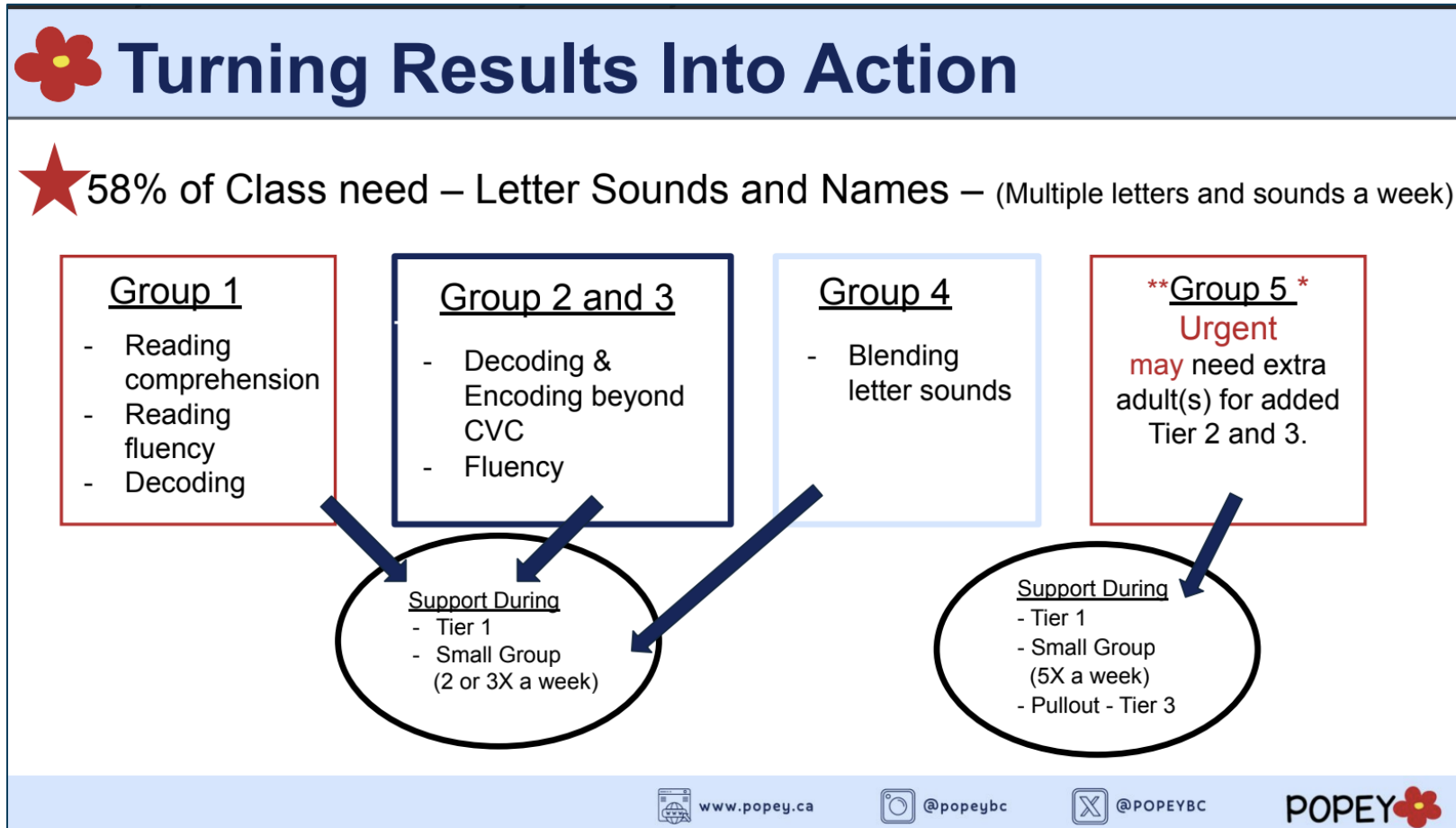
# Instructional Strategies: Architecture

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

<div data-bbox="616 411 1195 458"> <b>Structured Literacy Block Checklist (K-3)</b> </div> <div data-bbox="568 485 736 508"><b>Daily Components</b></div> <div data-bbox="568 526 1029 552"><b>1. Opening/Phonological Awareness (5-10 minutes)</b></div> <div data-bbox="593 565 991 611"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Rhyming, segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Activities: songs, oral games, or quick activities.</li></ul></div> <div data-bbox="568 625 909 649"><b>2. Phonics Instruction (15-20 minutes)</b></div> <div data-bbox="593 664 1065 732"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Explicit teaching of letter-sound relationships (alphabetic principle).</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Practice decoding real and nonsense words. Multi-sensory</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> engagement (e.g., tiles, sand, air writing).</li></ul></div> <div data-bbox="568 746 833 772"><b>3. Word Study (10-15 minutes)</b></div> <div data-bbox="593 786 1062 831"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Focus on spelling patterns, high-frequency words, and morphology.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Activities: word sorts, building words, or dictation.</li></ul></div> <div data-bbox="568 846 945 871"><b>4. Vocabulary Development (5-10 minutes)</b></div> <div data-bbox="593 885 1044 929"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Direct instruction of 1-2 tiered words daily.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Use visuals, context sentences, and student-friendly definitions.</li></ul></div> <div data-bbox="568 951 960 976"><b>5. Small Group Instruction (20-30 minutes)</b></div> <div data-bbox="568 981 1110 1005"><b>Differentiated small group sessions targeting specific needs:</b></div> <div data-bbox="644 1021 876 1086"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Decoding and word recognition.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Comprehension strategies.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Fluency practice.</li></ul></div> <div data-bbox="568 1102 945 1128"><b>6. *** Independent Reading (10-15 minutes)</b></div> <div data-bbox="593 1142 1182 1206"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Book bags would include decodable books aligned with phonics skills already mastered, plus student selected high interest books.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> The teacher monitors and supports as needed.</li></ul></div> <div data-bbox="568 1222 807 1249"><b>7. Writing (20-30 minutes)</b></div> <div data-bbox="593 1260 996 1303"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Modeled, shared, and independent writing opportunities.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Focus on encoding, sentence construction, and grammar.</li></ul></div> <div data-bbox="1128 1330 1256 1366"></div>	<div data-bbox="1307 425 1572 448"><b>8. Read-Aloud (10-15 minutes)</b></div> <div data-bbox="1335 469 1898 516"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> High-quality, diverse texts.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Discussion of comprehension strategies: predicting, summarizing, and connecting.</li></ul></div> <div data-bbox="1307 566 1505 592"><b>Weekly Components</b></div> <div data-bbox="1307 604 1681 628"><b>9. Fluency Practice (2-3 times per week)</b></div> <div data-bbox="1335 642 1842 688"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Repeated reading, partner reading, or choral reading of decodable texts.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Focus on accuracy, rate, and expression.</li></ul></div> <div data-bbox="1307 704 1684 729"><b>10. Assessment and Progress Monitoring</b></div> <div data-bbox="1335 742 1783 788"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Weekly or biweekly phonics, fluency, or comprehension checks.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Adjust instruction based on data.</li></ul></div> <div data-bbox="1307 802 1681 826"><b>11. Enrichment/Intervention (As Needed)</b></div> <div data-bbox="1335 841 1676 863"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Additional time for targeted skill development.</li></ul></div> <div data-bbox="1307 915 1493 938"><b>Teacher Reflection</b></div> <div data-bbox="1335 953 1760 1019"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Have I included all literacy components today?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Were activities accessible and engaging for all learners? Did</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> I differentiate for diverse abilities and needs?</li></ul></div> <div data-bbox="1307 1063 1383 1086"><b>NOTES:</b></div> <div data-bbox="1865 1330 2000 1366"></div>
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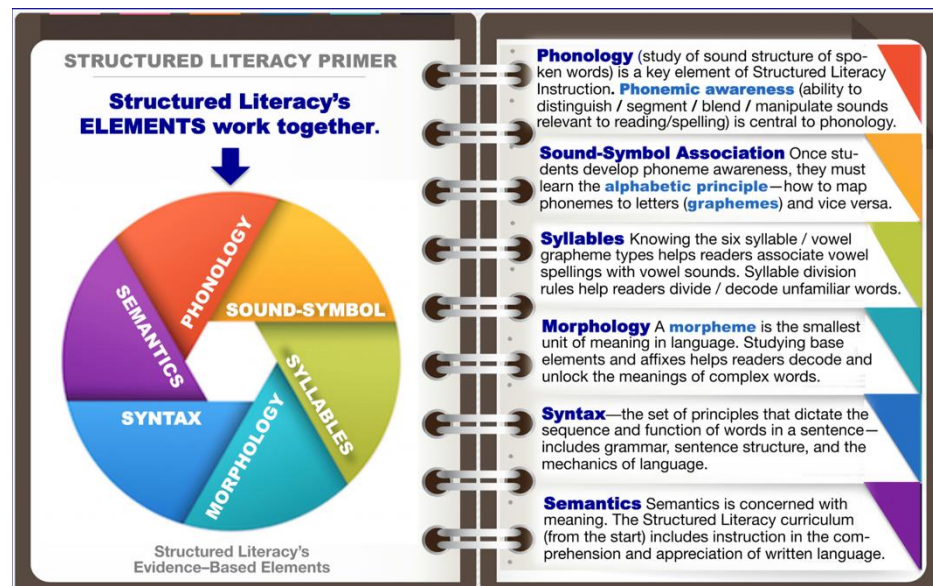
# Instructional Strategies: Architecture

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



# 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).



*Cowen w/ International Dyslexia Association, 2016*

# 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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ResearchGate

David-Fainstein

[website]



# Questions

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

