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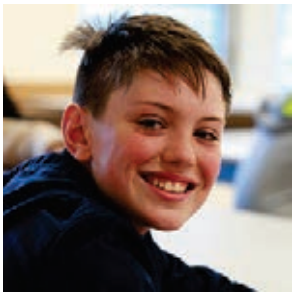
K-12 Literacy

Literacy Framework









Calgary Board of Education

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Notes |

- The Literacy Framework is intended for CBE employees and may link to resource materials available on Insite.
- The use of the term “student(s)” within the Literacy Framework encompasses all learners within CBE, including Kindergarten children. The terms “student(s)” and “learner(s)” are used synonymously.
- The **bolded** words throughout the document indicate a definition is provided in the glossary.

Literacy Framework

Outcome

> *"Students, and arguably adults, are always looking for themselves in spaces and place. Before getting to literacy skill development such as decoding, fluency, comprehension, writing, or any other [curriculum], students must authentically see themselves in the learning" (Muhammad, 2020, p. 69).*

As human beings, our deepest desire is to feel a sense of connection with those around us. This connection validates our identity and concept of self, makes us feel safe to express our ideas and opinions, and supports us in times of challenge. Gholdy Muhammad's quote asks us to: consider the intersection between identity and environment, how we as educators support students to see themselves in this learning, and to have great intentionality when considering how we use the vocabulary of learning to cultivate genius.

Literacy is defined as "the ability, confidence, and willingness to engage with language to acquire, construct, and communicate meaning in all aspects of daily living" (Alberta Education, n.d., 2017). It is a means to discover and make meaning of an increasingly complex and evolving world. Learners need the confidence and habits of mind to acquire, create, connect, and communicate information in a variety of contexts which go beyond the basic skills of reading and writing (Alberta Regional Consortia, 2017). A focus on literacy throughout all disciplines is an important way to allow learners to develop and demonstrate deep conceptual understandings, think creatively and critically, and generate new ideas and knowledge. Diverse literacy opportunities and teaching expertise increases equity for each learner by enabling individuals to reach their full potential, achieve a better quality of life, and contribute to their communities. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states that "equity in education means that personal or social circumstances such as gender, socio-economic status, migrant background, age, special needs, or place of residence, do not hinder the achievement of one's educational potential" (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2024, para 1).

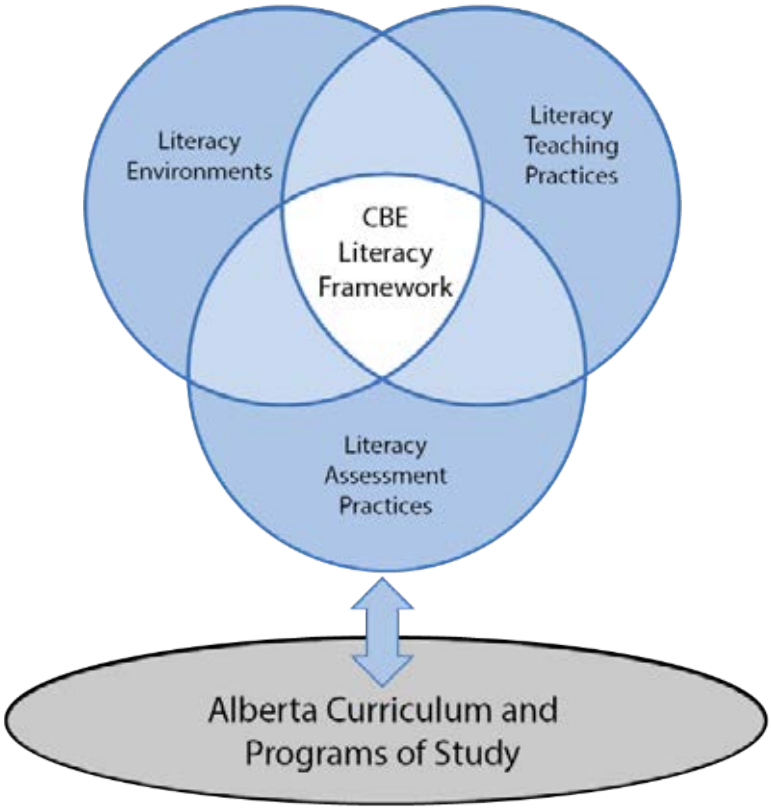
The Literacy Framework is one of the foundational documents for educators and leaders in CBE to support and guide the development of literacy within teacher practice, school development plans, and across the system for the benefit and success of all students. It serves to connect disciplines and aligns with the Education Plan through the uplifting of pedagogical practices that promote the three Board priorities of Learning Excellence, Well-Being, and Truth & Reconciliation. All three priorities intersect, and the Literacy Framework places significant emphasis on each component. Consequently, the Framework recognizes that achieving learning excellence and well-being requires a deep understanding and appreciation of a student's identity, background, and culture. Seeing ourselves and our experiences reflected in our surroundings signals that we belong and that we are valued. By extension, seeing others and their experiences reflected around us builds empathy and opportunities to learn from one another, therefore fostering a community where everyone belongs. In this way, the texts we consume daily offer what Rudine Sims Bishop describes as "mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors" (Reading Rockets, 2015).

Essential Elements

Literacy Practices: Our Shared Stories and Collective Responsibility

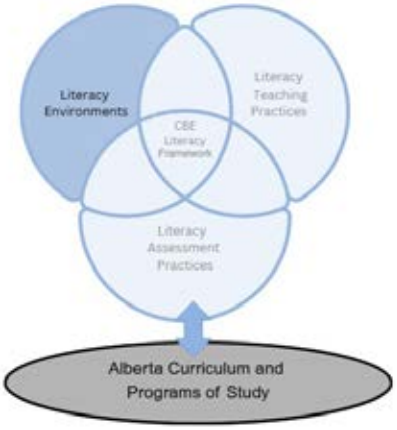
> *"Making connections to students' ethnicity, language, out-of-school practices, and family customs is important for facilitating students' engagement, their sense of belonging in the academic setting, and their belief about their capabilities as learners" (Elish-Piper, Matthew, & Risko, 2022, p.22).*

The essential elements: environments, teaching practices, and assessment practices, and the considerations for implementation within this document were chosen in line with enduring literacy research that focuses on improving learner achievement in literacy for all disciplines. Research that connects to the essential elements is identified throughout the document.



Every student enters the classroom with a story, a story shaped by language, culture, community, and lived experience. Understanding students as learners, provides important information about what influences their responses to literacy instruction and their dispositions towards literacy instruction (Elish-Piper et al., 2022). Our shared stories intersect in schools and classrooms where literacy is more than a skill set, it is a powerful tool for communication, connection, and critical thinking. Creating equitable and effective literacy learning for all students requires attention to literacy environments, teaching, and assessment practices, each of which is foundational to CBE Literacy Framework.

Essential Elements

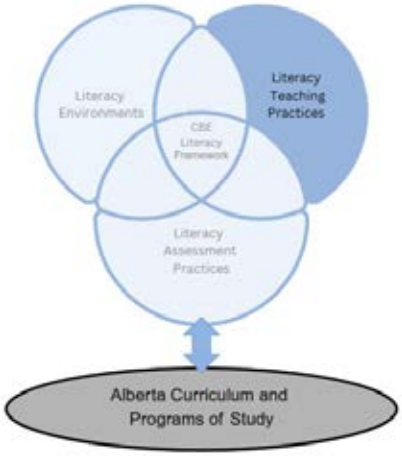


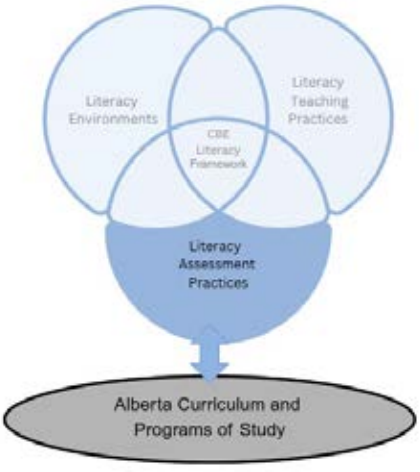
Literacy Environments are inclusive spaces where students can access communities of learning that create equity through learning space, routines, instructional materials, and understanding and development of literacy identities. Thoughtful decisions are made around multimodal resources, culturally responsive materials, routines that honour student needs, and the inviting nature of physical space. It is essential that the environment creates a sense of belonging that is inclusive of educators, students, families, and communities. Educators will acknowledge social and cultural identities and curate their resources to ensure they are bias free, culturally responsive, and based on student voice and need (International Literacy Association, 2019).

The literacy environment includes a variety of supportive, rich, diverse, and complex text. The texts we choose, and the instruction that surrounds them, shape students' sense of belonging and their developing literacy identities.

Literacy teaching practices are rooted in a belief that every student is capable of growth and strong instruction benefits all learners. "Every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be" (Pierson, n.d., as cited in Hammond, 2015, p.88). This type of learning partnership is an alliance that supports students to build independence and develop the knowledge, skills, and values to make reflective decisions, develop self-efficacy, and take initiative in their learning (Hammond, 2015).

A commitment to research-informed, explicit, and systematic literacy practice is supported through collaboration of educators. The focus is on best practices in both foundational and higher-level literacy skills to move learners towards the transfer of understanding across disciplines and experiences, building upon the literacies and strengths already inherent in all learners. Responsive teaching practices create equitable learning opportunities and ensure that all learners are engaged in meaningful, joyful, and challenging work that leads to becoming self-determining readers, writers, and thinkers (Routman, 2018).



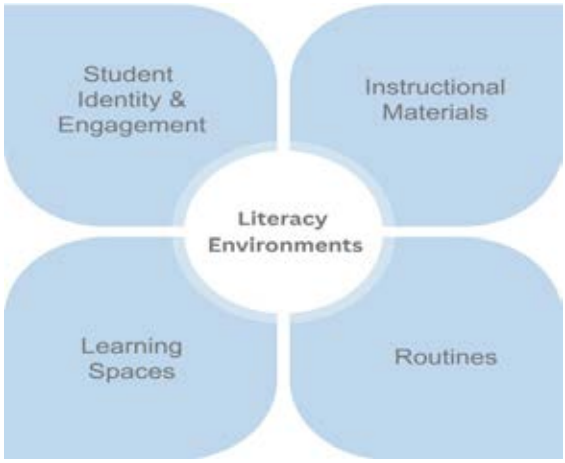


Literacy assessment practices form a continuous, responsive cycle of evidence gathering, interpretation, and instructional adjustment. Assessment practices prioritize student voice, self-awareness, and decision-making, all in service of improving student learning outcomes. Teachers support students in an active pursuit of learning, developing self-understanding, and participating in decision-making. A variety of observations, conversations and products inform what students know and can do and help determine next steps for learning. The purpose of assessment is to improve student learning (Calgary Board of Education, n.d.).

When these three pillars, environments, instruction, and assessment, are intentionally designed and interwoven, they cultivate meaningful, joyful, and equitable literacy experiences. When we hold space for each other's stories, we build a shared narrative rooted in possibility. Together, we can create classrooms that are not only places of learning, but places of hope, belonging, and transformation.

Literacy Environments

"Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky, 1978/1980, p.88).



Student Identity & Engagement



Each learner comes to school with a variety of literacies and personal interests from which to build on. Recognizing each learner's identity as a reader and a writer is an essential foundational piece in growing both individual and community depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding through literacy. As knowledge, curiosity, and interest grow, it allows for conversations and expands each learner's reading and writing selves.

Considerations for Implementation

- allow for learner engagement with ideas and others, and encourage structured perspective taking
- honour student voice and choice
- support the creation of positive interpersonal relationships
- engage learners in goal-setting, self-assessment and/or reflection
- complete and refer to students' reading and writing interest inventories
- value and strengthen home-school-community literacy relationships
- utilize book talks to build reader identities and interests
- celebrate diversity and cultivate a sense of belonging

Learning Spaces



Refers to the design and general organization of the physical or virtual learning spaces. As educators, the goal is to create an inclusive and equitable place that fosters inquiry, dialogue, and sharing of ideas as well as quiet areas for work and reflection. Learning spaces are responsive and intentionally designed to be welcoming, accessible, and reflective of the interests and backgrounds, languages, and cultures of all learners.

Learning Spaces | Considerations for Implementation

- varied learning space arrangements within the classroom or other areas in the school
- spaces that allow for lively and respectful dialogue
- easy access to a variety of organized learning materials and responsive spaces
- purposeful access to technology tools and outdoor learning spaces
- cultivate positive relationships amongst students to promote kindness, active listening, and respectful conversations

Instructional Materials



Instructional materials need to be thoughtfully evaluated to meet the needs of the learners and the learning goals. Learners need access to resources that include a range of modalities, levels, formats, topics, perspectives, and diverse text types. Materials need to be culturally responsive and include texts that incorporate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge systems, languages, and histories. The materials need to provide choice and offer opportunities for learners to see themselves and others in positive representations.

Considerations for Implementation

- document and support instruction and learning in intentional ways (i.e. word/sound walls, anchor charts, concept maps, sentence frames, graphic organizers, clear criteria, exemplars)
- utilize and provide access to culturally diverse texts that provide “windows” into the experiences of others and “mirrors” into students’ own experiences (Sims-Bishop, 1990)
- provide access to inclusive, linguistically diverse, and inviting texts
- support phonics instruction with a variety of texts including **decodable texts**
- utilize a variety of inviting reading and writing materials
- use technologies intentionally and purposefully that support literacy practices and represent learning
- consider authenticity of the materials shared in the classroom and how they reflect learner identity

Routines



Daily routines make learning environments feel safe and build trusting relationships created around connection. Routines allow teachers to spend more time on meaningful instruction and build community in the classroom. Honigsfeld and Dodge (n.d.) call routines “the deliberate procedures that teachers establish in their classroom to develop community and offer structure to their learners. Routines are individual and shared habits within a classroom community” (para. 4)

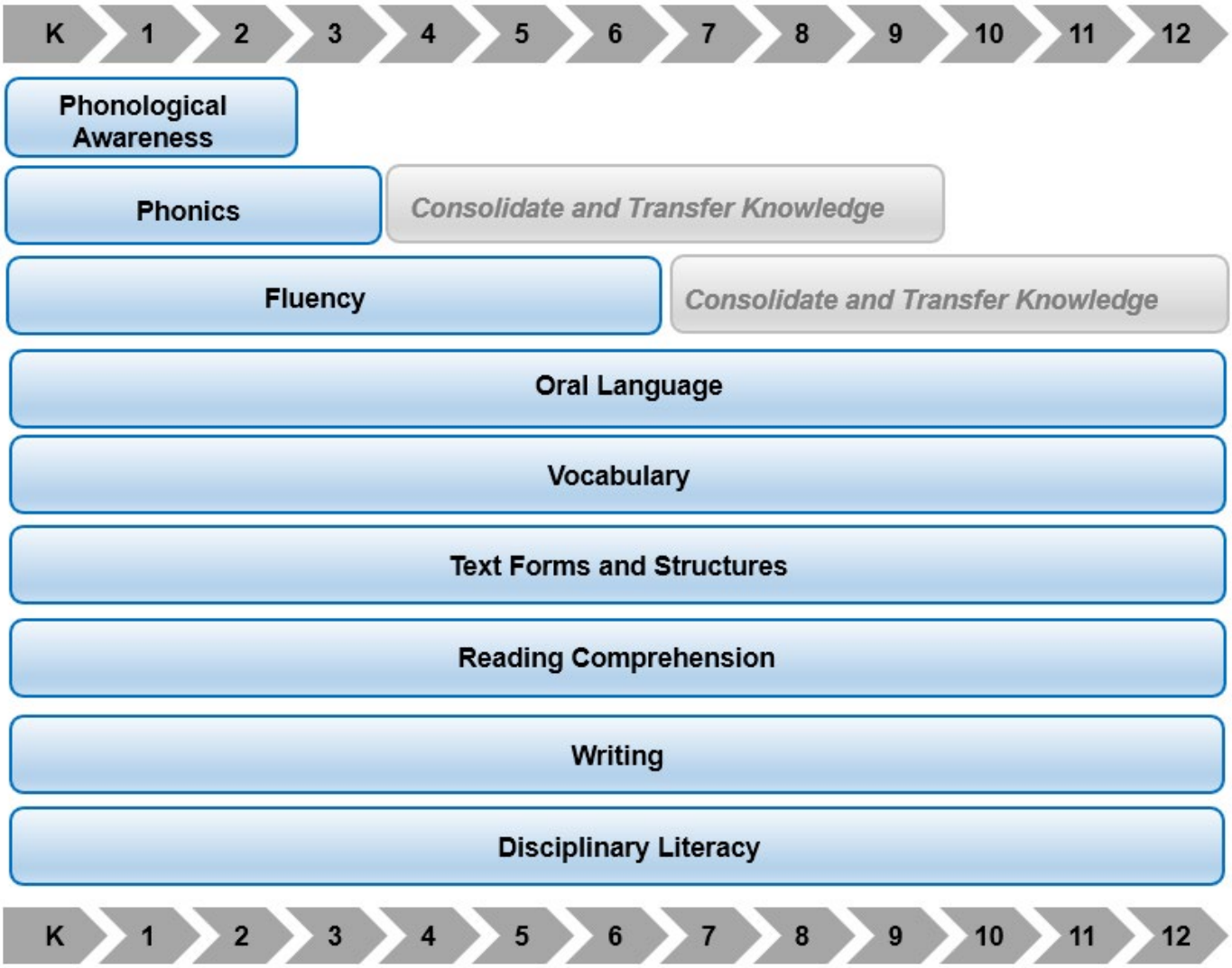
Considerations for Implementation

- greet and recognize learners as individuals and include celebrations and sharing times
- clearly display literacy expectations, instructions, and purposes for work for all learners
- post daily/class schedule and learning intentions
- provide repeated opportunities for learners to practice and consolidate literacy skills and knowledge
- maintain clear and consistent expectations during independent, small group, and large group instruction
- utilize strategic, **flexible groupings** that create equitable opportunities for connection and target students’ specific learning needs
- ensure meaningful daily reading and writing tasks in all content areas

Literacy Teaching Practices

> *"The greatest influence on student progression in learning is having highly expert, inspired, and passionate teachers and school leaders working together to maximize the effect of their teaching on all students in their care" (Hattie, 2015, p. 2).*

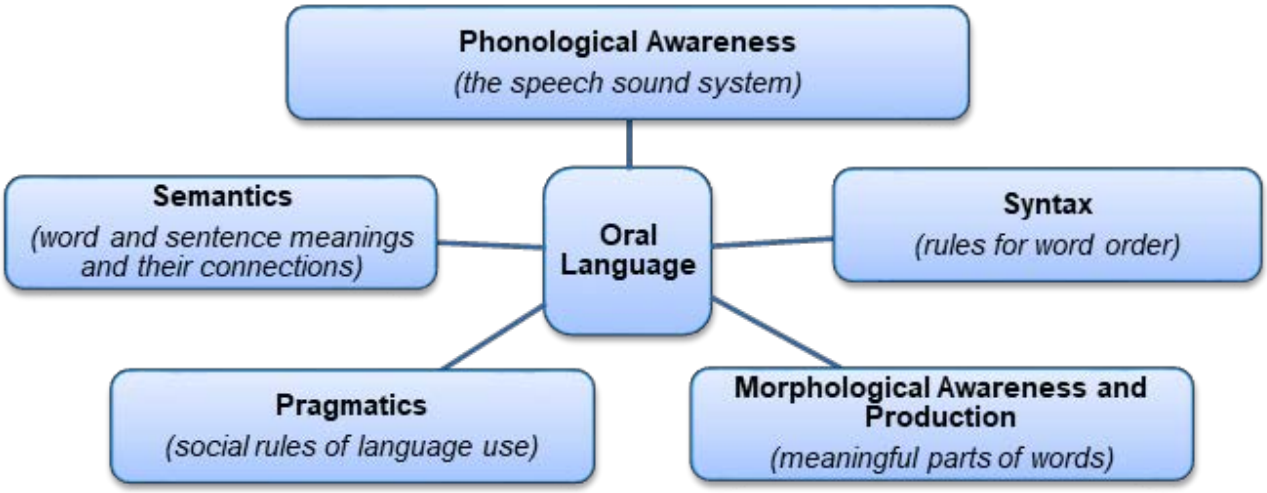
Instructional Emphasis | K-12



Note | The above image aligns with the organizing ideas and/or learning outcomes from the K-6 English Language Arts and Literature curriculum (2022) and Programs of Study for ELA 7-9 (2000) and ELA 10-12 (2003).

Oral Language

Oral language skills are involved in virtually every aspect of a learner's school day. From socializing with peers at drop-off, to understanding instructions from educators and participating in classroom activities, oral language skills are at the centre of every interaction and profoundly impact success in school (Foorman et al., 2015; Ladd et al., 2012; Rubin et al., 2012, as cited by Bardell & Archibal, 2020).



Note. Adapted from Moats, L.C. (2020). Speech to print: Language essentials for teachers. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Moats (2020) defined oral language as encompassing phonological awareness, syntax, morphological awareness and production, pragmatics and semantics. The acquisition of these skills often begins at a young age, before learners begin focusing on print-based concepts. In this document, the term oral language includes the understanding and use of receptive and expressive language, and its connection to background knowledge as a means of communication. Although oral language is often inherent, it continues to evolve as students are supported in a variety of learning experiences. To support the understanding of this terminology, each of these language components are defined as follows:

- **Morphology** refers to morphemes, the smallest units of meaning in language (e.g., the "ed" in walked indicates it happened in the past) and how they are combined to form words.
- **Semantics** refers to the meaning of words and phrases, including vocabulary knowledge.
- **Syntax**, sometimes simply referred to as grammar, is the set of rules that dictate the ways in which words and phrases can be combined into sentences and paragraphs. Correct syntax communicates messages that are meaningful and easy to understand.
- **Pragmatic** refers to the social use of language. This includes a variety of social norms regarding how to participate in communication including how to take turns in a conversation, interact in a group, maintain personal space, and use appropriate behaviour with different communication partners or in different settings.
- **Phonology and Phonological Skills** are addressed in sections below

Considerations for Implementation

- utilize discussion and questioning, including asking and encouraging open-ended questions
- model and explain complex vocabulary and syntax in classroom discussions and read-alouds
- provide opportunities for activities like reciprocal teaching, think-pair-share, **dialogic discussion**
- include culturally responsive and non-verbal communication
- provide wait time

Reading

Reading is a multifaceted process that allows for making meaning from print. Unlike seeing, hearing and speaking, reading is not something humans do naturally. Wolf (2008) states that "we human beings were never born to read; we invented reading and then had to teach it to every new generation. Each new reader comes to reading with a 'fresh' brain - one that is programmed to speak, see, and think, but not to read" (p. 3).

Skilled reading is a complex, active process which develops through the interconnected components of phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Scarborough's Reading Rope

Scarborough's (2001) Reading Rope explains how reading is acquired in more detail. This model depicts two strands, language comprehension and word recognition, with the required individual skills as threads within each strand. Scarborough's version expands upon the Simple View of Reading (SVR), Reading = Decoding x Comprehension, to demonstrate that these individual skills are interconnected rather than isolated (Fisher et al., 2016). These models are grounded in the **science of reading**. As it is clear below, skilled reading is challenging without a solid foundation in each thread or strand.

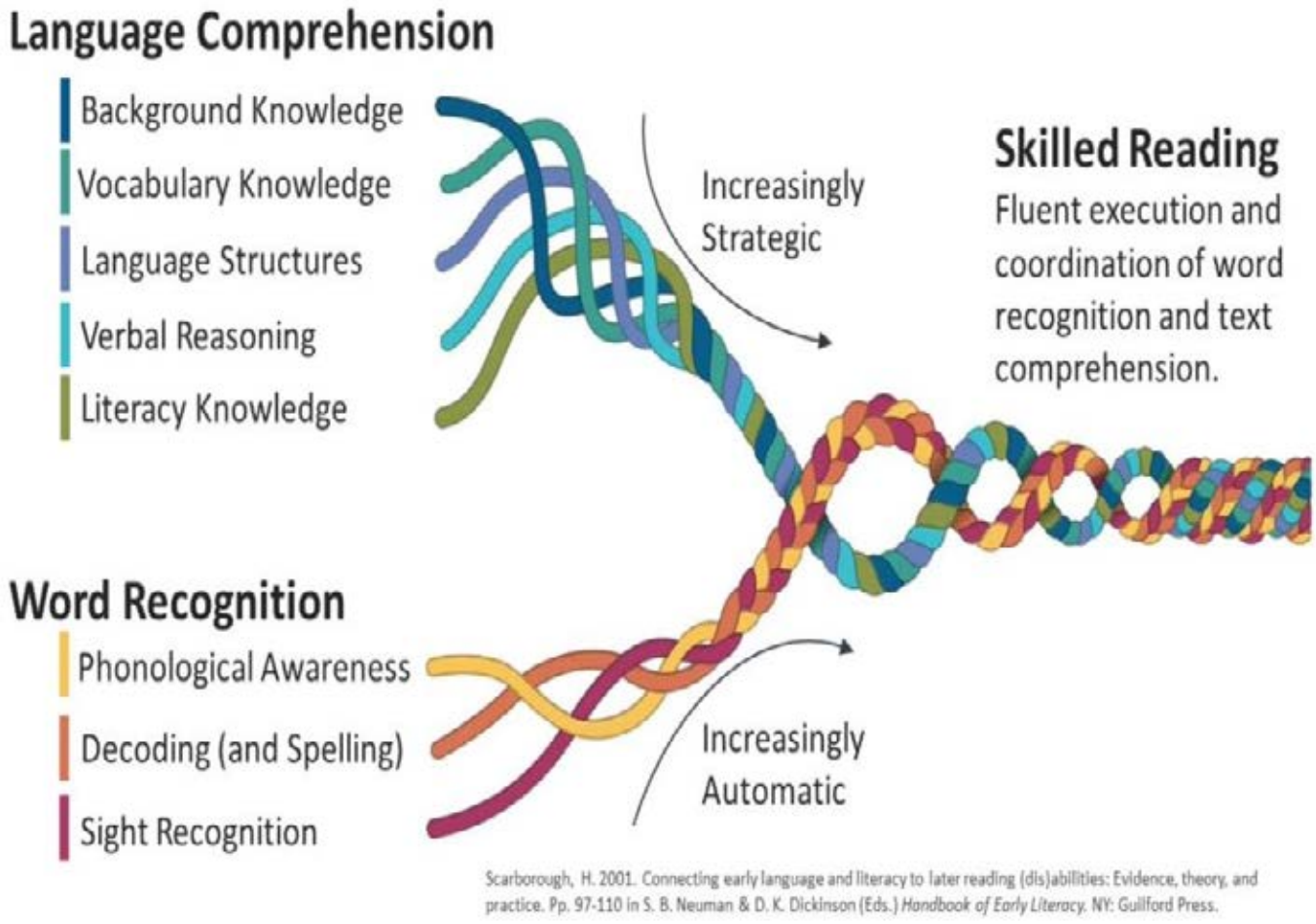
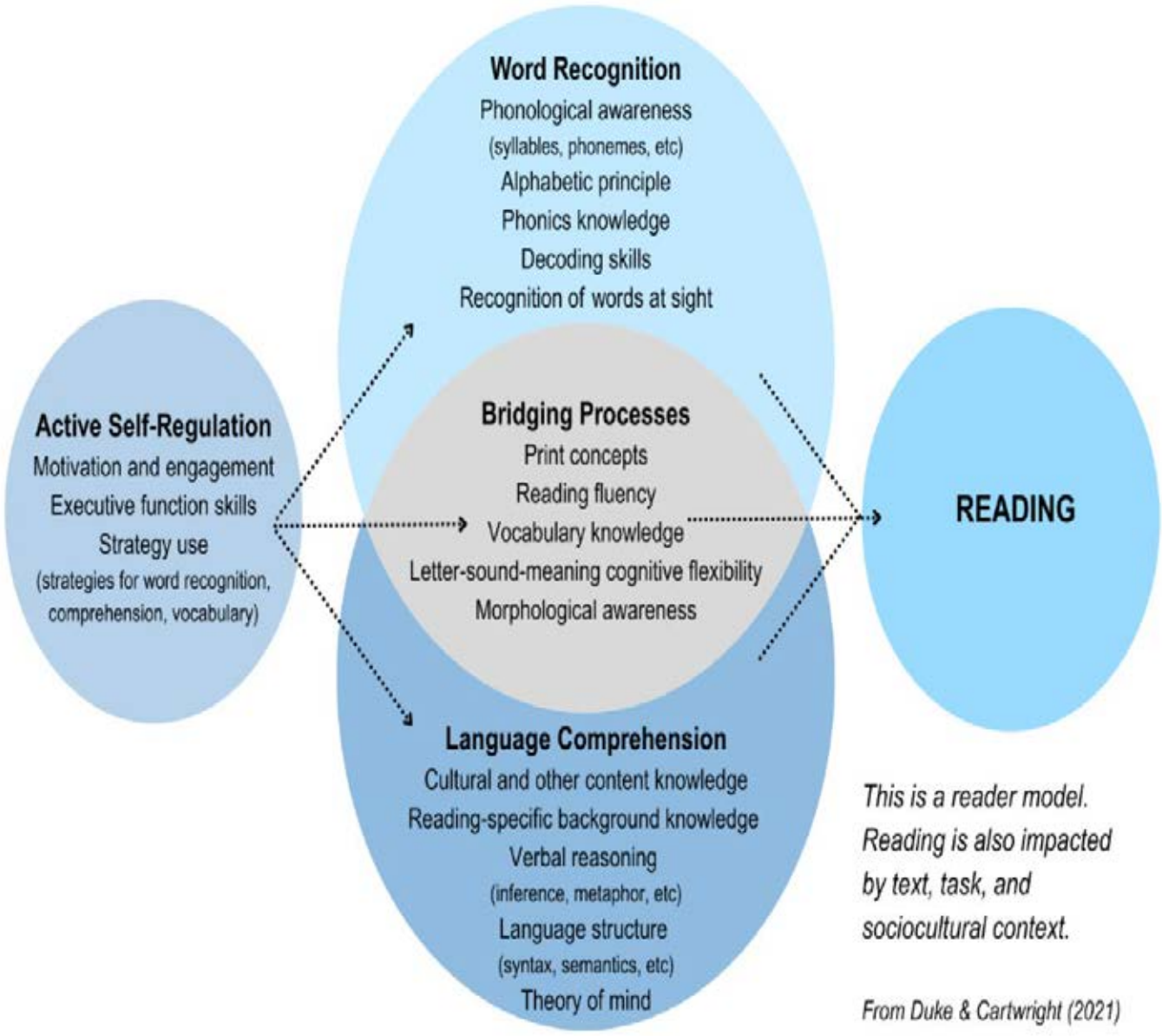


Image source: https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-101/how-children-learn-read/models-reading

The Active View of Reading

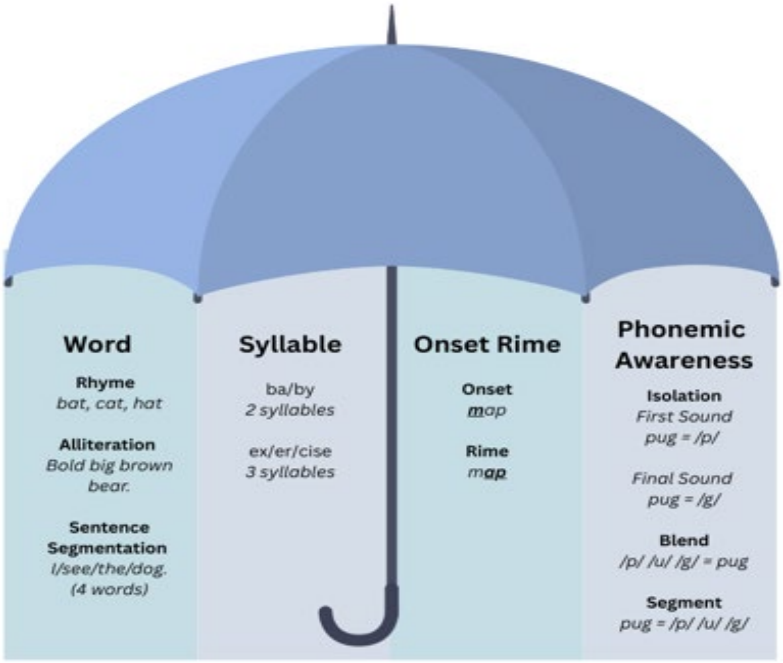
An extension to Scarborough's Reading Rope, Duke and Cartwright's (2021) Active View of Reading model (AVR) offers that "reading difficulties can have causes beyond word recognition and language comprehension" (p. 528). It incorporates new research to further illustrate the complexity of learning to read, highlight previously overlooked components, and identify ways to address reading challenges" (Heinemann, 2025). The Active View of Reading demonstrates how a student's motivation, engagement, strategy use, and executive function skills all directly influence their overall reading ability.

The Active View of Reading



Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is an umbrella term that includes awareness of words, phonemes (sounds), and of larger word units (Reading Rockets, 2020). It refers to the ability to identify, think about, and manipulate the sounds in words, and includes syllabic structure, onset-rime, and phonemic awareness to enable learners to make sense of print which leads to becoming better readers and spellers. Research shows that as phonological awareness, specifically phonemic awareness, improves, foundational reading and writing skills improve as well.



Note. Adapted from *National Center on Improving Literacy (n.d.),*

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and work with the sounds of spoken language. It encompasses a wide range of skills, from word level skills like identifying rhymes, alliteration, and segmenting sentences into words. It also includes breaking words into syllables, and distinguishing onsets and rimes. At its most sophisticated level, phonological awareness involves phonemic awareness: the capacity to hear, identify, and manipulate the smallest units of sound, or phonemes. Phonemic awareness skills like blending and segmenting form an essential foundation for reading and spelling.

Considerations for Implementation

- provide daily opportunities for learners to use and reuse language to explore spoken language
- include opportunities to connect phonological awareness knowledge & skills to home language
- precisely model the pronunciation and articulation of speech sounds (phonemes)
- design tasks to include experiences such as singing songs, tongue twisters, poetry, games, read-alouds, **dialogic discussions,** repeated readings, gross motor connections
- provide phonemic awareness activities including recognizing which words in a set of words begin with the same sound, isolating and saying the first or last sound in a word, combining or blending the separate sounds in a word to say the word, and breaking or segmenting a word into its separate sounds
- design instruction to include the gradual release of responsibility with opportunities to practice and review as needed

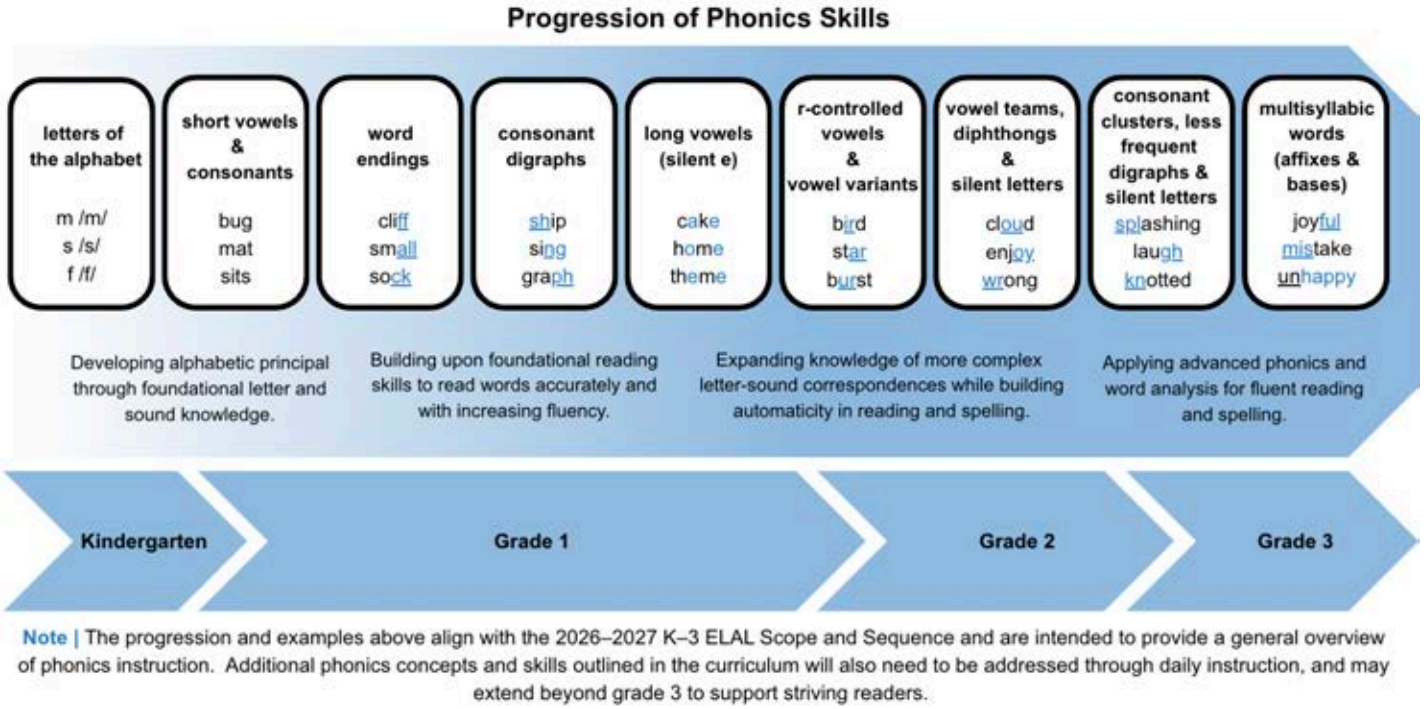
Phonics

Phonics instruction teaches learners how to connect graphemes (letters) to their corresponding phonemes (spoken sounds). Preferred phonics instruction devotes intentional time to providing learners with tasks to apply these skills to real reading and writing experiences. Systematic and explicit phonics instruction significantly improves word recognition, spelling, and reading comprehension. Phonics is not simple or intuitive; these foundational skills are complex and need to be explicitly taught.

Considerations for Implementation

Phonics instruction meets the decoding needs of early readers and can be an intervention for older learners:

- provide daily explicit instruction and application of alphabetic principles to create sound/symbol connections
- precisely model letter-sound correspondences
- utilize hands-on materials for learners to use, such as **Elkonin (sound) boxes** or letter tiles
- include opportunities to read **decodable text** as part of each phonics lesson design
- include the reading and spelling of disciplinary vocabulary using syllables for multisyllabic words
- use visuals, such as sound walls
- integrate phonics skills and knowledge into connected texts within instruction
- use CBE scope and sequence that includes the following progression of skills



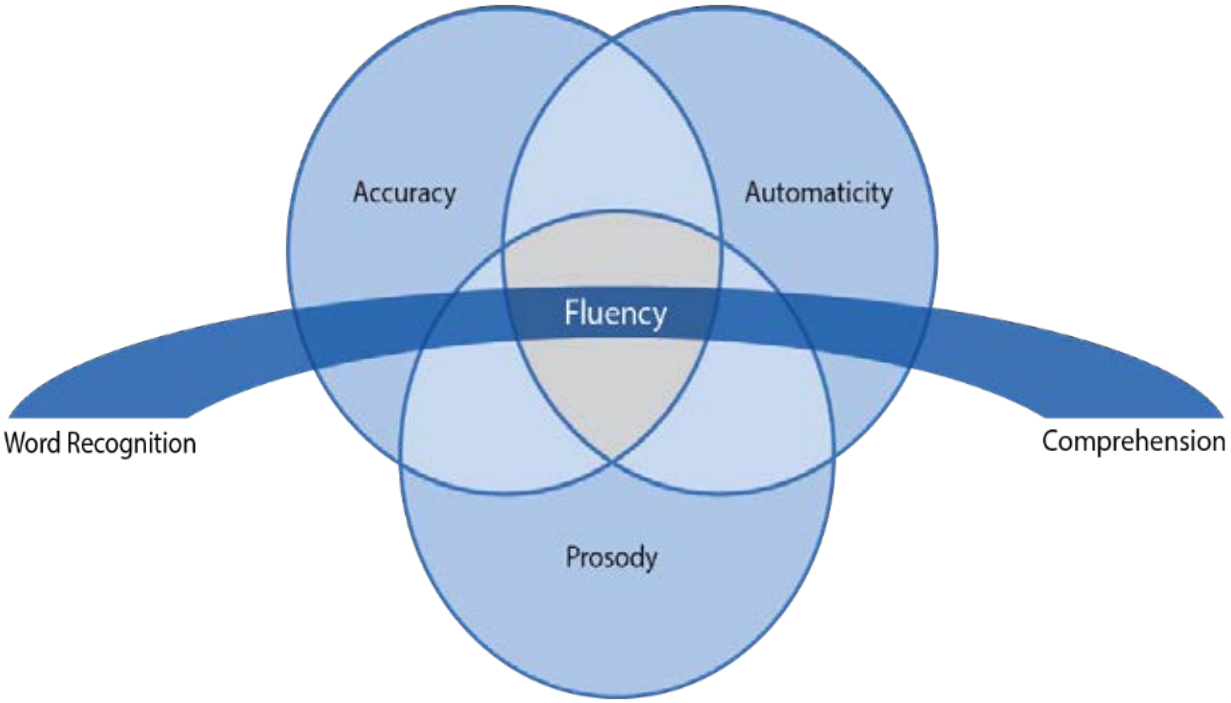
Note | The progression and examples above align with the 2026–2027 K–3 ELAL Scope and Sequence and are intended to provide a general overview of phonics instruction. Additional phonics concepts and skills outlined in the curriculum will also need to be addressed through daily instruction, and may extend beyond grade 3 to support striving readers.

Note | Adapted from A fresh look at phonics: Common causes of failure and 7 ingredients for success (p. 40), by W. Blevins, 2016, Corwin.

Fluency

Reading fluency refers to the ability to read text aloud with sufficient speed, accuracy, and expression (prosody). Reading fluency is made up of two components – automaticity in word recognition and expression in oral reading that reflects the meaning of the text. Reading fluency is the bridge between decoding and reading comprehension and is an essential element of proficient and meaningful reading. While fluency is important to both oral and silent reading, research suggests that oral reading practice and instruction are most effective for fluency development (Rasinski et al., 2012; Rasinksi, 2014; National Reading Panel, 2000; Shanahan, 2015).

Elements of Fluency Instruction



Note. Adapted from *The megabook of fluency: Strategies and text to engage all readers*, by Rasinski, T and Cheeseman Smith, M., 2018, Scholastic Inc. and Alberta Education. (2022). *English language arts and literature K-6* [curriculum]. https://curriculum.learnalberta.ca/curriculum/en/s/laneng.

Considerations for Implementation

- model fluent reading, using both examples and non-examples, while reading curriculum-aligned text
- provide assisted reading through paired, choral, and echo reading, and listening to text through text-to-speech technologies or audiobooks
- read and re-read pieces of complex content area text together to ensure equitable access to content for all students
- provide wide and varied reading practice which includes re-reading of complex texts, independent reading, and performance reading such as rehearsed scripts, poetry, songs, or speeches
- utilize a Fluency Protocol (i.e., repeated reading, echo reading, paired reading, close reading, choral reading) to support reading comprehension through the intersecting skills of accuracy, automaticity, and prosody when reading text (including disciplinary text)

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and their meanings and is strongly related reading comprehension (Oakhill & Cain, 2012). Building vocabulary is an equity issue because limited word knowledge restricts students' access to text(s), comprehension, and the ability to express their ideas. The more a student knows about words they read, the stronger their reading proficiency. While students will learn new words implicitly, through listening to others, independent reading, and exposure to vocabulary-rich environments, direct vocabulary instruction is key for all students.

Intentionally supporting vocabulary growth across all content areas ensures that every student can engage deeply with complex concepts and academic content, opening pathways to meaningful learning and growth. Most vocabulary instruction will focus on high-utility Tier 2 words and discipline-specific Tier 3 vocabulary. The tables below provide guidance for selecting and teaching vocabulary.

Three Tiers of Vocabulary Development

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
High frequency, basic words that are easy to learn through everyday situations and conversation. Some students may need additional support, depending on their exposure to and experience with the English language.	Broadly used words that are found across content areas and contexts. Includes academic vocabulary and words with multiple definition. Main focus of vocabulary instruction.	Low frequency words that are content- and discipline-specific. Learned as the need arises when studying a topic. Key for disciplinary understanding
Examples: warm, dog, tired, run, talk, book	Examples: expression, present, cell, matter, bass, minute, analyze, infer	Examples: filibuster, epidermis, pantheon, alkaline, biscuit joint

Note. Adapted from *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*, by M. L. Beck, M. G. McKeown, and L. Kucan, 2013, Guilford Press.

Considerations for Implementation

Key Components of Vocabulary Instruction	
Components	**Teaching Practices**
 Provide rich and varied language experiences	▪ read-alouds of complex texts with direct explanations of words ▪ independent reading of a variety of authors, formats, and genres ▪ provide time for meaningful classroom discussion ▪ use models to demonstrate elaborated vocabulary through writing
 Foster Word Consciousness	▪ stock the classroom with engaging, diverse books ▪ engage in word play through games and discussion ▪ provide lessons on word choice when writing ▪ flood the classroom with words related to the topic
 Teach Word-learning Strategies	▪ study word parts to unlock meaning (prefixes, suffixes, roots) ▪ make connections to learners' first language if appropriate ▪ build relational sets using routines such as word sorts, **word ladders,** concept maps, **word matrixes**, affix walls ▪ use context to infer word meanings and facilitate use of reference tools
 Teach individual words	▪ intentionally choose words to teach, with a focus on tier 2 words ▪ explain, generate definitions, and use words in speech and writing ▪ use of **Frayer Models**, semantic word sorts or collaborative class charts

Note. Adapted from *No more "look up the list" vocabulary instruction*. C. Cobb and C. Blachowicz 2014, Heinemann. *The Vocabulary Book: Learning and Instruction*. M. F. Graves, 2016, Teachers College Press.

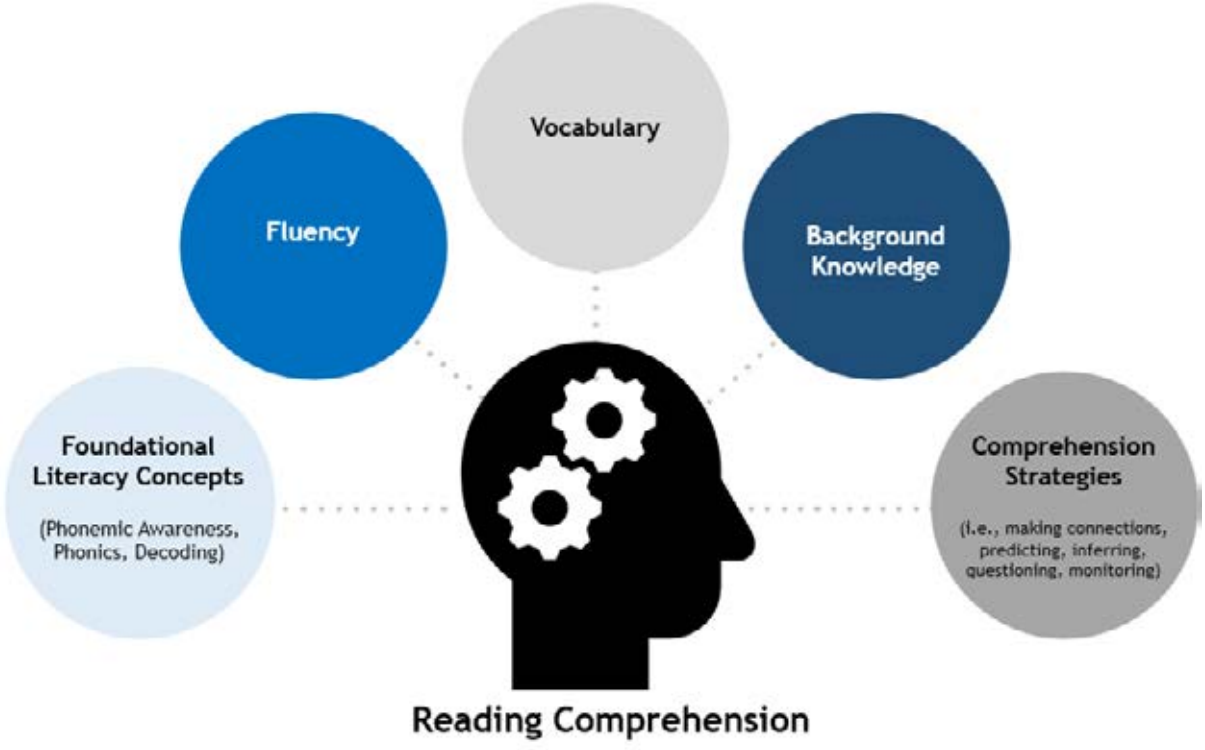
Reading Comprehension

> *Effective reading comprehension includes the act of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning while engaging in intentional problem solving and critical thinking (National Reading Panel, 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).*

Reading comprehension is an active, complex process of constructing meaning from text. It is influenced by multiple interacting factors, including the reader's word-reading skills, fluency, vocabulary, background knowledge, experiences, comprehension processes, the purpose for reading, and the text itself (Duke et al., 2021). Developing comprehension is fundamental to helping students move beyond surface understanding toward deeper learning and transfer (Fisher et al., 2016).

Foundational word-reading skills allow readers to accurately identify printed words, while fluency supports efficient reading so greater attention can be directed toward meaning. Vocabulary and background knowledge help readers understand words, concepts and ideas, and connect new information to prior knowledge. What students already know about a text's topic can have a substantial influence on how well they understand a text (Smith et al., 2021). Readers also draw on their knowledge of language, sentence structures, text structures and features.

Comprehension strategies are flexible thinking tools that readers select and combine before, during, and after reading to make meaning, remember important information, and resolve confusion. These may include monitoring understanding, predicting, questioning, summarizing, and inferring. However, comprehension strategies cannot compensate for limited vocabulary or background knowledge (Fisher et al., 2021). Effective instruction therefore develops these areas together while providing students with meaningful opportunities to read, discuss, write about and learn from text.



Note | Adapted from Duke, Ward, & Pearson (2021).

Reading Comprhension | Considerations for Implementation

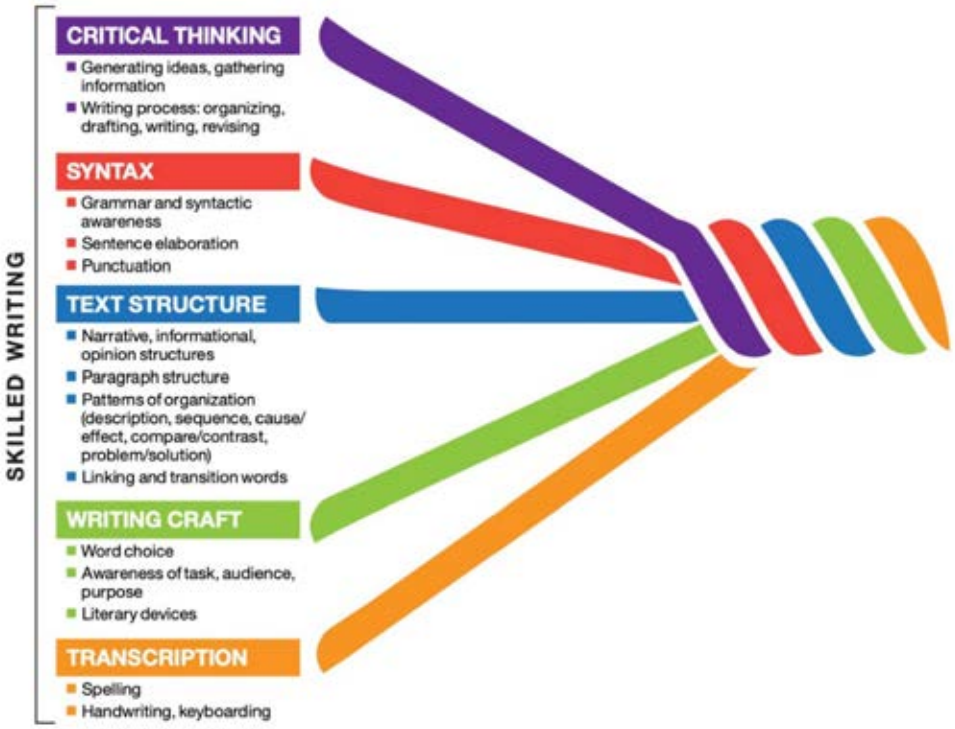
- activate and build background knowledge by using pre-reading provocations and connections
- include considerations for vocabulary development (see Vocabulary)
- build opportunities for student voice and choice in selecting texts
- consider relevancy and representation when selecting texts
- provide many opportunities for learners to discuss texts and ideas before, during, after reading: think-alouds, partner reading, **reciprocal teaching,** jigsaw, think-pair-share, **Socratic seminars**
- re-tell, question, and summarize during and after reading
- annotate texts with connections, wonderings, and paraphrases/summary of main points
- use of digital tools to collaboratively share thinking and make connections on text that has been read
- represent thinking through webs, concept and story maps

Writing

Writing is an unconstrained literacy skill used to accomplish a variety of outcomes within the school setting and beyond. It is a multimodal process we can use to gather, preserve and transmit ideas and information, tell stories, create imagined worlds, explore who we are, and chronicle our learning and experiences. Writing is an indispensable tool for learning and communicating. The permanence of writing makes ideas we are studying readily available for review and evaluation. Its explicitness encourages establishing connection between these ideas, and its active nature fosters the exploration of unexamined assumptions (Graham & Harris, 2016). Writing is a way to make our thinking visible and deepen comprehension. Its recursive nature allows writers to reflect, revise, and improve their thinking in critical and collaborative ways.

Over time, as writers deepen their explorations of ideas and experiment with craft, they progress from novice skills to the mastery of complex skills. However, depending upon the complexity of the writing task, writers may return to earlier skills to support honing their ideas. Writing is a non-linear process which encompasses macro and micro levels of decision-making from context, audience, and purpose, to word choice, syntax, and figurative language (Stockman, 2016).

The Writing Rope | The Strands that are Woven into Skilled Writing



Note. Image in Sedita, J. (2023). *The writing rope: A framework for explicit writing instruction in all subjects.* Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. Inc.

Strands of Writing	
Critical Thinking 	**Critical thinking** in writing is the ability to engage with ideas in an analytical and reflective way before and during the writing process. ▪ critical thinking involves executive function skills like planning, organizing, self-monitoring, and flexible thinking to connect ideas and create coherent written content ▪ comprehension and background knowledge provide the writer the depth and breadth of knowledge to create rich written content
Syntax 	**Syntax** is the set of rules that dictate the ways in which words and phrases can be combined into sentences and paragraphs. ▪ students benefit from explicit instruction focused on sentence skills ▪ each individual sentence communicates ideas and when sentences are put together, they make meaning ▪ cohesive processing of sentence structure is necessary for reading and listening comprehension and for communicating information in writing
Text Structure 	**Text structure** is the way ideas and information are organized within text to help the reader understand and make meaning. ▪ students benefit from instruction in several levels of text structure: ▪ *information, opinion, and narrative text structure:* knowledge of different organizational structures for these types of writing ▪ *paragraph structure:* understanding written paragraphs are used to group information, ideas, and supporting details ▪ *patterns of organization:* sentences and paragraphs can be organized to convey a specific purpose (description, sequence, cause & effect, compare and contrast, problem/solution) ▪ *transition words & phrases:* words/phrases to link sentences, paragraphs, or text sections
Writing Craft 	**Writing craft** includes several techniques that writers employ like writing style, text structure, and word choice. Students benefit from instruction in: ▪ *word choice*: purposeful use of vocabulary and word placement to convey meaning or create effect ▪ *writer's voice:* techniques and style that show emotion, personality, and point of view ▪ *literary devices:* understanding and use of literary elements (plot, setting, narrative, characters, theme) & techniques (imagery, dialogue, personification, figurative language) ▪ *task, audience, & purpose* influence word choice, tone, length and writing style decisions
Transcription 	**Transcription** addresses basic skills like (spelling, handwriting, and keyboarding) that are used to transcribe writing onto the page. ▪ explicit and sequential letter-sound correspondences and morphology instruction can support spelling development ▪ despite advances in technology, students still need instruction in handwriting ▪ keyboarding can become an efficient way for older learners to share ideas in writing ▪ automaticity and fluency in spelling, handwriting/keyboarding allows writers to focus attention to more cognitively demanding components of writing

Note. Adapted from Sedita, J. (2023). *The writing rope: A* framework for explicit writing instruction in all subjects. Paul H, Brookes Publishing Co.

Considerations for Implementation

Daily structured and supported writing times, where learners write for real purposes and audiences through strategies such as:

- **interactive writing** and collaborative construction of texts together
- provide direct and explicit instruction on purposeful planning
- explicit use of **mentor texts,** graphic organizers, and genre structures
- include structured writing lessons and writing within content areas
- utilize instructional activities like self-selected writing times, **loose parts,** response journals
- explicitly build reciprocal reading-writing connections
- use digital resources, such as Google Docs, for peer and teacher feedback, revising, and editing
- integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI), and other digital tools, to support and extend student learning within the writing process

Disciplinary Literacy

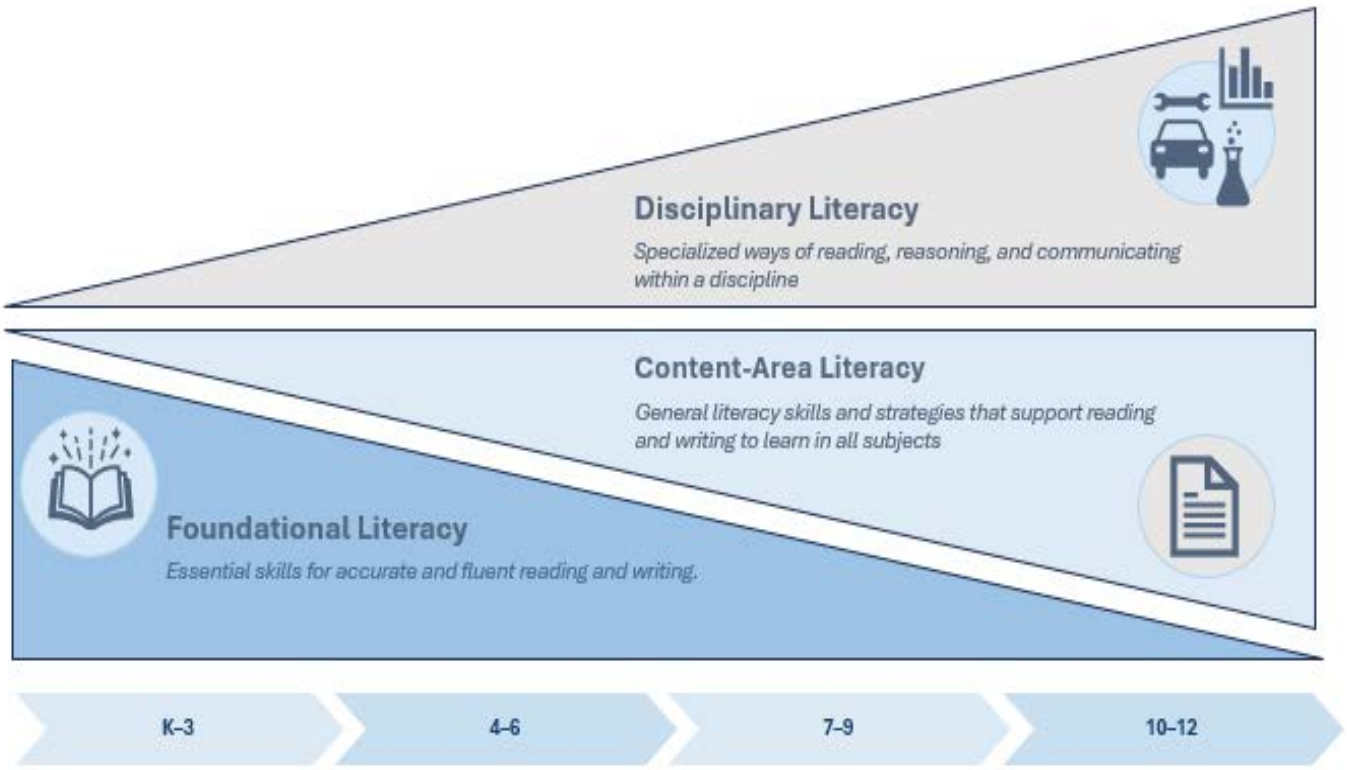
Every teacher is a teacher of the literacies within their disciplines.

Teaching practices used to support disciplinary literacy are discipline specific; disciplinary literacy does not mean applying outcomes from English Language Arts to other disciplines.

Disciplinary Literacy emphasizes the knowledge and abilities possessed by those who create, communicate, and use knowledge within disciplines. It emphasizes the nuanced differences in the ways that experts engage in the work of that discipline. This is fundamental to improving learners' ability to engage in discipline-specific learning, as each discipline differs in its foundational purposes, specialized genres, symbolic artifacts, traditions of communication, evaluation standards of quality and precision, and use of language. Disciplinary Literacy allows learners to grasp the ways literacy is used within a specific discipline to create, disseminate, and critique information (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012; Rehnein, et al., 2018).

Literacy development shifts in emphasis across K–12; it does not move through separate stages that begin and end at particular grades. Foundational literacy remains important as students progress, while content-area and disciplinary literacy become increasingly prominent as texts, concepts, and communication demands grow more complex. Content-area literacy supports reading and writing to learn across subjects, while disciplinary literacy teaches students to read, think, and communicate in ways that are specific to particular disciplines (Sedita, 2024).

Emphasis of Literacies K-12



Note. Adapted from Wolsey and Lapp (2024, p. 9).

The table below describes the primary focus of each form of literacy and what it may look like in classroom practice. The amount and type of instruction students need will vary by learner, text, task, and discipline:

Foundational Literacy	Content-Area Literacy	Disciplinary Literacy
• *Core skills* that support accurate, fluent reading and writing. These are emphasized in the early grades but may require continued instruction and support for some older students. • Includes phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding and spelling, word recognition, fluency, and print and language conventions.	• *General* literacy practices used across subject areas to learn from and communicate about text and content. • Includes using comprehension strategies, reading increasingly complex and multisyllabic words, developing academic vocabulary, navigating text structures and features, summarizing, and responding critically to text.	• *Specialized* ways of reading, thinking, writing, and communicating within a particular discipline. • May include using discipline-specific vocabulary, interpreting specialized text structures and representations, evaluating evidence, and using the conventions and communication practices valued within a discipline.

Note. Adapted from *Disciplinary literacy: Integrating literacy instruction in all subjects, grades 6-12* (Sedita, 2024)

Considerations for Implementation

Supporting literacy across disciplines involves making visible how knowledge is accessed, developed, evaluated, and communicated within each subject or field.

Disciplinary Literacy Considerations	
Consider Essential Questions 	• What technical language do adult practitioners use in a discipline or field? • What big questions do leaders and learners ask in the discipline or field? • What processes are used for making new knowledge or sharing advances in the discipline or field? • Where is the current "edge" of knowledge making in the discipline or field? • What are the habits of mind we would see in a highly skilled practitioner of the discipline or field? (National Council of Teachers of English, 2014)
Design Disciplinary Inquiry and Tasks 	• Frame learning through essential disciplinary questions to guide students' authentic inquiry into issues that are relevant to the student and within the discipline. • Provide students with learning opportunities that mirror the reasons, texts, and application of thinking skills that would be found within the discipline or field. (Wilder, 2016)
Select Appropriate Disciplinary Texts 	• Each discipline values certain kinds of texts • Select texts which: o align with the discipline or field o include a wide variety of multimodal primary and secondary source texts (e.g., podcasts, news stories, videos, graphs, tables, images) o function as tools for literate thinking and participation in the discipline or field (Wilder, 2016)

Scaffold Disciplinary Practice 	• Demonstrate how to read across specific texts providing students with a model of literate disciplinary reasoning
	  o e.g., in mathematics a model for students how to gain accurate information from tables and graphs to justify their solutions to real-world problems.
	  o e.g., in history, use disciplinary literacy strategies to interpret a historical text and determine the importance of identifying and assessing accuracy and bias in sources
	• Provide modeling and pay attention to student interaction with texts to reinforce literacy within the discipline or field
	  o e.g., watch for students who attempt to read a science text in the same way as literature, such as skimming over vital information contained in illustrations and other images (Wilder, 2016)

Build Vocabulary and Background Knowledge 	• Develop the vocabulary that is specific to the discipline, learning task, or text to deepen comprehension (refer to *Vocabulary*) • Activate and build students' background knowledge to increase the accessibility of the learning task, content, or text • Model and support students' engagement with the vocabulary and content of the text through close reading activities and group discussion (Wolsey & Lapp, 2024)

Assessment and Reporting Practices

> *"It is only through assessment that we can discover whether the instructional activities in which we engaged our students resulted in the intended learning. Assessment really is the bridge between teaching and learning" (Wiliam, 2013, p. 15).*

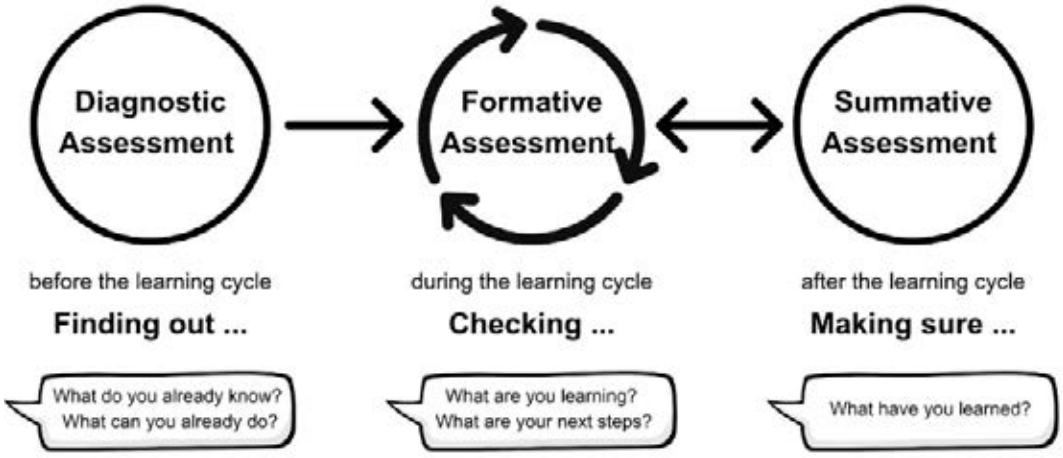
In The Calgary Board of Education (CBE), assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Assessment includes a continuous cycle of instruction, gathering and interpreting evidence from a variety of sources and responsively adjusting teaching practice. Assessment practices aim to improve student engagement in learning and to elicit evidence that accurately represents what each student knows and can do in relation to the intended learning goals. Five guiding principles are central to all assessment and reporting policies and practices:

1 | Assessment practices are fair, transparent, and equitable for all learners.
2 | Assessment makes explicit connections to the intended learning goals.
3 | Assessment is ongoing and embedded throughout cycles of learning.
4 | Learners are actively involved in the assessment process.
5 | Assessment information shared with learners and families is clear and meaningful.

Although all forms of assessment contribute to building an understanding of student growth, progress and achievement, how assessment information is used determines whether it is diagnostic, formative or summative. The figure below illustrates how these three types of assessment are used throughout a single learning cycle.

- Diagnostic assessment is used at the beginning of each learning cycle to determine what students already know, understand and can do in relation to the learning goals.
- Formative assessment is used throughout each learning cycle to inform instruction and provide guidance to students about how to improve.
- Summative assessment is used at or near the end of each learning cycle to verify that students have achieved the learning goals.

Assessment Types Throughout a Learning Cycle



For more information regarding Assessment and Reporting in CBE, please refer to [Assessment & Reporting | Calgary Board of Education.]

Diagnostic Assessment

Teachers engage in diagnostic assessment at the beginning of each learning cycle and use the information they gather to better know learners. This assessment data may be collected from individual students, small groups and/or the whole class. The results of these assessments are not used in the determination of report card grades or to make recommendations for course enrolment.

A broad range of diagnostic assessments can be used to provide teachers with valuable information which

- informs planning and instruction;
- identifies learner interests, learning preferences, current level of understanding and/or readiness to learn new skills;
- supports differentiation and scaffolding of learning for students; and
- identifies students that may require further supports, targeted interventions and/or more specific diagnostic information gathering.

Formative Assessment

The majority of classroom assessment is formative. The goal of formative assessment is to monitor student growth and inform instruction that moves learning forward. It is embedded throughout the learning cycle to tailor teaching strategies and offer students targeted feedback for improvement. In most cases, formative assessment is not used when determining report card grades.

Effective formative assessment is

- collected to inform instructional decisions and next steps in learning.
- carefully designed to identify and measure progress towards the intended learning goals.
- triangulated in both mode (observation, conversation and product) and frequency to best elicit evidence of student learning.
- collected from a variety of audiences (e.g., one-on-one, small group, whole group) and through a variety of methods (e.g., discussions, exit slips, in-the moment all-student response systems).
- considerate of student needs, including scaffolding and accommodations when appropriate.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment occurs at or near the end of each learning cycle, after multiple opportunities for formative feedback have been provided and teachers are reasonably confident that both learning has taken place and that students are ready to have their learning evaluated. These assessments measure achievement of and progress towards the intended learning goals. Summative assessment information informs final grade determination as well as report card comments.

Summative assessment best practices include

- collaborating with colleagues to design common assessments that support coherence and calibration.
- mitigating emotional impact to ensure accurate representation of student achievement.
- flexibly adjusting assessment plans in response to student need, to ensure each student is given the opportunity to successfully demonstrate their understanding (e.g., accommodations based on student need, fewer and targeted questions, a conversation instead of a written product).
- developing assessment plans that provide multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning, including continued support for students and reassessment opportunities.

Glossary

Alliteration – the repetition of the same initial sound in a series of words (e.g., *Sally sings softly*), is an important component of phonological awareness. Recognizing and producing alliteration helps students focus on the initial phoneme in words, strengthening their ability to isolate, identify, and manipulate individual sounds. Activities such as tongue twisters, sound-matching games, and playful alliterative phrases encourage auditory discrimination and lay a foundation for both phonics instruction and vocabulary growth.

Decodable texts – one type of book which are used to follow a phonics lesson. These texts include the following criteria: comprehensible (vocabulary is understandable), instructive (the majority of the words must be decodable based on the phonics previously taught), engaging, and "worth revisiting and talking about" (Blevins, 2016, pp. 154-158). A variety of texts are needed during early reading instruction.

Dialogic discussion – uses "the power of talk to stimulate and extend pupils' thinking and advance their learning and understanding. It helps the teacher more precisely to diagnose pupils' needs, frame their learning tasks, and assess their progress. It empowers the learner for lifelong learning and active citizenship" (Alexander, 2010). Dialogic discussion is collective, supportive, reciprocal, deliberative, cumulative, and purposeful (Alexander, 2010).

Elkonin boxes – builds phonological awareness skills by segmenting words into phonemes (individual sounds). To use Elkonin **boxes**, a learner listens to a word and moves a token into a **box** for each sound or phoneme.

Flexible grouping – grouping learners according to shared instructional needs and abilities and regrouping as learners' instructional needs change. Group needs and allocated instructional time may vary among groups.

Frayer Model – a four-square model that defines the word, describes essential characteristics of the concept, provides examples, and non-examples thus representing the term through multiple means. Engaging learners' thinking in each of these four components, promotes a deep understanding of vocabulary (AdLit, n.d.).

Funds of Identity – refers to the historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for a person's self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding (Funds of Identity)

Interactive writing – an explicit instructional writing strategy where teachers and students cooperatively construct a text while making visible elements of the writing process and/or elements of writers' craft.

Loose parts – natural or synthetic items that can be carried, mixed, remixed, ordered, connected, disconnected, and used in a variety of ways other than what was intended to create, deepen and/or represent knowledge and thinking in a multimodal context (Stockman, 2016).

Mentor texts – are pieces of writing whose idea(s), structure(s), and/or written craft can be used to model a writing technique and/or inspire a learner to write something original in that author's style (Meier, 2010).

Morpheme – smallest meaningful unit of language that has its own meaning or grammatical function; can be a whole word or a part of a word (i.e. prefixes like "un-" in "unhappy", "ing" in "reading", or "cat" in "cats")

Multimodal – refers to print and digital based texts that utilize more than one mode, where photography, painting, poetry [music], and mathematics can be examples of different modes (Serafini, 2015, pp. 412-413).

Onset and Rime Level – An onset is the initial consonant or consonant cluster of a one-syllable word. A rime is the vowel and any consonants that follow the onset. In the word "mat," /m/ is the onset and /at/ is the rime. Rimes are word parts that refer to a spelling pattern, and rimes will often rhyme. They are the sound similarities in words.

Phonemic awareness – the ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds in *spoken words*. Before children learn to read print, they need to become aware of how the sounds (phonemes) in words work. Phonemic awareness is a subcategory of phonological awareness. The focus of phonemic awareness is narrow – identifying, segmenting, blending, and manipulating the individual sounds in words.

Reciprocal teaching – a contemporary application of Vygotsky's theories; it is used to improve learners' ability to learn by being actively involved and monitoring their comprehension as they read (Reading Rockets, 2021). Teachers model, then help students learn to guide group discussions using four strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting (National Council of Teachers of English, 2021). Usually used during small group instruction.

Rhyming – an early phonological awareness skill. Detecting rhyme requires a child to hear sounds within words. Having learners generate rhyming words is an opportunity for them to work with words that have common sound patterns and often similar spellings.

Science of reading – The science of reading is the collection of more than fifty years of research and evidence from "multiple fields of study using methods that confirm and disconfirm theories on how children best learn to read" (National Center on Improving Literacy, 2022, para. 1). It includes teaching ~~based on the five big ideas:~~ phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. This research continues to evolve and has ranged from the required skills for reading, to the brain areas involved in reading development, to the most effective ways to teach students to read (Keisler, 2024). Researchers within different fields impact the work of educational and literacy researchers, with the "end goal to explain the processes by which successful reading occurs and [determine] the most effective ways to develop skills that enable those processes" (Keisler, 2024, 4).

Sentence segmenting – the ability to break a spoken sentence into its individual words. It helps students understand that sentences are made up of separate words that carry meaning. Practicing sentence segmenting, such as by clapping for each word or moving a token to represent each word, supports listening skills, concept of word, and prepares students for more complex tasks like syllable counting and phoneme manipulation.

Socratic Seminars – a formal discussion, usually based on a text, with the teacher asking open-ended questions and requiring students to explain their ideas by supporting them with evidence, listen carefully to the contributions of others, and think critically for themselves (Israel, 2002). It teaches learners how to conduct focused conversation and how to use effective habits of discussion.

Sound walls – a visual teaching tool that is set up according to the articulation of speech sounds. It builds speech to print connections through visual and auditory anchors (Dahlgren, n.d.).

Syllable Level – As learners develop awareness of sounds, explicit instruction is needed about words as units of pronunciation, not merely letter sequences. As learners begin reading, they can chunk longer words into manageable parts. Moats and Tolman (n.d) remind us that, "familiarity with syllable patterns helps learners to read longer words accurately and fluently and to solve spelling problems".

Word ladders – a learning task that teaches vocabulary. Learners are given clues to build words. E.g., _ _ _ _ "these twinkle in the sky" _ _ _ "people drive these" (Blevins, 2016).

Word matrix – is a tool designed to assist in vocabulary and writing instruction. "Students organize words by their connotative charge on one axis, placing words with more negative connotations to the left and more positive connotations to the right. On another axis, students organize that same list based on their levels of relative register, from informal to formal. Students also have the option of providing a brief statement that justifies their placement of a word at a specific point on the matrix" (National Council of Teachers of English, 2021).

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