

Module 1: The Need for Effective Literacy Instruction

Reading scores from the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP, 2022) indicate that only 33% of fourth-grade and 31% of eighth-grade public school students in the United States read at proficiency level. Data show the need for consistent, effective literacy instruction that is explicit, systematic, and cumulative. Unlike spoken language, reading is not a natural act. Robust evidence shows that reading is an unnatural act and must be explicitly taught (Adams, 1990; Dehaene, 2009; Gough & Hillinger, 1980; Wolf, 2008). The use of scientific evidence from well-designed research-based studies to inform best practices in reading instruction is known as the science of reading. Structured Literacy is explicit instruction that is informed by the science of reading; integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and emphasizes the structure of language systems (IDA, 2020). A Structured Literacy approach outlines both what needs to be taught (the components of Structured Literacy) and how to teach it (the principles and practices of Structured Literacy).

Module 2: Structured Literacy Components and Principles

The seven systems of language and components of Structure Literacy integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing and emphasize the following:

- phonology—the speech sound system of a language
- orthography—the writing system of a language
- morphology—the study of meaningful parts of words
- syntax—the arrangement of words, phrases, and clauses in a sentence
- semantics—the study of the meanings of and relationships among words
- pragmatics—the use of oral and written language in a particular context
- discourse—the structure and coherence of spoken and written communication

While the Structured Literacy components highlight *what* to teach, the principles explain *how* to teach the components. The first principle of Structured Literacy is *explicit instruction*, which involves directly teaching concepts and skills. Additionally, instruction should be *systematic*, meaning it is logically ordered in presenting concepts and skills from simple to complex, and *cumulative*, with new concepts and skills building on students' prior knowledge. Instruction should also be *diagnostic*, informed by students' strengths and needs, and *responsive*, adjusted based on the data.

Module 3: Structured Literacy in the Classroom

The instructional practices of Structured Literacy instruction build on the principles and include specific activities that support student learning (IDA, 2020). First, educators should use screening and progress-monitoring to identify and monitor students at risk of falling behind and ensure appropriate pacing, materials, and grouping for instruction. Educators should also model tasks, showing students exactly how to complete a specific task; encourage meaningful interactions with language; and provide students with multiple and varied opportunities to practice to progress toward mastery. They should provide positive, corrective feedback to help students gauge their progress and/or clarify any misunderstanding; encourage and celebrate student effort; monitor student engagement during instruction and independent work; and hold high performance expectations for students. Lastly, educators should implement multimodal/multisensory strategies that require students to use a variety of senses to increase engagement, enhance memory, and align instruction.

References

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