



## **Phonics Workshop**

### **Support Key Tenets of Structured Literacy**

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# Key Tenets of Structured Literacy

## Definitions

### Dyslexia

“Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.”

Adopted by the IDA Board of Directors, Nov. 12, 2002. Many state education codes, including New Jersey, Ohio and Utah, have adopted this definition. Learn more about how consensus was reached on this definition: *Definition Consensus Project*. Found at <https://dyslexiaida.org/definition-of-dyslexia/>

### Structured Literacy

Structured Literacy™ is “an approach to reading instruction where teachers carefully structure important literacy skills, concepts, and the sequence of instruction, to facilitate children’s literacy learning and progress as much as possible” (IDA, 2019, p. 6). “This term refers to both the content and the methods or principles of instruction” (IDA, 2020, p. 1). “Structured Literacy™ is characterized by the provision of systematic, explicit instruction that integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing and emphasizes the structure of language across the speech sound system (phonology), the writing system (orthography), the structure of sentences (syntax), the meaningful parts of words (morphology), the relationship among words (semantics), and the organization of spoken and written discourse” (IDA, 2019, p. 6).

Content of Structured Literacy™: Language <sup>1</sup>	
Structured Literacy Tenet	How Benchmark Phonics Workshop Supports It
<p><i>Phonemic awareness:</i> The ability to notice or become consciously aware of individual speech sounds (phonemes), allowing for the identification of and manipulation (segmentation, blending, and deleting) of sounds in spoken words. A large proportion of individuals with dyslexia has difficulty with this level of language analysis and needs prolonged practice to grasp it.</p>	<p>Phonological awareness and phonemic awareness activities appear each week in Benchmark Phonics Workshop in Kindergarten and Grade 1. There is a focus on oral blending and oral segmentation since these skills are most closely associated with early reading and writing growth. After that, the focus is on phonemic manipulation tasks (e.g., sound addition, substitution, and deletion), which is associated with orthographic mapping. Students are assessed on their phonological awareness skills and additional tools are available for students needing more intensive support. Some students will need this support past Grade 1. <i>(See Grade 1, Unit 2, Week 2, Day 3: Phonological Awareness: Phoneme Segmentation.)</i></p>
<p><i>Sound-symbol (phoneme-grapheme) correspondences:</i> Graphemes are letters and letter combinations that represent phonemes in print. The correspondences between letters and speech sounds can be taught through systematic, explicit, cumulative instruction over time.</p>	<p>Sound-spelling correspondences are taught explicitly. The teacher states the sound and the spelling (e.g., the /u/ sound is spelling with the letter u). The teaching of these sound-spellings is sequenced from easier to more complex and includes a review and repetition cycle for mastery so students can more readily transfer the skills. Students read words with the target phonics skills both in isolation (see Blend Words) and in context (see “I Read” decodable texts). <i>(See Grade 1, Unit 2, Week 2, Day 1: Spelling-Sound Correspondences and Blend Words. See also the program’s scope and sequence.)</i></p>
<p><i>Patterns and conventions of print (orthography):</i> Patterns and conventions (i.e., some letters, like v and j, cannot be used at the ends of words, only some letters can be doubled, and the six basic types of syllable types) can be taught. Through explicit instruction and practice, students with dyslexia can be taught to understand and remember patterns of letter use in the writing system.</p>	<p>Patterns and conventions of print are taught and reinforced throughout the program during the initial introduction of the target skill, during dictation (Write Words), while word building (Blend and Build Words), and during all syllabic instruction. <i>(See Kindergarten, Unit 9, Week 1, Day 1: Spelling-Sound Correspondences. See Grade 1, Unit 2, Week 2, Day 2: Write Words (dictation). See Grade 3, Unit 5, Week 2, Days 1-5: Vowel-r Syllables.)</i></p>
<p><i>Morphology:</i> Morphemes, the smallest unit of meaning in a language, includes prefixes, roots, base words, and suffixes. Recognizing morphemes helps students figure out and remember the meanings of new words. Knowledge of morphology is an aid for remembering spellings of words.</p>	<p>Students learn base words and affixes throughout the program beginning with common inflectional endings in Kindergarten and Grade and progressing to prefixes, suffixes, and Greek and Latin roots as they go through the grades. Attention is paid to using word parts for both decoding and accessing a word’s meaning. Students develop strategies to read multisyllabic words, including seeing whole words, recognizing parts for pronunciation and meaning, and building words. Activities such Build Words, Sort Words, Decode by Analogy (Grades 3 and up), Using Reading Big Words Strategy, and Build Automaticity drills focus on these patterns. <i>(See Grade 2, Unit 10, Week 2, Days 1-5: Prefixes. See Grade 3, Unit 5, Week 2, Days 1-5: Vowel-r Syllables.)</i></p>
<p><i>Syntax:</i> Syntax is the system for ordering words in sentences so that meaning can be communicated. The study of syntax includes understanding parts of speech and conventions of grammar and word use in sentences. Syntax lessons include interpretation and formulation of simple, compound, and complex sentences, and work with both phrases and clauses in sentence construction.</p>	<p>Students write about the decodable, accountable texts they read every week. It is through this application of the phonics skills that they also have opportunities to apply their knowledge of grammar/sentence structure and receive targeted feedback from their teachers. <i>(See Grade 1, Unit 2, Week 2, Day 4: Write About the Text: Encode. See Grade 3, Unit 5, Week 2, Day 3: Writing Follow-Up.)</i></p>
<p><i>Semantics:</i> Semantics is the aspect of language concerned with meaning. Meaning is conveyed both by single words and by phrases and sentences. Teaching word meanings (vocabulary), interpretation of phrases and sentences, and understanding of text organization leads to comprehension of both oral and written language.</p>	<p>The goal of teaching phonics is to access words in sentences and build fluency in reading so that students can focus more of their mental energies to deeply comprehending the text. Although words used in the decodable texts are simple, students who need vocabulary instruction on these words receive that support during Small Group work. During Whole Group, students use their Vocabulary Word Bank words to discuss and write about the stories they read. This visual vocabulary glossary enables teachers to build word knowledge while developing phonics skills. As students progress through the grades, instruction focuses on morphological awareness (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, Greek and Latin roots) that will help students access word meanings while reading. <i>(See Grade 1, Unit 2, Week 2, Day 2: We Read and Write: Build Vocabulary. See Grade 3, Unit 8, Weeks 1 and 2, Days 1-5: Negative Prefixes, Greek and Latin Roots)</i></p>

<sup>1</sup> Information for this section came from IDA, 2019; IDA, 2020; Hasbrouck, 2020; Moats, 2019; and Spear-Swerling, 2019

<b>Principles and Methods of Structured Literacy™ Instruction<sup>2</sup></b>	
<b>Structured Literacy Tenet</b>	<b>How Benchmark Phonics Workshop Supports It</b>
<i>Explicit:</i> Explicit instruction includes: a clear statement of the lesson’s goals; teachers explaining each concept and providing step- by-step demonstrations using a range of examples and non-examples; students applying each new concept to reading and writing words and text; and teachers providing sufficient amounts of guided practice and support with immediate feedback and guidance.	Deliberate, clear teaching of all aspects of foundational skills are provided in the program. The lessons are explicit and systematic. The focus is on daily application to both reading and writing—not isolated skill practice. The lessons are also active, engaging, and thought-provoking as they guide students to observe and discuss aspects of how English words work. See the program’s instructional routines for details on each research-based routine used (e.g., blending, word building, dictation, reading decodable texts, writing about decodable texts). <i>(See Grade 1, Unit 2, Week 2, Day 1.)</i>
<i>Systematic and cumulative:</i> Language concepts are taught systematically, with the teacher explaining how each element fits into the whole. This is done by creating a reasonable scope and a sequence of skills that progress from easier to more difficult, with concepts building on another.	The teaching of the sound-spellings is sequenced from easier to more complex (separating confusing letter and sounds, built so words can be formed early on, etc.) and includes a review and repetition cycle for mastery so students can more readily transfer the skills. Students go from the known to the new during instruction to provide connections across learning. <i>(See Grade 1, Unit 2, Week 2, Day 1: Spelling-Sound Correspondence and Day 2: Spiral Review. See also Grade 1, Unit 5, Week 1, Day 1: Blend Words.)</i>
<i>Intensive, hands-on, engaging, and multimodal:</i> Increasing the intensity of instruction requires frequent responses from students to ensure there is a high level of student-teacher interaction. Moving tiles into sound boxes, using hand gestures, building words with letter tiles, and color-coding sentences in paragraphs are all examples of hands-on learning that keep students engaged in learning. Multimodal instruction pairs sensory modalities (i.e., auditory, visual, and kinesthetic) in listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities, leading to enhanced learning of all students, including those with dyslexia.	The lessons in the program are multimodal—focusing on reading, writing, speaking, and listening to sounds, letters, and words. Many of the activities engage students in multisensory learning, such as dictation (in which students use sound boxes and counters to physically mark sounds as they segment the sounds in words), word building (in which students use letter cards to build a series of words), Heidi Songs (in which students sing and move to actions as they learn sounds and letter formation), and so on. <i>(See Grade 1, Unit 2, Week 2, Day 1: Spelling-Sound Correspondences, Day 2: Write Words.)</i>
<i>Diagnostic and responsive:</i> During instruction, teachers use student response patterns to adjust pacing, presentation, and amount of practice given. During and after instruction, progress monitoring helps to identify who needs extra help, what type of help is needed, and whether the instruction is working so appropriate modifications can be made in a timely manner.	Students are assessed three times a year using a comprehensive phonics assessment (Jan Hasbrouck’s Quick Phonics Assessment) and weekly cumulative assessments are provided to assist teachers in determining skill mastery versus skill decay and to make immediate course corrections before learning issues develop. <i>(See Grade 1, Unit 2, Week 2, Day 5: Cumulative Assessment. See also unit assessments for decoding and spelling.)</i>

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<sup>2</sup> Information for this section came from IDA, 2019; IDA, 2020; Moats, 2019; Hasbrouck, 2020; and Spear-Swerling, 2019



From *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*, a quarterly publication from IDA, in an article on reading instruction approaches by Moats (2017), this table compares types of programs. These might be useful to use or respond to these features and comparisons.

TABLE 2. Comparison of Code-Emphasis with Literature-Emphasis Approaches		
Feature of Program	Code-Emphasis or Phonics-Emphasis	Literature-Emphasis or Meaning-Emphasis
Organization	Scope and sequence of phonics and word reading skills determine lesson design and sequence and type of reading practice.	Organized by literature themes; may have ancillary phonics and phonemic awareness activities (not the focus of the reading lesson).
Texts for reading instruction	Decodable until about grade 2; high proportion of pattern words that have been taught.	Texts "leveled" by presumed difficulty but not controlled for phonic correspondences.
Content	Phonemic awareness, phoneme-grapheme relationships, syllabication and morphology, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing; use of decodable text at K-1 level.	Shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, leveled books; often, writers' workshop. Minimal instruction for skill development.
Instructional time	In K-1, about half the time spent on word work (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency in word recognition), the rest on language comprehension and oral reading in K-1. In grades 2-4, more instructional time is spent on language and comprehension, and less on word work.	In K-4, most or all of time spent on reading aloud, shared writing, independent reading of leveled books in K-1. Skill instruction embedded in "workshop" context or "word study" activities.
Method/teacher role	Mostly teacher-led; teacher actively leads students through decoding activities and guided practice. Until students can read words with a variety of phonic patterns, comprehension instruction is with read-alouds.	Often student-directed; more independent learning in centers; student choice of reading material. Leveled texts are used for reading and comprehension instruction.
Corrective feedback	Students asked to look carefully at the word; sound it out; check and see if the word they read makes sense.	Students asked what might make sense, given the topic, the pictures, and (perhaps) the first letter.
Types of practice	Synthetic skill building from sounds to words to sentences to text with high percentage of words with phonic patterns that have been taught.	Meaning-focused activities: creating books; memorizing through repeated readings of leveled books; writing in journals; talking about books and reciting stories.

## Phonics Workshop

Feature of Program	Code-Emphasis or Phonics-Emphasis	Phonics Workshop
Organization	Scope and sequence of phonics and word reading skills determine lesson design and sequence of reading practice.	The scope and sequence serves as the “spine” of the instruction. All the instruction, decodable text readings, and so on are derived from this carefully constructed scope and sequence with its built-in review and repetition cycle for mastery.
Texts for Reading Instruction	Decodable until about Grade 2; high proportion of pattern words that have been taught.	Decodable texts are the key student reading materials used in Kindergarten and Grade 1. They appear in the <i>My Reading and Writing</i> student book. Additional decodable books (Benchmark Decodable Reader small books) are also available for students needing extra support.
Content	Phonemic awareness, phoneme-grapheme relationships, syllabication and morphology, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing; use of decodable text at K-1 level.	All aspects of structured literacy are included in the Benchmark Phonics Workshop program. A strong reading-writing connection exists and the focus on the instruction is on the application of these skills—where the learning “sticks.”
Instructional Time	In K-1, about half the time spent on word work (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency in word recognition), the rest on language comprehension and oral reading in K-1. In grades 2-4, more instructional time is spent on language and comprehension, and less on word work.	Benchmark’s Phonics Workshop can be used as a stand-alone foundational skills program or in combination with other resources, such as the Benchmark Reading Workshop and the Benchmark Writing Workshop. Approximately 30 minutes per day should be spent focusing on these critical phonics skills in Kindergarten and Grade 1. The time needed decreases a bit in Grades 2 and up. However, the phonics lessons including both reading and writing.
Method/teacher role	Mostly teacher-led; teacher actively leads students through decoding activities and guided practice. Until students can read words with a variety of phonics patterns, comprehension instruction is with read-alouds.	The We Read selections and other read alouds are used to build vocabulary and comprehension in the program, while the decodable accountable texts focus on phonics fluency.
Corrective Feedback	Students asked to look carefully at the word; sound it out; check and see if the word they read makes sense.	Students are guided to focus on the use of letter-sound and spelling-sound aspects of words while reading. The decodable texts ensure that this skill is reinforced throughout the daily lessons. There is also a focus on analyzing word parts to increase students’ curiosity and awareness of how English words work. Discussions about words (e.g., in sorts) lead to improved reading and spelling.
Types of Practice	Synthetic skill building from sounds to words to sentences to text with high percentage of words with phonics patterns that have been taught.	Students practice reading decodable words in isolation and in connected text through daily readings of decodable accountable texts and the writing about them. This reinforces these skills and deepens text comprehension.

## References

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## Websites

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- <http://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/structured-literacy.pdf>.