

*Supporting literacy development in secondary education: identifying and addressing student
needs*

A curriculum program to assist secondary educators

by

Ann M. Schrick

B.G.S., Wichita State University, 2014

M.A.T., Kansas State University, 2017

M.S., Fort Hays State University, 2020

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2025

Abstract

This curriculum program is designed to help secondary teachers better support students who struggle with foundational literacy skills. It addresses a significant gap in secondary education, where many students face ongoing literacy challenges despite improvements in elementary reading instruction. The program provides teachers with practical, research-based tools and strategies for identifying and addressing reading difficulties through a Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS) framework. Drawing from cognitive science and the Science of Reading, the program explains how the brain learns to read and offers evidence-based teaching methods, including structured literacy approaches. The content is delivered through an interactive online platform that includes assessment tools, lesson plans, and resources for differentiated instruction. The program emphasizes five key components of literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, while incorporating both Scarborough's Reading Rope and Sedita's Writing Rope frameworks. This practical resource aims to empower secondary educators with the knowledge and tools they need to help struggling readers succeed, without requiring extensive additional training or resources.

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Suzanne Lynn Porath

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increased recognition of the importance of literacy skills in all areas of life. Reading and comprehending texts are essential for academic success, career advancement, and active social participation. However, despite improving literacy instruction in primary grades, secondary students often struggle with reading and comprehension, leading to significant challenges in their educational journeys.

Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS) (Freeman, Sugai, Simonsen, & Everett, 2017) provide a framework of interventions and support designed to address student behavioral and academic challenges. MTSS grew from the Response to Intervention (RtI) and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Ryan & Baker, 2019) models. When Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2020), RtI was created to help identify students who needed more intensive support.

MTSS became a proactive approach to identifying students in need and replaced the “wait to fail” method previously used. The key components of MTSS include universal screenings of all students early in the school year, tiers of interventions that can be increased in response to student needs, continual data collection and assessment, schoolwide approach to expectations and supports, and parental involvement (PBIS Rewards, 2020).

Reaching students who need academic support can be time-consuming and burdensome, especially for poorly trained and prepared educators (Samuels, 2011). General education teachers have expected special education teachers to support students with no consideration for the level of support the students need. The teachers send lists of students who they believe need remediation but do not provide any documentation as to why they believe there is an issue. This

presents a problem as the number of service requests and students receiving services (Kansas Association of School Boards, 2019) continue to grow without the same exponential growth of available special education professionals.

Background, Context, and Theoretical Framework

According to the U.S. Digest of Education Statistics, the number of 3-21-year-olds served under IDEA in Kansas increased by 20.3% from the 2000-01 school year to the 2017-18 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018 Tables and Figures)

This information has resulted in the State of Kansas initiating a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). The Kansas Board of Education has enacted legislation requiring every school district to implement a universal screening and system of support. An evaluation report completed in 2014 by WestEd stated that 48% of schools in Kansas already participate in the MTSS program, which is 67% of the districts across the state. More recent data is not currently available and will be addressed in the scope of this study.

MTSS in Kansas is relatively new, and with only 48% of schools in the state participating in some programs, there are bound to be many questions and opinions from the educators responsible for executing the program. A review of the Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN) documents identifies a need for a comprehensive, step-by-step, understandable guide to facilitate the creation and implementation of an MTSS program. Much of the information found is dated and difficult to read through.

The theoretical framework that has shaped this curriculum product is Situational Leadership Theory. This theory was developed by Hersey and Blanchard in the 1960s and is based upon another theory called the 3-D Management Style Theory by Reddin (Murray & Culver, 2018). The basis of this theory is that the focus of leadership is based on the situation and

that different situations demand different styles of leadership. This correlates with RtI/MTSS in that pedagogy requires assessing student needs and providing differentiation based on the results.

Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory is a very useful and adaptive model which allows educational leaders and literacy teachers to mentor, lead and develop their peers, staff, and students in a way which would positively contribute to their professional competence as well as literacy learning. The core principle of Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory is that effective leaders adjust their style based on the "development level" (a combination of competence and commitment) of the individuals they are leading. SLT's core principle of tailoring leadership style to follower maturity is highly relevant across the educational spectrum. It offers a practical model for principals to guide teachers and for teachers to guide students, fostering professional growth, enhancing student achievement, and cultivating positive learning environments.

Situational Leadership in Educational Administration

Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988), conceived in the 1970s, is a contingency theory of leadership. The theory's central claim is that there is no "one best" style of leadership. The most "effective leadership depends on, or is contingent upon, the specific situation and the maturity levels of followers" (Hersey, Blanchard, & Macgregor, 2001, p. 6). The seeds of SLT were sown in earlier research on leadership that began to study how task- and relationship-orientation played off each other.

The theory's key idea is that leaders must "vary" their style "in accordance with the degree of the maturity of the individuals or groups they lead" and in "particular situations" (Lee, 2025). Hersey and Blanchard's contribution and their focus on the Maturity of followers, distinguished Situational Leadership from other approaches and made it a highly dynamic and

adaptable framework. The cornerstone of effective leadership is therefore seen as the ability to adapt and is built into most applications of SLT in the fields of leadership development, training and coaching. One of the most telling insights from research into leadership is how sources constantly have to reiterate or point out SLT's essential rejection of a "one-best-style" and "stable leadership trait or behavior." (Lee, 2025). The search for universal or stable leadership traits or behavior has been a preoccupation of most leadership research and thinking. Hersey and Blanchard, by claiming that it is instead "contingent upon the specific situation and the maturity levels of followers," almost single-handedly propelled leadership studies into the dynamism, adaptation, and context-dependence that is taken for granted today. It is foundational for the purposes of this response because it illuminates why SLT should have any relevance or use for education. Education by its nature and for most stakeholders involves a broad diversity of learners, a vast array of tasks, and a constantly shifting context. The theory's flexibility, to put it mildly, is not an accident but rather its very essence and also an important reason for its use in education.

As SLT's key aspect is and must be adaptation and as the same sources unambiguously report that SLT is "employed in coaching and training programs worldwide" as well as in "leadership development programs" (Lee, 2025), the next implication for training for educational leaders must logically be that such training cannot stop at informing leaders about the theory. Such training must also focus on developing the capabilities needed to actually put SLT into practice. These capabilities, as elaborated on by the SLT theorists, must include "diagnose, adapt, communicate, and advance" (Lee, 2025). This goes beyond passive learning of the knowledge that there are various styles and, as important, implies active learning and

development of the skills to not only be able to accurately diagnose a situation but also to fluidly change one's style of behavior to best suit that situation.

For clarity and to avoid confusion, it should also be mentioned that Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory must be clearly distinguished from several other things that are also commonly known as SLT. They include the Social Learning Theory (Albert Bandura's theory that is all about learning from observation, behavior modeling, and rewards and punishment) as well as administrative set-ups or structures like School Leadership Teams (teams of educational staff with authority for public schools that are mandated for example in New York City) or Student Learning Targets (educator goal-setting tools with some public schools like those in Louisiana).

School principals have often been described in school administration as educational leaders who need to vary their style in relation to the maturity of their teachers and support staff (Maisyaroh, Imron, Burhanuddin, & Juharyanto, 2019). The leader's starting point is then a diagnosis of the situation or circumstances of their subordinates as a way to effectively direct and guide them (Lee, 2025).

In the same way that maturity, in line with the theory, is not global but specific to a given task, a principal may, for example, decide to give a particular experienced and capable teacher in their school close supervision (M1) for a new classroom discipline issue that they are struggling to handle, and next to them, an equally experienced teacher, whose mastery of organizing lesson plans is unquestioned (M4 for this task) (Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976).

Illustrative applications of SLT in school administration include:

- For teachers who are new to the profession or taking on novel responsibilities (D1: low competence, high commitment), a Directing (S1) style is most appropriate, providing clear instructions and close supervision.
- When dealing with new teachers who possess basic skills but may lack confidence (D2: some competence, low commitment), a principal might effectively employ a Coaching (S2) style, offering feedback and guidance.
- For experienced teachers who are highly competent but may exhibit variable commitment or lack confidence in a new initiative (D3: high competence, variable commitment), a Supporting (S3) style is beneficial, providing resources and fostering confidence through collaborative efforts.
- Highly competent and committed teachers (D4) can be empowered through a Delegating (S4) style, granting them significant autonomy and responsibility for their work.

SLT offers the opportunity to meet each teacher where they are and provide the support, they need at their specific stage of development or level of motivation. By deliberately tailoring the management approach to each teacher's individual needs, SLT can foster a positive work environment and drive teacher performance in line with organizational objectives. This might mean offering additional support or resources in some cases, providing direction and autonomy in others, or adjusting feedback mechanisms to ensure they're effective (Maisyaroh, Imron, Burhanuddin, & Juharyanto, 2019).

At its core, SLT is about building followers' skills and confidence (Thompson & Glaso, 2018). In a school setting, this means empowering teachers by giving them the opportunity and

resources to develop their current skills, learn new ones, and take on increasing levels of responsibility over time. The available research supports the notion that principals who can flex their leadership style to match their teachers' changing needs play an important role in promoting teacher motivation and achievement. One study found a positive correlation between teacher motivation for achievement and the use of situational leadership (Khaleel, Kausar, & Riaz, 2024).

In a sense, it's difficult to separate the use of SLT in a school administrative context from the concept of human capital development more broadly. The very fact that a school leader progresses through the four leadership styles (S1-S4) as teachers develop from one maturity level to the next suggests a process of ongoing coaching, mentoring, and support to help them advance. Principals who adapt their leadership strategies to match their teachers' specific needs demonstrate management while simultaneously developing their staff's expertise and self-reliance. In this way, SLT can serve as a blueprint for systematic professional development within a school, with the end goal of developing a highly skilled, confident, and self-sufficient workforce.

Situational Leadership in Classroom Instruction and Student Development

The core concepts of SLT, which posit that leaders need to change their style contingent on the readiness levels of their followers, are inherently relevant and can be readily applied to the fluid and dynamic teacher-student relationships that exist in the classroom. Students, like employees in the workplace, vary in their readiness (competence and commitment) to perform academic tasks, achieve learning goals, and display appropriate behaviors (Raza & Sikandar, 2018).

Teachers occupy leadership roles when they guide students through their educational journeys and personal growth. The situational leadership model aligns with teaching because it allows for the necessary shifting of leadership styles (such as from direct instruction to offering autonomy) to best meet the unique readiness and needs of a student or group of students. A good teacher, as a situational leader, is expected to adopt different teaching or instructional styles contingent on the readiness levels of their students. This translates to:

•**Directing (S1)** for Novice Learners: For students with low competence and low commitment (M1/D1) regarding a new concept, a complex assignment, or a task they have no prior experience with, the teacher would use a Directing style. This involves providing explicit instructions, clear guidelines, and close supervision. A classic example is a teacher adopting an S1 style for a student (Tom) who was failing English due to low writing maturity, providing specific assignments and close supervision.

•**Coaching (S2)** for Developing Learners: For students who have some competence but may lack commitment or confidence (M2/D2), perhaps due to initial struggles or disillusionment, the teacher employs a Coaching style. This involves providing direction while also explaining the rationale, motivating students, and offering praise for efforts and accomplishments.

•**Supporting (S3)** for Capable but Hesitant Learners: When students demonstrate high competence but exhibit variable commitment, perhaps due to insecurity or lack of motivation (M3/D3), a Supporting style is effective. The teacher provides socio-emotional support, facilitates student-led discussions, and shares decision-making, allowing students greater autonomy.

•**Delegating (S4)** for Autonomous Learners: For highly competent and committed students (M4/D4) who are capable of independent work and self-direction, the teacher adopts a

Delegating style. This involves monitoring progress but entrusting students with significant responsibility for their learning and task completion.

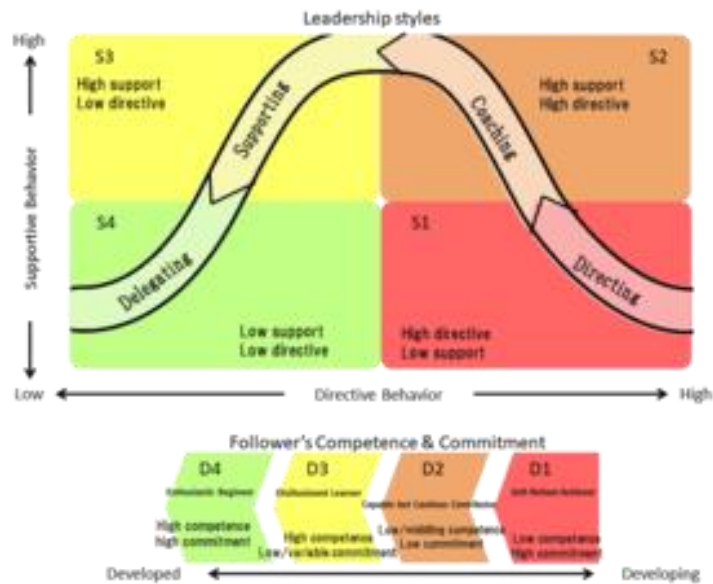


Figure 1.1. Situational Leadership Model / Wikimedia Commons

Enhancing Student Learning and Behavior Management

Empirical support for the core claim that a teacher’s leadership style can helpfully affect student behavior comes from a study of 8th-grade students conducted using a pretest-posttest experimental design, which found that the experimental group (teachers of which used SLT principles) had significantly better posttest performance than did both their own pretest and the control group. The intervention techniques of “telling” (S1) and “selling” (S2) had a “strong positive impact on the performance of students particularly having low readiness level” (Raza & Sikandar, 2018). This at least directly empirically supports the claim that SLT has utility in the context of classroom instruction. The point of particular interest to this essay here, is that the readiness level of students is something that can be influenced and changed by the teacher’s

adaptive style, which further substantiates SLT's developmental emphasis by illustrating that a teacher can work to develop more independence and capacity in their students.

A teacher can diagnose a student's readiness for the behaviors expected of them in class and adapt their approach, accordingly, taking a Directing style with a student new to classroom routines and rules and a Delegating style with a student that is highly self-managing, is capable, and confident. The practical takeaway of the idea that a teacher should provide different individuals with the right amounts of direction and support is that it can be one of a teacher's more purposeful strategies for helping to produce and maintain an orderly, productive learning environment.

SLT's leader-follower relationship can be mapped directly onto the teacher-student relationship, which implies that successful teaching is less about simply delivering content or curriculum to students and more about situational instruction and situational behavior management (Raza & Sikandar, 2018). A teacher's pedagogical effectiveness is conditional on them at the very least, taking an active interest in diagnosing a student's readiness for a particular learning task or behavioral expectation and then being conscious of and making adjustments to their approach in instruction or management as warranted. This has the effect of lifting teaching above a mere generalist practice and positioning it as a more individually tailored, responsive, and adaptive art form that is directly and exactly a reflection of SLT's core principles. An example like "Tom's case" (Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976) is a direct and quite powerful case study of this claim in action.

Hersey and Blanchard's SLT, at its core, simply requires that a leader adapt to an individual's "maturity" for a "specific task" (Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976). In the practical reality of the classroom, this principle maps directly onto a theory-grounded basis for

differentiated instruction. The classroom teacher is always confronted with a variety of different individuals, each of whom has a different level of competence and commitment with respect to any given subject, assignment, or learning goal. To use SLT, they would purposefully “direct” a struggling student, “coach” a middle-of-the-road one, “support” a confident but unwilling student, and “delegate” to an advanced, motivated student – which is very possibly all in the same lesson or unit. This is a way of systematizing differentiated instruction on an evidence-informed basis and can help move the practice beyond intuition and into deliberate pedagogical strategy by grounding it in a recognized theory of leadership.

Empirical Evidence and Case Studies in Education

Empirical tests of the SLT in a range of organizational contexts with some analogues to education have lent support to the basic propositions of the theory. Support for the model has been found particularly when there is a correspondence between the leaders ratings of their followers’ competence and commitment with the followers’ own self-assessment ratings (Thompson & Glaso, 2018). This finding indicates that the SLT is particularly likely to be supported when there is a shared understanding of the followers’ developmental readiness between the leader and follower (Thompson & Glaso, 2018). One study used a pretest-posttest experimental design and demonstrated that teacher leadership style informed by the Hersey and Blanchard model had a significant effect on the performance of 8th grade students (Raza & Sikandar, 2018). The study found that in comparison to a control group, the posttest performance of the experimental group (taught by a teacher with leadership style informed by SLT) was significantly better than their pretest performance. The study also showed that the “telling” (S1) and “selling” (S2) intervention techniques had a “strong positive impact on the performance of students particularly having low readiness level” (Raza & Sikandar, 2018). This is an example of

direct empirical support for the practical utility of SLT as applied to classroom instruction. The specific empirical finding that the “telling” (S1) and “selling” (S2) styles had a “strong positive impact on the performance of students particularly having low readiness level” (Raza & Sikandar, 2018) is important. This is not just a generic confirmation of the theory’s practical effectiveness; it advances understanding of which styles work best at which stages of development in an educational setting. It suggests that for basic learning, introducing new material, or dealing with significant knowledge or skill gaps (all hallmarks of low readiness), a directive and coaching approach is not just theoretically recommended; it is empirically more effective. This finding would appear to validate the prescriptive nature of the theory for certain stages of development in terms of actual pedagogical practice, providing a clear framework for action for teachers.

Research from public schools shows that principals need to adjust their leadership style to teachers’ evolving needs throughout the school year to support academic success (Khaleel, Kausar & Riaz, 2024). The research established that when teachers implement situational leadership their motivation to achieve gets stronger which confirms that adaptive leadership styles can boost teacher productivity by first motivating teachers. It is notable that SLT has been incorporated as a central feature of a wide range of leadership development and management training programs worldwide over the past 30 to 40 years. This is a strong signal of perceived practical utility and intuitive soundness on the part of both public and private sector organizations, even as the theory’s critics have continued to call for more comprehensive empirical validation of its basic propositions.

It is important to note that the literature states “SLT principles are supported when leader rating and follower self-rating are congruent” (Thompson & Glaso, 2018). In education, this

means that for the SLT to have the greatest potential impact, there must be a high degree of congruence between a principals perception of a teachers' readiness and the teachers own self-perception of their readiness (or similarly, a teachers perception of their students readiness and the students self-perception). Significant disconnects between leader and follower perceptions of the followers' development are likely to lead to a misapplication of styles and a corresponding erosion of the theories efficacy. This makes clear that good communication, shared understanding, and perhaps the use of collaborative self-assessment tools, are not just good supplementary practices; they essential to unlocking the full potential of the theory in a real-world educational context. In this sense, the relational element is a critical determinant of the theory's actual practical validity.

Illustrative Examples of SLT in Practice

A rather common example, which is often referred to in various sources as "Tom's Case Study," can demonstrate one instance of using SLT in a real-life educational scenario. First, in the role of a teacher, an individual used an inappropriate "hands-off" (S4) style for a student Tom, who had a low level of maturity (M1) in writing and thus failed in this task. After learning SLT, the teacher implemented an S1 (Directing) style for sports stories, offering Tom specific assignments and close supervision. As his maturity in writing improved gradually, she transitioned to S2 (Coaching, less direction and more socio-emotional support) and eventually to S3 (Supporting, commending and sharing decision-making) styles. When Tom's maturity reached a high level (M4) and he fully assumed responsibility for his writing, the teacher's style became S4 (Delegating) with little involvement (Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976). This example well explains the "developmental" and flexible nature of SLT.

A final example is more abstract, but demonstrates the theory's usefulness in professional transitioning, which often occurs in school administration. For instance, a teacher with high motivation and competence (M4) can be promoted to the school principal position, which means that new and more complex tasks are to be performed. Although this person is very mature in the former job, in the latter one they would, of course, be a novice and have a low level of maturity (M1). In this case, their supervisor (e.g., a superintendent) should switch from the initial S4 (Delegating) style to S3 (Supporting, more socio-emotional support) and perhaps to S2 (Coaching, more direction and supervision) until the new principal can confidently do their job. Then, as their maturity increases, they should gradually return to S3, S2 and eventually S4 styles (Gates, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1976). This case shows how SLT can be helpful for professional development and for situations when maturity temporarily decreases because of new tasks.

In order to best implement Situational Leadership Theory in educational institutions, the following suggestions are made for practitioners::

- Leverage SLT for Differentiated Support and Instruction:** Apply SLT principles to inform and enhance differentiated professional development for teachers and differentiated instruction for students. Recognize that a "one-size-fits-all" approach is ineffective for both adult learners (teachers) and student learners, and tailor support and challenge accordingly.

- Promote a Developmental Mindset:** Leaders should consciously adopt a developmental perspective, viewing their role not merely as managing tasks or delivering instruction, but as actively cultivating the readiness, independence, and confidence of their followers over time. This involves strategically shifting styles to empower individuals towards greater autonomy.

•**Cultivate Leadership Style Flexibility:** Professional development programs should go beyond theoretical understanding of SLT. They must actively train educational leaders in the practical application and fluid transition between all four SLT styles, equipping them with the adaptive behavioral repertoire necessary for diverse educational scenarios.

Problem Statement

Strengthening secondary literacy foundations is critical for educators and policymakers today. Secondary students who struggle with reading and comprehension face many negative consequences, including lower academic achievement, limited career opportunities, and decreased self-confidence. Moreover, their struggles often extend beyond English language arts classes, affecting their performance in other content areas.

Faithful implementation is impossible if educators do not buy into the process. Understanding positive perceptions helps motivate educators and change negative perceptions. A problem identified in previous studies and research is that educators lack support, training, and resources to implement MTSS effectively. It is recognized that RtI/MTSS is generally enacted primarily at the elementary level. However, educator perceptions at all levels would be beneficial.

Purpose of the Curriculum Product

This purpose of this curriculum product is to identify and address secondary literacy deficits through focusing on effective instructional strategies and interventions (MTSS/RTI) that educators can easily access and implement. The discussion explored the factors contributing to these deficits, identified specific challenges faced by secondary students, investigated evidence-based approaches to address these issues and provided secondary educators with resources that can be used in their classrooms without expensive and extensive training.

Research Questions

The guiding research questions will ask what knowledge and tools secondary educators need to identify and remediate student literacy deficiencies.

The following research questions will be used to guide program development:

1. What common causes and underlying factors contribute to secondary literacy deficiencies?
2. What evidence-based instructional strategies and interventions have proven effective in strengthening foundational literacy skills in secondary students?
3. How can educators and schools effectively identify and assess secondary students' literacy skills?

Rationale for the Curriculum Product

The curriculum product focuses on identifying what educators need to implement literacy MTSS/RTI. Several articles have been reviewed that suggest teachers have negative feelings about the MTSS implementation process but positive feelings regarding the program's effects on students.

Significance of the Curriculum Product

This curriculum product is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing a comprehensive understanding of identifying and remedying secondary literacy weaknesses. By examining the challenges faced by secondary educators and exploring effective instructional strategies, the product aims to arm educational practitioners with practical research and evidence-based approaches to improve literacy outcomes.

Secondly, this product's findings have practical implications for educators, as they will gain insights into effective instructional practices and interventions to support emergent literacy students. Understanding the causes and challenges associated with secondary literacy deficiencies will enable educators to implement targeted interventions and differentiate instruction to meet their students' diverse needs.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters and includes a functional product to help secondary educators build literacy proficiency by providing targeted literacy support. Chapter 1 introduces the program, including the problem statement, purpose, research questions, and significance of the program. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature on identifying and remedying secondary literacy deficiencies, highlighting key theories, research studies, and effective instructional practices. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used for creating an online interactive functional text for educators to identify and support literacy growth. Chapter 4 provides details of the free, open-access book that is in the process of creation. Chapter 5 is a conclusion that includes a summary of key findings and implications for secondary educators to have a tool available to strengthen foundational literacy skills within their own classroom.

Definition of Terms

Multi-Tiered Support Systems (PBIS Rewards, 2020): a framework that helps students succeed academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. It is a proactive approach that uses data and evidence-based strategies to support all students.

Response to Intervention (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2011): Schools use a system to help students struggling academically or behaviorally. It is a multi-tiered approach that provides interventions at increasing intensities.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (Ryan & Baker, 2019): is an evidence-based framework used in schools to proactively prevent problem behaviors, teach positive social skills, and provide tiered support systems to address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students, aiming to create a safe and positive learning environment for everyone; it focuses on identifying, teaching, and reinforcing positive behaviors rather than solely punishing negative ones

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2020): is a federal law that ensures children with disabilities receive free and appropriate public education. IDEA also provides guidelines for special education and related services.

Situational Leadership Theory (Murray & Culver, 2018): Effective leaders adapt their leadership style to fit their followers' specific situations and needs. There is no single "best" leadership style. Instead, leaders should adjust their approach based on their employees' maturity level and competence, using different styles like telling, selling, participating, or delegating, depending on the context.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of a structured literacy curriculum product can vary depending on the specific context and product design.

The assumptions discussed in this context include language development, sequential learning, phonological awareness, explicit instruction, and a multisensory approach. A structured literacy program assumes that individuals, especially children, can develop strong reading and writing skills through systematic instruction and practice. It also assumes that reading and writing skills are best acquired sequentially, where learners build upon previously learned

concepts and skills. This product assumes that developing phonological awareness is crucial for reading success, as it helps individuals recognize and manipulate the sounds in spoken language. It also assumes that explicit and direct instruction will focus on specific skills and strategies to effectively teach reading, writing, and spelling. The product will also assume that a multisensory approach, engaging different sensory modalities (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic), will enhance learning and retention of literacy skills.

The limitations discussed include individual differences, time and resource constraints, transferability, and a limited scope. A curriculum product may have limitations in addressing individual learners' unique needs and learning styles, as it is intended to be a resource but does not provide specific training for educators. Implementing a structured literacy product can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, requiring trained teachers, appropriate instructional materials, and ongoing support. The curriculum product's effectiveness in improving reading, spelling, and writing skills may not automatically be transferred to other areas of language and communication, such as oral fluency or comprehension. A curriculum product may focus primarily on decoding and encoding skills, potentially overlooking other aspects of literacy, such as critical thinking.

The delimitations discussed include age and grade range, language and cultural context, specific learning needs, and educational settings. This curriculum product has a specific target age or grade range, limiting its applicability to learners outside that range. The product's design and materials may be seen as developed for a specific language or cultural context, potentially making it less suitable for learners from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds. This product might not fit the needs of individuals with specific learning disabilities or neurodevelopmental disorders, such as dyslexia or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

(ADHD). The curriculum product may have been designed for a specific educational setting, such as a classroom. It might not quickly adapt to other contexts, such as homeschooling or distance learning.

Chapter 2 - Review of Literature

Introduction

This research topic has evolved further into the article reviews, school year, and professional development the writer got. Initially, the framework included research on the MTSS/RTI and educator perceptions of the remediation program in preparation for constructing an MTSS/RTI program in a school district. The more that was learned, the more it was discovered that we must step back. Before a school district can put together an MTSS/RTI program, it must understand the process of how the brain learns to read to create an effective program that will enable students within the MTSS parameters of the lower 10-15% student population needing Tier 2 and Tier 3 support to fill in the knowledge gaps that prevent their success. This realization has reframed the literature review to understand better the scope of an effective MTSS literacy product.

Search Criteria and Importance of Research

Initially, the focus was on the MTSS program, process, and educator perceptions. An essential part of the program is the implementation scope, sequence, and the presenter's education. Many teacher preparation programs teach whole language, balanced, or structured literacy (as framed by the Science of Reading). However, only one of these three theories has proven to be highly successful in fluency success in emergent readers.

This knowledge has framed additional literature research to identify and define these three theories of reading instruction and their efficacy. The goal was to create the most effective product possible to benefit the maximum number of educators and students.

The Simple View of Reading, developed by researchers Gough and Tunmer in 1986, is the foundational basis for the Science of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, Decoding, Reading and

Reading Disability, 1986). Gough and Tunmer discovered a simple relation between decoding and linguistic comprehension for fluent readers ($R = D \times C$). This relationship, while labeled as simple, is a complex process within the brain (Kweldju, Neurobiology Research Findings: How the Brain Works During Reading, 2015).

These two realizations reformed my search criteria. I could no longer contain my search to just MTSS, RTI, or educator perceptions of intervention programs. Generative AI was used to brainstorm initial topic ideas and refine search criteria (Google Gemini, 2025). AI was used to generate broad themes and sub-areas, identify gaps within the research reviewed, organize thoughts on current methodologies, identifying relevant databases and journals, creating Boolean strings, and refine search criteria (using a broad search- “secondary literacy”, refined to “suggest related keywords, synonyms, and broader/narrower terms for secondary literacy”)No direct content was copied, and any generated text was reviewed and substantially revised by the author. Research moved into including the brain and how it learns to read, leading me to the Science of Reading, which includes many possible MTSS training programs, intervention programs, and intervention activities. An opinion has developed that led to my research that educators must be trained in the MTSS program and the process the brain goes through to learn to read. This will help educators understand where the gap is for students and enable us to put together a program to address each reading problem that our students may have.

The search criteria I developed included several different terms and some constants. The search terms evolved from where I began with MTSS, RTI, and educator perceptions of intervention programs to the Simple View of Reading, how the brain learns to read, whole language programs, balanced literacy, and finally into the Science of Reading. Understanding that some of the information I needed is older, I needed to step outside the usually acceptable

practice of recent articles. I was not searching for as many related articles as possible in this case. I was searching for specific articles or specific authors to complete that criterion.

Once I found the history of reading and how the brain works in learning to read, then my article searches could become more recent. The infancy of the Science of Reading has only about fifty years of history, with most of the research and findings being within the past 35 years since the Gough and Tunmer (1986) understandings. Studies of the neural and genetic bases of dyslexia (Gabrieli, 2009) inadvertently became the beginning of the study of science and reading (Seidenberg, 2013). The remaining searches included the Science of Reading peer-reviewed journal articles within the past 7-10 years.

Essential books, articles, and studies

This section is the bulk of this writing. I address the documentation that I have chosen to use so far based on the development of my thought process. This means that I will start with the MTSS/RTI discussion of my research introduction, then move into the whole language and balanced literacy teaching theories, then the simple view of reading, the neurobiology and genetic bases of dyslexia, and the reading brain, which will lead into the Science of Reading.

MTSS/RTI

The research began with MTSS/RTI. I was sure I knew what I wanted to learn, so I became an expert. Many of the research articles that were initially found revolved around MTSS/RTI. About 30 articles were selected, which was narrowed down to 10.

The most applicable report is *RTI in Middle Schools* from the National Center on Response to Intervention (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2011). This document is a blueprint for starting an RTI program in middle school or at a secondary level. The one thing this report is missing is what RTI looks like in middle school regarding scheduling. Secondary

schools generally do not have separate reading and writing blocks of 90 minutes or more. Secondary schools typically have core instruction (Math, ELA, Social Studies, and Science), specials (Music, Band, PE/Health), and some elective choices. This scheduling makes it difficult to find an appropriate time to implement interventions.

Explicit Instruction

Many experts agree that direct instruction is one feature of all teaching and interventions. It has been widely established that small group direct instruction to students is a highly effective teaching method. A small section on the benefits and features of direct instruction has been included.

One study, *Explicit Instruction in Phonemic Awareness and Phonemically Based Decoding Skills* has been included as an intervention strategy for struggling readers in whole language classrooms (Ryder, Tunmer, & Greaney, 2008). This study measured the success rate of using explicit instruction on 6—and 7-year-old emergent readers. The study concluded that while the test and control groups improved their reading fluency over the 24-week intervention trials, the test group that received explicit instruction improved more than the control group.

Another article that supports direct instruction, specifically in a secondary school, is *A Comparison of Two Direct Instruction Reading Programs for Urban Middle School Students* (Houchins, 2005). Two programs were used: *Corrective Reading Decoding* and *REWARDS*. The study showed that both student intervention groups using these direct instruction programs improved their reading fluency. However, students were still at several instructional levels below their current grade level. The limitations of this study include the sample size. This study was completed in one school and one grade level. Another issue in the survey is teacher training. The teachers in this study received no training in implementing these direct instruction programs,

so there was inconsistent teacher performance. The authors note that teacher performance and student performance are “inextricably linked,” which means that had the teachers been trained to present these programs, the student outcomes may have been more positive.

Whole Language

In recent history, one of the most heated educational debates has been about Whole Language vs. Balanced Literacy vs. Science of Reading literacy programs. Exploring all three programs to defend the Science of Reading adequately is beneficial.

The first article on whole language that was chosen is A Meta-Analysis of Studies Examining the Effect of Whole Language Instruction on the Literacy of Low-SES Students (Jeynes & Littell, A Meta-Analysis of Studies Examining the Effect of Whole Language Instruction on the Literacy of Low-SES Students, 2000). This article was chosen because it comprehensively explains what whole language instruction is and why educators find it appealing. The findings reported in the study were that the students who received strictly the whole language performed worse than those who received a basal-whole language mix on standardized tests. The article acknowledges that they did not analyze non-standardized tests, so those results are unknown.

An article that supports whole language instruction has been included as a counterpoint. Defending Whole Language: The Limits of Phonics Instruction and the Efficacy of Whole Language Instruction (Krashen, 2002) states that the rules of phonics are complex and have numerous exceptions, and for this reason, many are unteachable. The whole language advocate argues that when the whole language is defined correctly and includes accurate reading, students in these classes do better on reading comprehension tests, with no difference in skills tests. The author of this meta-analysis states that when accurate reading is considered the core element of

whole language, and when details of studies are examined closely, whole language does very well in method comparison studies (Krashen, 2002).

Balanced Literacy

A review of the Balanced Literacy approach is also required to evaluate literacy education. Balanced Literacy is part of whole language and part of skill-based literacy instruction (the Science of Reading was not a coined term when Balanced Literacy originally came into use) (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013). One of the key points of balanced literacy is that literacy instruction should promote the interaction between the skill-based aspects of reading (e.g., phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, letter-sound association) and the meaning-based elements of reading (e.g., vocabulary, comprehension) (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013).

A second article, Balanced Literacy Instruction, supports the use of balanced literacy when it states, “The case in favor of balanced literacy teaching is growing, a case that follows from balanced reflection on qualitative analyses of effective classrooms and quantitative studies of specific components of instruction.” The author states that balanced literacy is limited by how to identify individuals [teachers] who can become balanced and effective literacy teachers and that teacher education programs need to be more selective about who is admitted, assuring teachers who can and will do all that needs to be done to promote literacy engagement and achievement (Pressley, Roehrig, Bogner, & Raphael, 2002).

Structured Literacy

A few articles have been selected to represent and define structured literacy. Structured literacy (as framed by The Science of Reading) uses evidence-based practices based on basic cognitive mechanisms of reading, the neural processes involved in reading, computational models of learning to read, and the like (Seidenberg, 2013). According to those views, such data

provide convincing evidence that explicit decoding instruction (e.g., phonological awareness, phonics) should benefit reading success (Shanahan, 2020). This article explores the nature of the evidence that should be the basis of the science of reading instruction. The author points out that there is a substantial body of high-quality cognitive and neuroscientific evidence, and it is evident that instruction consistent with that research has not been emphasized much in teacher education (Shanahan, 2020). He also goes on to say that high-quality cognitive and neuroscientific evidence should not be the only determinant in enacting a new program; studies that directly evaluate the effectiveness of a practice or policy should also be weighed.

A second article evaluates the scientific claims and basis for the term Science of Reading (Petscher, et al, 2020). This article, How the Science of Reading Informs 21st-Century Education, describes the existing evidence-based understanding of how reading develops and identifies proven instructional practices that impact decoding and linguistic comprehension (Petscher et al., 2020). This article explores the ever-expanding scientific literature on reading through contributions from education, psychology, linguistics, communication science, neuroscience, and computational sciences (Petscher et al., 2020).

How the Brain learns to read

Stanislas Dehaene's "Reading in the Brain" (Dehaene, 2010) explores how the human brain processes reading through complex neural mechanisms which represent a recent cultural development. Dehaene tackles the "reading paradox": What evolutionary changes have allowed our brains to develop the ability to process written language despite their original functions being different? Through brain-imaging studies and cognitive experiments he studies how visual input becomes comprehension by analyzing the brain circuits responsible for reading.

The primary theme examines "neuronal recycling," which shows how existing brain circuits get used for new cultural abilities including reading. Dehaene uncovers the subconscious process our brains use to decode words which operate independently of size, case, or font during spelling comprehension. His research provides insights relevant to educational practices including the phonics versus whole-language instruction debate and strategies to support individuals with dyslexia. The research demonstrates that our evolutionary brain development sets boundaries for reading instruction which must therefore match these natural constraints.

More recent neuroscientific evidence has been discovered regarding how the brain learns to read. What was once thought of as a natural process that everyone figures out at some point is now understood to be an unnatural process that needs to be explicitly taught. Neurobiology Research Findings: How the Brain Works During Reading (Kweldju, 2015) tells us that improved, modern neuroimaging techniques have uncovered and identified the mechanisms of reading. This article reviews the results of neuroscience research on the reading processes to enhance the significance of using evidence-based reading instruction practices. The most significant takeaway from this article is that no one area of the brain is devoted to reading. Four areas must be engaged and work together to enable a person to read fluently.

Simple View of Reading

The Simple View of Reading describes comprehension as the product of decoding and listening comprehension and served as the primary theoretical model underlying the Reading for Understanding (RfU) initiative (Gough & Tunmer, 1986); Cervetti et al., 2020). The basic premise of the Simple View of Reading is that $D \times LC = RC$ (Decoding $\times$ Linguistic Comprehension = Reading comprehension). This means that Reading Comprehension is the product of decoding and linguistic comprehension, and if either the multiplicand or the multiplier

is missing, there will not be a product (Peltier, 2019). The RfU research has identified that deliberate, evidenced-based, multi-component interventions are more effective in student comprehension than single-component interventions (Cervetti et al., 2020)

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for Structured Literacy is primarily based on understanding language structure, cognitive processes, and effective instructional practices. Structured Literacy draws from several theoretical perspectives and models, including Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Decoding, Cognitive Load Theory, Orthographic Awareness, Linguistic Structure and Syntax, and Multisensory Instruction.

Phonological awareness (National Reading Panel, 2000) refers to the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. Structured Literacy emphasizes the importance of phonological awareness in developing reading and spelling skills. Linguistics, particularly the study of phonetics and phonology, provides the theoretical underpinnings of phonology and phonological awareness.

Structured Literacy emphasizes explicit, systematic phonics instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000). The theoretical foundation for phonics and decoding comes from the Simple View of Reading, which posits that reading comprehension is a function of decoding (phonics) and language comprehension (vocabulary and background knowledge).

Cognitive Load Theory, developed by John Sweller (Sweller, 1988), provides insights into the cognitive processes involved in learning and instructional design. Structured Literacy incorporates the principles of Cognitive Load Theory to ensure that instruction is structured to minimize cognitive load and optimize learning.

Orthographic awareness refers to understanding the written structure of language, including spelling patterns, letter-sound correspondences, and syllable structures (Rakhlin, Mourgues, Cardoso-Martins, Kornev, & Grigorenko, 2019). Structured Literacy acknowledges the importance of orthographic awareness in reading and spelling development.

Understanding language structure, including grammar and syntax, is vital for reading comprehension (Foorman, Herrera, Petscher, & Truckenmiller, 2015). Structured Literacy integrates instruction in linguistic structure and syntax to support students' understanding of sentence structure and meaning.

Structured Literacy often incorporates multisensory instructional techniques, engaging multiple senses (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic) to enhance learning and memory (Birsh & Carreker, 2019). The theoretical foundation for multisensory instruction draws from research on the brain's information processing and multimodal learning concepts.

The theoretical framework for Structured Literacy integrates principles from linguistics, cognitive psychology, and instructional design to provide a structured and explicit approach to literacy instruction. By addressing the core components of language and reading skills, Structured Literacy aims to support students with diverse learning needs in developing strong reading and writing abilities.

The Simple View of Reading

The Simple View of Reading, proposed by Gough and Tunmer (1986), is a foundational theoretical framework for understanding reading comprehension. According to this model, reading comprehension is influenced by two essential components: decoding and language comprehension. Students with secondary literacy deficiencies often struggle in one or both areas.

The Simple View of Reading emphasizes the need for explicit instruction in decoding skills and comprehension strategies to address these deficiencies.

Cognitive Load Theory

Cognitive Load Theory, developed by Sweller (1988), provides insights into the cognitive processes involved in learning and the implications for instructional design. Secondary students with literacy deficiencies may experience a high cognitive load as they grapple with decoding difficulties and limited vocabulary knowledge. By applying the principles of Cognitive Load Theory, educators can design instructional materials and activities that reduce cognitive load and facilitate learning.

John Sweller established Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) (Sweller, 1988) to explore the mechanisms of human cognitive architecture information processing within working memory boundaries. Working memory represents our active processing space but has a limited capacity. Because working memory has limited capacity, educators must carefully design instructional materials to prevent learner overload. The CLT framework recognizes three distinct cognitive load types: intrinsic, extraneous, and germane. The inherent complexity of learning material defines intrinsic load through the relationship between its elements and its overall difficulty. Extraneous load emerges from how information is delivered to learners and typically acts as a barrier to learning. The germane load involves the mental processing needed to build and automate schemas that organize knowledge and constitute the preferred type of cognitive engagement that leads to effective learning.

CLT provides significant insights for improving teaching methods within structured literacy instruction. The research-based structured literacy approach that emphasizes systematic explicit foundational literacy skills instruction improves when extraneous cognitive load is

minimized. Teachers accomplish this outcome through straightforward instruction methods that remove potential uncertainty or misinterpretation. The breakdown of complex skills through systematic and sequential instruction lowers cognitive strain by transforming learning into manageable individual steps. Materials with explicit content and consistent formatting that avoid clutter can help reduce unnecessary distractions and cognitive load. Educators who simplify information delivery allow students to invest their mental capacity into significant learning experiences.

Structured literacy management of intrinsic load requires a strategic approach to scaffold learning experiences that address the material's inherent complexity. Students develop their schemas gradually as they move from explicit instruction to practicing independently through a gradual release of responsibility. New and complex concepts receive essential support through scaffolding techniques that utilize modeling, examples, and targeted feedback. Structured literacy's focus on fundamental competencies like phonological awareness and phonics creates a solid ground for developing advanced literacy skills, reducing later learning's inherent complexity. Students develop a solid foundation through this systematic approach, which makes it possible to introduce more complex skills.

Developing robust schemas for deep learning depends on promoting germane load. Structured literacy develops learning through active participation in decoding, encoding, and reading exercises. Extensive practice and review enhance understanding while promoting schema development. When learners make clear connections between new concepts and what they already know, they organize information within their mental frameworks, which improves understanding and memory retention. Structured literacy optimizes learning outcomes and

develops proficient readers by centering on activities that promote active processing and schema construction, which corresponds with CLT principles.

Factors Contributing to Secondary Literacy Deficits

Secondary literacy deficits can arise due to a variety of factors. Understanding these factors is crucial for effective identification and remediation strategies. It is important to note that these factors can interact and vary among individual students. Identifying and addressing these factors through targeted instruction, interventions, and support can help improve secondary students' literacy skills and overall academic success. Some key factors that contribute to secondary literacy deficits include language and vocabulary exposure, weak phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding skills, poor reading fluency or letter knowledge such as sound/symbol correspondence, inadequate reading comprehension strategies, lack of motivation and engagement, limited background knowledge, home and socioeconomic factors, learning disabilities and language differences, insufficient instructional support, ineffective reading instruction, limited vocabulary knowledge, inadequate fluency and decoding skills, lack of content-specific knowledge, and limited engagement and motivation.

Language and Vocabulary Exposure

A lack of adequate vocabulary creates a substantial obstacle to understanding written material by restricting readers' ability to derive meaning from text. The reader's cognitive resources shift from comprehending the main message to struggling with the meanings of unfamiliar words when they come across new vocabulary. When processing gets disrupted by unfamiliar words, readers commonly experience frustration and reduced engagement while struggling to follow narratives and comprehend information. When vocabulary is restricted, readers tend to understand texts only at a surface level because they miss the deeper meanings

hidden in word choice subtleties. Readers can misunderstand the text because their comprehension lacks depth and complexity.

Insufficient vocabulary knowledge extends beyond reading comprehension and negatively impacts all aspects of literacy development. Reading comprehension is essential for developing other literacy skills, including writing and critical thinking. Students with limited vocabulary struggle to write effectively because their writing consists of simple sentences, and they cannot express their ideas precisely. Critical thinking depends on analyzing information and requires strong comprehension skills for complex language and concepts. Students with limited vocabulary knowledge find it challenging to participate in advanced discussions and write logical arguments while interpreting complex texts. Limited vocabulary blocks students from decoding and understanding written words and prevents the acquisition of advanced literacy skills, which restricts academic performance and personal development.

A person's limited vocabulary affects their capacity to manage daily situations and educational experiences. In professional and social settings, success depends on written and oral communication skills. The constraint of having an inadequate vocabulary affects a person's capacity to engage in discussions, understand detailed directions, and read written information. Restricted vocabulary creates feelings of isolation alongside frustration and reduces an individual's sense of control over their life. Developing a broad vocabulary extends beyond academic activities to become an essential literacy element that opens doors for personal growth and career advancement.: Difficulties in decoding and phonics can impede reading fluency and comprehension. Students who struggle with recognizing and blending letter sounds may have difficulty reading unfamiliar words accurately and efficiently.

Weak Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Decoding Skills

Students with poor phonemic awareness and decoding abilities face essential barriers to reading comprehension because these skills block their ability to turn written symbols into spoken language. The ability to recognize and manipulate the individual sounds in spoken words, known as phonemic awareness, helps students understand the alphabetic principle since this principle defines letters as representations of sounds. A lack of foundational phonemic awareness prevents children from understanding how letters connect with sounds, thus impairing their ability to decode words. Students with poor phonics skills have trouble accurately reading words because they cannot effectively apply letter-sound relationships. Decoding challenges use up mental resources, which shifts attention away from understanding text meaning. Preoccupation with decoding individual words prevents readers from forming meaningful phrases and sentences, which results in fragmented comprehension.

These fundamental deficits affect more than just word recognition because they substantially limit overall literacy abilities. The ability to read accurately and quickly with expressions, which defines reading fluency, depends mainly on strong decoding abilities. The inability to decode words efficiently results in a slow and laborious reading that obstructs smooth information processing for readers. This deficiency in fluency reduces both comprehension levels and creates barriers to reading enjoyment and motivation. Students with poor phonemic awareness and phonics skills face challenges in spelling development because they cannot correctly use letter-sound relationships when encoding words. The persistence of spelling errors undermines students' ability to communicate effectively in writing.

Shortcomings in phonemic awareness alongside phonics and decoding abilities result in adverse effects extending to every literary element. Reading comprehension deficiencies block

access to knowledge, negatively affecting academic development and continuous learning. Effective written and oral communication suffers from poor spelling and fluency abilities. Explicit, systematic instruction must target foundational weaknesses to build a strong literacy foundation that helps students develop proficiency in reading and writing. A lack of essential literacy skills severely restricts individuals from fully utilizing written materials to their benefit.: Proficient readers employ various strategies, such as making predictions, summarizing, questioning, and making connections, to enhance their understanding of the text. Students who lack these strategies may struggle to comprehend and engage with the material they read.

Limited Background Knowledge

Limited background knowledge is a major obstacle to reading comprehension because it forms a barrier between the reader and the text. Reading extends beyond word recognition, including building understanding by integrating new information with existing knowledge. The absence of background knowledge about a text topic causes readers to struggle with understanding connections, which results in comprehension gaps. Readers without knowledge of historical events will find it challenging to understand historical fiction novels, while individuals who lack scientific understanding struggle to follow scientific articles. Readers find it difficult to understand the author's message without context because they cannot correctly infer meanings or understand implicit information. Readers who do not recognize crucial details or misinterpret information often develop a shallow or incorrect understanding of the text.

The adverse effects of inadequate background knowledge reach far beyond basic comprehension because they disrupt several aspects of literacy abilities. Reading comprehension is the basis for academic success because students without adequate background knowledge struggle to learn across different subjects from text materials. Students with limited background

knowledge face challenges when grasping complex concepts and completing assignments while struggling to engage in class discussions. Limited background knowledge restricts vocabulary development because new words require specific contextual understanding for proper learning. Students will struggle to understand new words without knowledge of the relevant contexts. Critical thinking requires readers to analyze and evaluate information, which depends on their capacity to connect new data with what they already know and develop well-informed opinions.

Limited background knowledge creates a cascading effect that affects reading comprehension, damaging vocabulary development and critical thinking abilities and reducing academic performance. Educators must implement active strategies that develop students' background knowledge by using direct teaching methods while providing exposure to diverse experiences and connecting lessons across different subjects. Educators enable students to become active learners who construct meaning from texts and expand their world understanding by giving them essential context and knowledge.: Students who are disengaged or lack motivation in reading may be less likely to develop strong literacy skills. Motivation and engagement are essential for fostering a love of reading and a desire to improve literacy.

Home and Socioeconomic Factors

Reading comprehension and literacy skills face major hindrances from home and socioeconomic factors, which lead to unequal educational results. Students living in low-income families frequently lack access to educational materials like books and technology, which help develop literacy skills. Children can struggle to develop early literacy skills such as phonological awareness and vocabulary without interaction with print-rich settings. Parental engagement in literacy practices like reading to children and conversational interaction may face limitations because of extended work hours, insufficient parental educational background, and financial

stress. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds frequently start school with substantial literacy gaps, which makes it difficult for them to catch up with their classmates.

Quality education access shows disparities influenced by socioeconomic factors. Educational institutions in impoverished areas struggle to recruit and retain skilled educators and secure necessary resources while ensuring student safety and support. These factors negatively affect instructional quality, with specific consequences for foundational literacy skills. Children living in disadvantaged conditions face increased absenteeism due to health problems or family duties and lack of transportation, which interrupts their educational process. The cognitive development and school focus of children in poverty suffer due to stress and instability, which makes learning engagement challenging.

The collective impact of these home and socioeconomic elements creates a substantial obstacle to developing literacy skills. Students from resource-poor environments with minimal parental support and inadequate schooling systems face greater chances of reading problems and academic underperformance. Over time, students who encounter these barriers experience diminished educational achievements, leading to restricted job prospects and lower quality of life. To address these disparities, educators must implement a multi-dimensional plan involving early literacy access expansion, parental support reinforcement, school quality improvements in impoverished areas, and tackling socioeconomic elements that drive educational inequality.

Learning Disabilities and Language Differences

The unique challenges of learning disabilities like dyslexia and language differences in English Language Learners (ELLs) create distinct yet frequently intersecting obstacles to reading comprehension and literacy skills. The main issue with learning disabilities such as dyslexia revolves around phonological processing, which involves recognizing and manipulating

language sounds. The primary deficiency obstructs the learning of phonemic awareness and phonics skills, which are vital for accurately and fluently decoding words. Dyslexic individuals face difficulties recognizing words, resulting in slow and strenuous reading patterns. The energy needed to decode words limits the mental resources for understanding the text. Learning disabilities affect other cognitive abilities, including working memory and processing speed, which makes reading comprehension more difficult. These challenges will continue to exist without proper intervention and assistance, obstructing literacy development and threatening academic achievement.

English language learners face additional literacy acquisition challenges due to language differences. Students learning English as a second language must understand English reading mechanics and become skilled in using a new linguistic system.

Students can encounter challenges due to phonological contrasts between their mother tongue and English, which results in phonemic awareness difficulties and poor pronunciation. Earning proficiency in English vocabulary presents a significant obstacle because ELLs must develop a strong command of English words to understand written materials properly. Comprehension becomes more difficult because grammatical variations result in different sentence structures and word orders across languages. The interpretation of texts can be affected by cultural differences because readers and writers often have different background knowledge and cultural references. ELL students without specialized support to address their unique language needs encounter reading fluency and comprehension obstacles affecting their literacy development.

Learning disabilities combined with language differences establish substantial obstacles to developing literacy skills. Students and ELLs face obstacles in their progress because they

often feel frustrated and demotivated while struggling with inadequacy. Successful intervention depends on customizing strategies to meet the distinct needs of every person. Students with learning disabilities need systematic teaching methods for phonological awareness, phonics instruction, and decoding skills to succeed. To succeed, ELL students need targeted language support through vocabulary development, grammar instruction, and culturally responsive teaching. Early detection and intervention are essential steps to reduce long-term difficulties and to provide every student with the chance to build robust literacy abilities.

Insufficient Instructional Support

The lack of sufficient instructional support is a significant obstacle for students learning to comprehend reading and develop literacy skills irrespective of their natural abilities or socioeconomic backgrounds. Students who do not receive practical, explicit, systematic instruction must tackle reading complexity by themselves. Students experience this absence of guidance through various forms, such as insufficient instruction in essential reading skills like phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding. Students face challenges in fluency and comprehension because they cannot process written words correctly without mastering these essential reading elements. A dearth of instructional support frequently results in undifferentiated teaching approaches that overlook the varied learning requirements of students. Insufficient instructional support leads to struggling readers not receiving necessary interventions while advanced learners remain unchallenged, which causes overall literacy development to stagnate.

Insufficient instructional support is beyond foundational skill areas as teachers fail to direct instruction on comprehension strategies. Instruction does not include teaching students' active engagement with texts or monitoring their understanding while using strategies such as summarizing, questioning, and making inferences. Lack of strategic reading instruction results in

students reading passively without the ability to obtain meaning effectively or think critically about the content. The absence of regular and relevant practice opportunities impedes literacy development. Students must have plentiful chances to practice their new reading and writing abilities in real-world situations to strengthen their comprehension and develop fluency. A lack of support results in restricted access to quality texts that spark reading interest and contribute to knowledge and vocabulary development.

Insufficient instructional support adversely affects reading comprehension abilities and broader literacy skills, affecting students' academic success. Reading difficulties often increase frustration and reduce motivation while fostering negative learning attitudes.

Students who fail to receive adequate instructional support often become disengaged from school and experience lower academic achievement, limiting their future opportunities. To achieve successful literacy instruction, educators must dedicate themselves to ensuring every student receives essential support, including explicit foundational skill instruction and comprehension strategy teaching, differentiated instruction, access to engaging reading materials, and sufficient practice opportunities. Without this support, students face significant setbacks that prevent them from achieving their highest literacy potential.

Ineffective Reading Instruction

Students face significant challenges in becoming skilled readers because ineffective instruction blocks development in reading comprehension and general literacy skills. Students encounter gaps in comprehension when instruction does not utilize systematic and explicit teaching methods because they struggle to interpret written language through random and unstructured approaches. Students who learn through whole language methods without sufficient phonics instruction often encounter difficulties decoding unfamiliar words, which impedes their

ability to read smoothly. Reading instruction that omits key elements such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension results in an incomplete educational foundation. Student reading skills remain disjointed when educational methods fail to integrate essential reading competencies, which leads to poor comprehension and restricted literacy advancement.

Substandard reading instruction lacks the necessary differentiation, preventing it from meeting all student learning needs within the classroom. The one-size-fits-all approach fails to account for students' different prior knowledge levels and unique learning styles and disabilities. Students who struggle with reading continue to fall behind, while advanced readers remain insufficiently stimulated. Students exposed to insufficiently targeted educational support may experience ongoing reading problems, which cause them to become frustrated and lose interest in learning. Ineffective teaching methods often depend on round-robin reading and other passive learning activities that do not actively involve students in reading. Students may develop inadequate critical thinking and analytical abilities vital for profound understanding and literacy growth.

Students who receive ineffective reading instruction face profound consequences that reach beyond reading comprehension difficulties to affect their entire educational journey. Students who struggle with reading often face challenges in multiple academic areas because reading is the foundation for learning different subjects. They also face lower academic achievement, reduced motivation, and a negative self-perception about their learning abilities. Poor teaching methods produce lifelong literacy challenges, which prevent people from accessing information, fully participating in society, and reaching their full potential. A

systematic, explicit, and differentiated evidence-based reading instruction approach is vital for students to acquire the necessary literacy skills to succeed.

Limited Vocabulary Knowledge

Limited vocabulary knowledge is a significant factor contributing to secondary literacy deficiencies. (Biemiller & Boote, 2006)emphasize the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction in improving reading comprehension. Beck and McKeown (2007) highlight the need for direct instruction focused on tiered vocabulary words to enhance students' oral and written expression.

Restricted vocabulary severely limits reading comprehension, preventing readers from understanding the meaning of written material. A reader who meets unfamiliar words in text shifts their mental focus from understanding the content to figuring out the meanings of those words. These reading interruptions interfere with the reader's ability to maintain attention while following the main storyline or argument. Limited vocabulary causes readers to grasp the text only on a fundamental level because they often overlook the text's subtle nuances and more profound meanings embedded in specific word choices. Lack of vocabulary results in inaccurate interpretations and prevents readers from critically analyzing text while blocking their ability to understand the author's intended message.

Limited vocabulary affects students during reading comprehension and creates obstacles in developing their full range of literacy abilities. Understanding vocabulary creates connections with various literacy skills, including writing, speaking abilities, and critical thinking processes. Students with restricted vocabulary have trouble writing because they produce basic sentences and repeatedly use the exact words instead of precisely sharing their thoughts. Students with a restricted vocabulary find it difficult to join advanced discussions and understand complex

spoken presentations while struggling to develop logical arguments. The practice of critical thinking demands strong skills in understanding and manipulating complex language because it depends on analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information. Students experience difficulties with higher-order thinking because of their limited vocabulary, which restricts their academic development.

A limited vocabulary restricts access to information and prevents the expansion of one's understanding of the world. Reading is a fundamental method for knowledge acquisition, which becomes difficult to achieve when a restricted vocabulary prevents understanding texts from different academic fields. Students who lack sufficient vocabulary experience general knowledge gaps, which obstruct educational development and continuous learning throughout life. A rich vocabulary transcends being just a list of words because it serves as a tool that opens pathways to knowledge acquisition and enables efficient communication while empowering people to think deeply and connect purposefully with their surroundings. Building a strong vocabulary is fundamental to developing literacy skills, leading to academic achievement and personal success.

Inadequate Fluency and Decoding Skills

Paige, Rasinski and Maguri-Lavell (2012) emphasize the importance of reading fluency instruction to enhance reading comprehension. The lack of fluency and decoding abilities presents a significant obstacle to reading comprehension, interrupting the seamless transfer of information from the written page into the reader's mind. The decoding skill, which translates written symbols into spoken sounds, is a fundamental component of reading. Students who cannot decode words accurately and efficiently experience slow and difficult reading. The effort required to decode words uses up cognitive resources, which prevents readers from focusing on understanding the text. Readers who struggle with decoding words face difficulties

understanding the text because they focus on individual words, which causes fragmented comprehension and disrupts their ability to track the narrative or argument. Students often misinterpret texts because inaccurate decoding makes them replace similar-sounding words or ignore unfamiliar terms, which changes the text's meaning.

Reading fluency, which combines accurate reading speed with expressive delivery, remains fundamentally connected to decoding skills and overall understanding. Fluent readers process text smoothly, while non-fluent readers experience choppy and interrupted reading patterns that disrupt their information processing. A deficit in automaticity results in slower reading speed, which creates challenges in maintaining focus and linking ideas across sentences and paragraphs. The absence of expressive reading makes it difficult to grasp the author's tone and intent, which results in only a surface-level comprehension of the text. Fluent reading enables readers to use their mental capacity to understand the meaning and make connections while developing critical insights.

Insufficient fluency and decoding abilities have repercussions beyond immediate reading comprehension while affecting literacy and educational success. Students who find foundational reading skills challenging often experience increased frustration and decreased motivation, leading to a negative attitude toward reading. Lacking fundamental reading skills results in students becoming disengaged with learning and obtaining lower academic results, restricting their future opportunities. Challenges in fluency and decoding skills prevent vocabulary growth because students avoid complex texts and lack exposure to new words through reading.

A solid reading foundation requires students to develop strong fluency and decoding skills, which improves their reading comprehension and makes them proficient and engaged readers.

Lack of Content-Specific Knowledge

Secondary literacy deficiencies may also arise from a lack of content-specific knowledge. This knowledge significantly impedes reading comprehension, particularly when encountering texts that delve into specialized subjects. Shanahan & Shanahan (2008) advocate for content-area literacy instruction that integrates reading and writing skills with subject-specific content to enhance comprehension.

Reading requires more than decoding words because readers build meaning through connections between new information and their existing knowledge base. A reader who does not possess the essential background knowledge in a specific field will find it challenging to establish connections between new information and their existing knowledge base, leading to misunderstandings and comprehension gaps. Readers who do not know basic scientific concepts will find comprehending scientific journal articles difficult, even with strong general reading skills. A reader with limited historical knowledge will find it challenging to grasp the nuances and context of historical documents. Without content-specific knowledge, readers face obstacles to understanding because they cannot track complex arguments, decode specialized vocabulary, and make informed inferences.

The absence of content-specific knowledge has effects that surpass reading comprehension and extend into multiple literacy abilities. Students need content-specific knowledge to learn science, history, and mathematics because reading is a fundamental knowledge-acquisition tool in all academic disciplines. Students may struggle with completing assignments and participating in discussions while also finding it hard to understand concepts specific to various subjects because of this. Students who lack content-specific knowledge struggle to expand their vocabulary because they miss opportunities to learn specialized terms in

their natural contexts. Students who lack knowledge of specific contexts will find new vocabulary terms confusing and prone to incorrect interpretations. The essential literacy components of critical thinking and analytical skills depend on the capacity to connect new information to previously acquired knowledge before forming educated opinions. When readers lack specific knowledge about a subject, they find it challenging to assess sources and analyze arguments while reaching meaningful conclusions.

Readers who lack content-specific knowledge find their engagement with specialized texts limited, resulting in reduced reading comprehension and impedes literacy development. Educators must emphasize building background knowledge across disciplines while allowing students to explore diverse subjects and explicitly teach their specific vocabulary. Educators who nurture extensive knowledge foundations enable students to develop reading proficiency and engagement, which allows them to understand complex texts across multiple disciplines.

Limited Engagement and Motivation

Guthrie, et al. (2007) emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and interest in reading. Limited motivation combined with minimal engagement creates significant barriers to proficient reading development, directly affecting reading comprehension and literacy skills. Students who do not engage in reading materials allow their focus to drift away and fail to digest the presented information actively. Students who read passively decode words without grasping their meanings or relating them to the broader context, which results in superficial comprehension. Several elements contribute to a lack of engagement, including texts that fail to capture interest or relevance, a lack of perceived reading value and general disinterest in literacy

activities. Students develop apathy towards reading tasks, resulting in reduced effort and impaired ability to retain and integrate information.

A limited motivation creates a continuous loop of underachievement that perpetuates itself. Students who view reading as a frustrating task or an unwelcome duty often avoid independent reading, essential for developing reading fluency and expanding vocabulary and general knowledge. Literacy skill development faces setbacks when students avoid reading practice, strengthening their negative perception of reading. When students lack motivation, they often resist joining literacy activities or asking for help, which stops them from getting the assistance needed to address their reading challenges. Students who fail to recognize reading's significance or applicability in everyday activities tend to avoid putting in the essential effort required to achieve reading proficiency.

Limited engagement and motivation in reading affect immediate comprehension abilities and undermine overall literacy skills and academic success. A lack of engagement in reading prevents students from developing a passion for learning, which plays an essential role in lifelong literacy development. Students who do not engage in reading experience reduced academic performance and find their growth opportunities restricted, weakening their full societal participation. Educators must focus on designing immersive reading activities that students find relevant while establishing a welcoming classroom atmosphere and teaching students explicit methods to boost their motivation and engagement. Educators who connect reading activities to student interests while offering choice opportunities and celebrating reading achievements help students develop enduring reading habits and reach their complete literacy potential. Creating a supportive and engaging literacy environment, incorporating student

choice, and utilizing technology can foster students' motivation and improve their reading comprehension.

Effective Instructional Practices

While numerous barriers, including insufficient vocabulary, weak phonemic awareness, limited background knowledge, and inadequate instructional support, can hinder reading comprehension and overall literacy skills, effective instructional practices offer a powerful countermeasure. Educators can directly address these challenges by implementing evidence-based strategies and creating a supportive and engaging learning environment that fosters literacy development. Using the principles of instruction (Birsh & Carreker, 2019) identified in the text *Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills, 4th ed.* can mitigate the impact of these barriers, empowering students to become confident and proficient readers.

Principles of Instruction

1. Direct-explicit instruction—The inferential learning of any concept cannot be taken for granted. Multisensory language instruction requires the direct teaching of all concepts with [continual] student–teacher interaction.
2. Systematic, sequential, and cumulative—Multisensory language instruction requires that the organization of material follow the logical order of the language. The sequence must begin with the most straightforward and most basic elements and progress methodically to more challenging material. Each step must also be based on those [elements] already learned. Concepts taught must be systematically and continuously reviewed to strengthen memory.
3. Synthetic and analytic instruction—Multisensory structured language programs include synthetic and analytic instruction. Synthetic instruction presents the parts of

the language and then teaches how the parts work together to form a whole. Analytic instruction presents the whole and teaches how it can be broken down into component parts.

4. Comprehensive and inclusive- All language levels are addressed, often in parallel.
5. Diagnostic-prescriptive teaching to automaticity—The teacher must be adept at prescriptive or individualized instruction. The teaching plan is based on careful and [continual] assessment of the individual's needs. The content presented must be mastered to the degree of automaticity.
6. Progress from skills to functional use- instruction during every lesson moves from teaching skills to functional use and application of skills.
7. Consistent use of Structured Literacy vocabulary- explicit vocabulary during instruction and discussion of language concepts builds the necessary vocabulary for beginning and later learning.
8. Multisensory instructional strategies- Teaching simultaneously enhances memory and learning by using all brain learning pathways (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile).

2.4.4 Technology Integration

9. Technology can serve as a valuable tool in addressing secondary literacy deficiencies. Digital resources, online reading platforms, and educational apps provide opportunities for personalized and interactive learning experiences. (Higgins, Xiao, & Katsipataki, 2012) highlight the potential of technology in improving reading comprehension skills.

Interventions

Direct Instruction is to allow all students to close an academic gap. As stated earlier, teachers are seeing an increase in diversity and intensity of student needs and coupled with greater demands for accountability and linking student outcomes to curriculum and testing, teachers need ways to improve student learning (Rathvon, Burns, & Riley-Tillman, Effective School Interventions, 2017). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only about one-third of U.S. fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-graders are performing at proficient levels in reading, and less than one-third are proficient in mathematics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018 Tables and Figures, 2007b). These statistics emphasize the need for effective school-based interventions.

The reauthorization of IDEA 2004 includes authorizing local school districts to use up to 15% of federal funds for early intervention services for students in K-12 grades. IDEA (2004) suggests a special focus on K-3 students who have not been identified with a disability but still need academic and behavioral support in the general education classroom. Although IDEA (2004) does not explicitly name the process, it requires identifying students with specific learning disabilities utilizing a scientific, research-based intervention, which is referred to as a response to intervention (RTI).

RTI can take several forms; however, there are some things that many of the programs have in common: (1) the use of increasingly intensive tiers of intervention, (2) a reliance on research-based instruction and interventions, (3) a problem-solving approach for matching interventions to student needs and making educational decisions, and (4) systematic data collection and monitoring to determine if students are making sufficient progress (Rathvon, Burns, & Riley-Tillman, 2017)

A standard RTI program uses a three-tiered approach. Tier 1 consists of universal screening, evidence-based instruction, and progress monitoring for all students within a general education classroom. Tier 2 is typically delivered in small group settings and is usually in addition to the general education curriculum. The small group settings are typically done three or four times per week for a fixed number of weeks. If students do not progress in Tier 2, they are generally referred to Tier 3. Tier 3 is intensive individualized interventions, and students may receive a referral for special education service testing (Rathvon, 2008).

Some problems associated with interventions include poor quality, rarely addressing behavioral issues, teacher infidelity, and failure to implement systematic data collection and progress monitoring (Rathvon, 2008). When selecting an intervention, Rathvon (2008) has identified seven criteria that should be considered.

1. Documented Evidence of Effectiveness: Systematic, objective methods of documenting observable changes in student performance should be evident.
2. Consistent with an Ecological Perspective: Internal child deficits, as the sole cause of students' school problems, provide insufficient information for designing school-based interventions. Ecological approaches consider the whole child as a basis for students' needs.
3. Emphasis on a Proactive Approach to Classroom Problems: Many classroom behavior interventions are reactive instead of proactive. Proactive strategies that remove antecedents and promote student engagement also prevent academic failure and disruptive behavior.
4. Capable of Class-wide Application: Given the growing needs and diversity of the student population and federal mandates for improving outcomes for all students,

teachers need strategies that can enhance the academic performance of all students.

5. Capable of Being Easily Taught through a Consultation Format: Interventions that are hard to implement or require a lot of teaching time to ensure success are likely not to be used with fidelity
6. Capable of Implementation Using Regular Classroom Resources: Interventions using common classroom resources and removing additional resources are essential for fidelity in starting and continuing use.
7. Capable of Being Evaluated by Reliable, Valid, and Practical Methods: Interventions should target concrete, observable student behaviors that can be objectively measured over time.

Implications for Practice

The most significant implication for practice from the shift away from “Wait to Fail” towards the proactive RTI practice is that more and more students are identified as needing learning support. With a nationwide shortage of teachers (U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education , 2017), the potential to identify more and more students as qualifying for special education or intervention services is scary. Moving all the students who need additional support into special education would nearly be impossible. This conceptual shift to using the RTI model can improve student outcomes because students do not need to qualify for special education to receive intervention services, and educators are now using data-driven methods to look for how and why students struggle to put into a plan of action to help students bridge their knowledge gap.

The problem with RTI programs is not in the program itself but in the training of the presenting educator and the fidelity to the program. The shifts have raised questions about whether educators understand RTI and how to implement it. If they do not know how to implement it, will it occur faithfully? Literature reviews indicate that teachers do not feel confident in what they are asked to do with RTI (Braun, Kuman, Brown, & Walte, 2018). They do not think they have received sufficient training to be successful (Stuart, Rinaldi, & Higgins-Averill, 2011), and they do not know what to do with students who struggle through each tier (Faggella-Luby & Wardwell, 2011). Literature reviews suggest districts may implement RTI too quickly to meet federal regulations. It is also recommended that educators understand the benefits of RTI. Still, since they do not feel fully prepared to present the program to the students who need it, they also think their presentation may be a disservice and do more harm than good.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the theoretical framework, encompassing the Simple View of Reading and Cognitive Load Theory, which provides a lens to understand the components and processes involved in reading comprehension. Factors contributing to secondary literacy deficiencies have been discussed, including limited vocabulary knowledge, inadequate fluency and decoding skills, lack of content-specific knowledge, and limited engagement and motivation. Furthermore, effective instructional practices, such as explicit vocabulary instruction, reading comprehension strategies, content-area literacy instruction, and technology integration, have been identified.

This brings me to my research interest in preparation for my doctoral dissertation curriculum program creation. My interest lies in educator preparation, delivery, and perceptions of RTI programs that support emergent readers on the secondary level. I have a series of

questions that I presented to educators across the country to examine their ideas on whether or not their district participates in an RTI program, whether they were appropriately trained to present an RTI program, and their perception of the effectiveness (supporting students & identifying students for special education testing (Greenfield, Rinaldi, Proctor, & Cardarelli, 2010) of the RTI program.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

The methodology for creating a literacy interactive online book involved a structured, design-focused approach to ensure the book is engaging, effective, and accessible to its target audience. Developing an online literacy book for teachers required a teaching-focused design approach emphasizing educational effectiveness and real-world classroom implementation. The process was initiated through an evaluation of current literacy teaching methods and existing challenges while educators contribute through surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The gathered data shaped the book's core content and design features while ensuring compatibility with educational requirements and curricular guidelines. The design and development process requires a collaborative effort that includes literacy specialists, curriculum developers, and experienced teachers. The book's content drew its foundation from research-based practices and demonstrates practical classroom applications.

Educators have access to multiple resources and tools through the book's content structure, which includes explicit lesson plans, interactive activities, assessment tools, and multimedia resources. Interactive features enable differentiated instruction by allowing educators to customize lessons for their student's varied needs. The book identified interactive phonics games to help struggling readers while offering vocabulary-building activities for ELLs and extension activities for advanced learners. The system provides information about assessment tools that give educators immediate feedback on student progress so they can tailor their instruction as needed. Video demonstration links of teaching methods and audio recordings of proficient reading serve as multimedia tools that support educators' professional development. Educators require an intuitive platform that offers easy access. Educators must

have efficient search and filter tools to identify resources that match distinct literacy skills and student requirements for specific grade levels.

Technological development aims to build a strong platform that intuitively helps teachers incorporate resources into their lessons. The platform must work with different devices and learning management systems while maintaining secure access and data storage. Professional development must continue to be an essential element. Educators will receive support in using the interactive book through platform features, including tutorials, webinars, and online communities, which help integrate the book into teaching practices. Educator feedback and ongoing research guide regular updates and enhancements, maintaining the book as a relevant and practical literacy instruction resource.

Needs Assessment

An informal survey of secondary educators was completed to understand educators' perceptions of interventions. This information can be valuable for analyzing and assisting educators fully participating in the process. Faithful implementation is impossible if there is no educator buy-in to the process. Understanding positive perceptions helps motivate educators and change negative perceptions.

Secondary educators' feedback through informal surveys provides valuable and quick information for needs assessments when creating literacy instruction resources and interventions. Developers obtained direct insights from teachers about their classroom challenges and resource gaps through field feedback and identified student learning difficulties as perceived by educators. This approach gathered qualitative data, which helped researchers understand how educators view their teaching environment. Informal surveys allow developers to create quick,

straightforward questionnaires that enable more teachers to participate without significantly disrupting their schedules.

The informal survey approach required designing a brief questionnaire that contained open-ended questions. Teachers could share their concerns and suggestions through open-ended questions, which yielded detailed qualitative data. The survey reached participants through convenient channels, including email and online platforms, and teachers received adequate time to submit their responses. Teachers received assurance of anonymity, which allowed them to provide honest feedback while their identities stayed protected throughout the data analysis process.

The survey data underwent analysis to discover recurring themes, patterns, and problematic areas. The analysis process led to creating specialized resources and strategies that directly meet the requirements of secondary school teachers and their students. The survey findings guided the prioritization of specific features for an interactive online literacy book development to meet educators' practical needs and boost their support for student literacy development.

Content Development

Creating an interactive online book to enhance literacy outcomes in secondary educators started with thoroughly examining existing research and proven teaching methods for adolescent literacy. The process involved compiling data from peer-reviewed journals, educational reports, and established literacy frameworks. The development process aimed to create content that relied on evidence-based strategies while aligning with proven instructional methods. The team implemented a cooperative strategy that included literacy specialists, seasoned secondary

teachers, and curriculum experts. The collaborative effort produced content that stood up to theoretical scrutiny while remaining directly usable in classroom environments.

The literacy content addressed multiple components essential for secondary students, including vocabulary development, comprehension strategies, content-area literacy, and writing instruction. The book's sections provide educators with straightforward key concept explanations, practical teaching methods, and usable resources. Including interactive elements like video demonstrations of teaching techniques, downloadable lesson plans, and customizable assessment tools increased user engagement while supporting practical applications. The book contained real-world examples and case studies demonstrating the application of instructional strategies across different subjects and student demographics.

Educators can personalize their teaching methods to address their students' unique needs because the content maintains flexible and adaptable characteristics. The materials included distinct resources and teaching methods designed for students who struggle with reading while addressing the needs of English language learners and advanced students. Educators could easily access and utilize specific sections thanks to the content's modular organization, which caters to their immediate instructional needs. The development process featured continuous content review and updates, which kept the book up to date with new research findings while meeting the changing needs of secondary education professionals. Multimedia resources cater to diverse learning preferences and enhance engagement.

Interactive Features

Online literacy books with interactive features provide secondary educators with multiple advantages by turning static text into active teaching resources. These features allow educators to create customized lessons that address student diversity while improving student engagement

through differentiated instruction methods. Educators can use interactive simulations and case studies to practice and apply new strategies in real-world scenarios in a secure virtual setting. This practical approach strengthens comprehension while increasing teacher confidence in executing successful literacy methods.

Interactive tools deliver real-time feedback and monitor learning advancement, which helps educators gain important information about their personal educational growth. Through quizzes, self-assessments, and reflection prompts, educators can measure their grasp of essential concepts and discover further development opportunities. Data visualizations that educators can interact with display student progress information in a straightforward manner, allowing educational professionals to observe student achievement levels and modify teaching strategies as needed. Online discussion forums and educational communities enable educators to collaborate through knowledge sharing, which helps them to join peer networks and gain expert support while exchanging ideas.

Through interactive tools, administrative tasks become more efficient, and teaching delivery experiences improve. Educators can save valuable time and effort with customizable lesson plan templates, integrated assessment tools, and digital resource libraries. Educators gain enhanced student engagement and varied learning experiences through multimedia resources like video teaching demonstrations and audio reading recordings.

Interactive technology allows educators to revolutionize their teaching practices, leading to better student literacy results and more engaging and effective learning spaces.

Technology and Accessibility

Interactive online literacy books require strong technological support and easy accessibility to benefit secondary educational professionals fully. An effective platform design

facilitates smooth integration with classroom operations and learning management systems while reducing interruptions and improving operational efficiency. Educators can access the book from any internet-connected device at any location, including classrooms or homes, and professional development events through cloud-based access. Busy educators need flexible access to resources that match their schedules.

The book's resources must be accessible to all educators through essential accessibility features that support users with different technological skills and physical abilities. To minimize cognitive load and maximize ease of use, systems must feature user-friendly interfaces, intuitive navigation, and clear instructions. Educators who have visual or auditory disabilities depend on closed captioning and audio descriptions along with screen reader support for effective learning. The platform must operate in a responsive manner, allowing it to adjust to different screen dimensions and device types to provide consistent and enhanced user interactions on desktops, laptops, tablets, and smartphones.

Technology surpasses essential accessibility to create customized educational experiences for teaching professionals. Data analytics enables tracking how educators utilize resources while providing insights into their strengths and improvement zones alongside personalized professional development suggestions. Educators can tailor their learning journey through interactive features that enable them to choose modules and activities that match their requirements and interests. Educators stay current with newly added content and available resources through real-time updates and notifications. Interactive online books have become dynamic, personalized tools for secondary educators to enhance literacy instruction and student outcomes through technology.

Pilot Testing and Feedback

The refinement process of an interactive online literacy book requires pilot testing and feedback to make sure its content functions well and remains user-friendly for secondary educators. The pilot test requires the delivery of the online book to a chosen group of educators who will use it in actual classroom environments. Developers gain insights into teacher interactions with content by identifying usability problems and evaluating instructional strategy implementation during testing. Pilot test educators receive encouragement to submit comprehensive feedback about their experiences including both strengths and weaknesses of the content. Educators' perspectives become fully understood when feedback is collected through surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

The results from pilot testing undergo systematic analysis to reveal recurring themes and recognizable patterns. The feedback analysis leads to content revisions in the book which involve improving key concept explanations while tailoring the difficulty of interactive activities to match learning needs better and making instructional materials clearer. When educators describe specific sections as confusing or overwhelming developers will update the language and incorporate visual aids or divide the material into smaller modules for better comprehension. The book developers carefully evaluate and integrate educator-recommended resources and tools into their teaching materials to advance teaching practices.

Pilot testing generates valuable insights that guide developers to enhance the book's technological platform and user interface. Reviewing navigation features and accessibility measures ensures the book provides seamless usability and fits into educators' daily teaching workflows. Developers who integrate pilot testing feedback can design an interactive literacy

book for secondary classrooms that combines educational soundness with practical effectiveness for literacy improvement.

Evaluation and Revision

Developers need to conduct ongoing evaluations and revisions for an interactive online literacy book to maintain effectiveness and stay relevant in improving literacy outcomes. Developers who implement structured data collection and analysis processes can pinpoint successful elements of their book and areas needing enhancement. Consistent assessment enables recognition of new literacy teaching methods, curriculum standard updates, and technological advancements, which help maintain the book's alignment with best practices. The iterative approach enables developers to refine content and interactive features while optimizing user experience, which maximizes how the book benefits educators and students.

The evaluation data offers essential insights regarding the book's influence on educator knowledge and professional practice. Developers can measure the book's effectiveness through educators' literacy concept understanding evolution, their application of successful instructional strategies, and their students' literacy results to justify the book's ongoing utilization. The collected data directs the development of new features and resources that meet current educational demands and overcome new challenges. Through ongoing evaluation and revision, developers can maintain the interactive online literacy book as an enduring resource for literacy instruction enhancement in secondary classrooms.

Implementation and Distribution

The distribution of an interactive online literacy resource intended for educators can occur through multiple methods that aim to make the resource broadly accessible and easily

integrated into professional development and classroom teaching. One approach centers on forming alliances with school districts and educational organizations. Through partnerships with academic institutions, the platform enables bulk licensing options and student access via current learning management systems and district portals. Educators gain streamlined access to resources through integration into current professional development programs. Webinars and virtual workshops can be hosted online to guide educators through platform features and practical implementation strategies.

This method prioritizes personal educator connections via digital platforms and professional learning communities. Educators can access the interactive text via a dedicated website or app and subscribe to access the content. Online professional learning communities enable educators to exchange best practices and collaborate on solutions to problems while supporting peers. Educators will gain broader exposure to the resource through strategic digital marketing and social media outreach. Educational institutions can include this material in their pre-service teacher programs at colleges and universities to prepare future teachers with vital

literacy capabilities. The program provides new educators with essential literacy instruction skills before starting their teaching careers.

Content Analysis Matrix

Article	Phonological Awareness	Phonics	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Explicit	Systematic	Assessment	Intervention	Evidence-based	Research-based	Decoding	Orthography
1989 Gough & Tunmer	x	x			x							x	x
1988 Sweller				x	x			x					
2000 Jaynes & Littell		x		x	x			x	x				
2000 National Reading Panel	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2002 Pressley, et al.		x		x	x	x			x			x	
2004 Learning Point Assoc	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	
2006 Biemiller & Boote	x		x	x	x			x					
2007 Beck & McKeown	x			x	x		x	x	x			x	x
2007 Guthrie Et al.					x		x	x	x			x	
2008 Shanahan & Shanahan	x	x	x	x	x	x			x			x	
2010 Greenfield, Rinaldi & Proctor			x		x			x	x	x			
2011 Stuart, Rinaldi & Higgins-Averill			x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	
2012 Paige, Rasinski & Maguir-Lavell			x		x			x	x		x		
2012 Higgins, Xiao & Katsipatakis	x				x			x	x	x			
2013 Bingham & Hall-Kenyon	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		
2013 NCRI								x	x	x	x		
2015 Kweldju					x					x		x	x
2015 Foorman, Herrera, Petscher, Mitchell & Truckenmiller	x		x	x	x	x		x				x	
2017 US DOE Office of Postsecondary Ed													
2018 Braun, Brown, Kumm & Walte									x	x			
2020 Petscher et al.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
2020 Shanahan	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2020 IDA						x	x						x
2020 Cervetti	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x
2015 Martin	x				x							x	x
2011 Fagella-Luby					x	x		x	x	x	x		
2009 Gabrieli	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
2005 Shippen			x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	
2022 Krashen		x			x	x	x						x
2024 Gicain													
2024 Technical appendix													
2019 Rakhlin	x		x		x			x	x			x	x
2008 Ryder, Tunmer	x	x			x	x	x					x	x
2011 Samuels									x		x		
2013 Seidenberg	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	

Figure 3.1. Content Analysis Matrix

Chapter 4 - Results- The Book

Introduction

This free, open-access book aims to be a tool for learning the science of reading at the secondary level, to guide teachers in rethinking classroom instruction, and to provide educators with evidence-based practices to support learning for all students.

Most teachers aspire to equip students with the knowledge and abilities to live productively in the world, and literacy is an essential key to success. Over the past several years, research on reading education has become more focused because of rising attention to the subject and provocative articles such as the *Sold a Story* (Hanford, 2022) podcast.

The *Sold a Story* podcast explained the literacy puzzle by examining how some techniques spread like wildfire despite having scant proof that they work. The series hosted by Emily Hanford reflected on how ideas and curriculum choices informed decades of reading instruction that were at odds with the science of how children should learn to read. It recounted the tales of teachers, students, and parents whose lives have been changed by faulty practice. It called for reconsidering school reading instruction and its adequacy to cognitive science.

One instructional approach was whole language, which took off in the 1980s and prioritizes natural reading. All language learning is also about making meaning and asking students to read the actual words so that they can understand, not decode. Although this approach encourages literary love, skeptics maintain it fails to teach the basic skills explicitly to readers who have difficulties learning to succeed.

Faced with criticisms of the whole language, balanced literacy was developed to meld the virtues of the entire language by teaching systematic skill-building. Balanced literacy included phonics, word recognition, and guided reading in the context of reading meaning. However,

many practitioners argue that this emphasizes understanding strategies at the expense of systematically teaching basic reading skills.

The structured literacy approach, by contrast, is scientific and based on the science of reading. This approach is evident in teaching letters and sounds—phonological knowledge, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and understanding. Structured literacy works exceptionally well for dyslexic and early reader students because it's a gradual process that develops the brain's reading circuits.

A quick history of the reading brain shows how critical pedagogy must be to cognitive science. Where speaking is an automatic human ability, reading is learned, and the brain's neural networks are rewired. It is based on coupling the sight of letters with sound, a function of the left side of the brain. Evidence suggests that this kind of explicit, structured instruction is necessary for forming these associations, particularly among students who fail to see the association between sounds and symbols automatically.

The Problem: American Children Aren't Proficient Readers

Although reading is a cornerstone of academic achievement, reading is still a big issue for most of our country's children. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2024 report highlights an alarming truth: reading scores have gradually decreased in recent years with grade 8 students score being two points lower than in 2022 and five points lower than in 2019, and most students remain below the proficient level (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2024).

The 8th-grade scale reading score in 2024 was 258, out of a range of 0 to 500. This was a decrease from previous years but not even close to where literacy scores should be. The report

further breaks down students into Basic, Proficient, and Advanced scoring to give us a more comprehensive view of the reading curriculum.

Basic Level: About 67% of 8th graders scored at or above the Basic level. An example of what eighth-grade students performing at the NAEP Basic level can likely do is determine the main idea or purpose of the informational text using explicit features from the text. This means that most students had at least a moderate mastery of the skill and knowledge for their grade. However, partial mastery hardly prepares students for problematic curricular or applied tasks.

Competent Level: This is a scary number: 33% of the students failed to reach the Proficient level. These students have good academic results and can perform challenging reading activities. An example of what eighth-grade students performing at the NAEP Proficient level can likely do is offer an opinion about the evidence an author uses to support a claim or argument in an informational text. The fact that only so many students meet this mark makes one wonder whether schools are adequately equipping their students for the demands of future schooling and work.

Advanced level: Even worse, only 4% of the students passed at the Advanced level with superlative reading ability. And that's an insufficient investment in producing examples of who could be the next leaders academically and professionally. An example of what eighth-grade students performing at the NAEP Advanced level can likely do is synthesize information across related informational texts and fully support their ideas with evidence from both texts.

All this data indicates a dire need to examine and change how we teach reading. When almost three-quarters of students never become proficient readers, it's easy to see that we are not catering to a wide range of learners. This crisis makes the case for evidence-based literacy education to ensure all children can become proficient readers.

The Basics: The essential information you need to know

The Simple View of Reading

The *Simple View of Reading* (SVR) (Gough & Tunmer, Decoding, Reading, and Reading Disability, 1986) is a widely recognized framework in literacy research that explains reading comprehension as the product of two primary components: decoding and language comprehension. Developed by researchers Philip Gough and William Tunmer in 1986, the SVR provides a straightforward yet powerful way to understand the complexities of reading and highlights the foundational skills necessary for literacy development.

The Formula

The Simple View of Reading is often represented mathematically:

Reading Comprehension (RC) = Decoding (D) × Language Comprehension (LC)

This formula emphasizes decoding and language understanding; missing one or the other will profoundly affect a reader's ability to process text.

1. **Decoding (D):** This refers to the ability to translate written symbols (letters and words) into their spoken equivalents. Decoding skills depend on phonemic awareness, letter-sound knowledge, and the ability to recognize words automatically. Without robust decoding skills, readers cannot comprehend text.
2. **Language Comprehension (LC):** This involves the capacity to understand spoken language, encompassing vocabulary, grammar, background knowledge, and the ability to make inferences. Even if a student can decode words accurately, they will struggle with reading comprehension if they cannot understand the language used in the text.

Implications of the Simple View of Reading

The Simple View of Reading highlights that reading comprehension is not merely a single skill but a combination of distinct, interdependent processes. For example, a child who is strong in decoding but weak in language comprehension may read words fluently but fail to grasp their meaning (a phenomenon sometimes seen in struggling English language learners or students with poor oral language skills). On the other hand, a child with good language comprehension but poor decoding abilities might be able to understand speech but struggle to read text.

Applications in Education

The Simple View of Reading has significant implications for teaching literacy:

1. **Balanced Instruction:** It underscores the need to address decoding and language comprehension in literacy instruction rather than disproportionately focusing on one component.
2. **Early Interventions:** Educators can use the Simple View of Reading framework to identify specific areas of difficulty and tailor interventions to address decoding deficits (e.g., phonics instruction) or language comprehension challenges (e.g., building vocabulary and background knowledge).

The Five Pillars of Literacy

Reading instruction is based on five principles —the Five Pillars of Literacy. The National Reading Panel identified these five pillars in 2000 as supporting reading growth and proficiency. Collectively, they make up a comprehensive structure for teaching students to read and interpret text.

The five pillars of literacy are a systemic approach to reading instruction, both in terms of the technical skills of reading and the higher-order cognitive capacities required for

comprehension. By intentionally building these pillars into literacy curricula, teachers can help to provide a firm foundation for every student so they can become good, life-long readers.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. It is a foundational skill for reading for students to understand that words are made up of discrete sounds, which can be blended or segmented. For example, a child with strong phonemic awareness can break the word "cat" into its component sounds: /k/, /æ/, and /t/. Phonemic awareness is crucial because it forms the basis for phonics instruction and supports decoding skills.

Phonics

Phonics involves the relationship between letters and sounds and how to use this understanding to read and spell words. Phonics instruction teaches students to decode written language by recognizing patterns, rules, and sounds. For instance, learning that the letter "c" can make both a hard /k/ sound as in "cat" and a soft /s/ sound as in "cent" is a part of phonics. Explicit and systematic phonics instruction is especially effective in helping beginning readers and those struggling with decoding.

Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read text accurately, quickly, and with proper expression. Fluent readers recognize words automatically and understand their meaning, allowing them to focus on comprehending the text rather than decoding each word. Fluency develops through practice and exposure to a variety of texts, and it is essential for bridging the gap between decoding and comprehension.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the words a person knows and understands, both in spoken and written language. A strong vocabulary is critical for reading comprehension, as students need to know the meaning of most words they encounter to understand a text fully. Vocabulary development occurs through direct instruction, such as teaching specific words and their meanings, and indirectly, through wide reading and rich conversations.

Comprehension

Comprehension is the ultimate end of reading. It involves making sense of reading and deciphering the text. Understanding requires the successful application of the other four pillars, and relies on the student's previous background, deduction abilities and capacity for critical thinking.

Scarborough's Reading Rope

Developed by Dr. Hollis Scarborough and introduced in the *Handbook for Research in Early Literacy* in 2001, Scarborough's Reading Rope is a visual framework that illustrates the complex, interwoven skills necessary for proficient reading. The model emphasizes that reading comprehension is not a single skill but a combination of interdependent components that must develop over time. This concept has become a cornerstone of modern literacy instruction, aligning with the *Simple View of Reading* by highlighting the essential roles of both decoding and language comprehension.

Scarborough's Reading Rope consists of two main strands, each of smaller, individual threads that work together to form a strong "rope" of reading proficiency.

- **Word Recognition Strand (Decoding Skills):**

- This strand focuses on the mechanical aspects of reading, including:

- **Phonological Awareness:** The ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in spoken words.
- **Decoding:** Reading words using knowledge of letter-sound correspondences.
- **Sight Recognition:** We can detect words without decoding them automatically.

These are the tools by which written communication is converted to spoken communication. These skills are foundational for translating written text into spoken language.

- **Language Comprehension Strand:**

- This strand includes all the cognitive and linguistic features needed to make sense of text, such as the meaning of words.:
- **Background Knowledge:** General knowledge about the world and specific topics.
- **Vocabulary:** The breadth and depth of word knowledge.
- **Language Structures:** Understanding grammar, syntax, and sentence structure.
- **Verbal Reasoning:** The ability to infer and reason about text.
- **Literacy Knowledge:** Awareness of text structures and conventions.

Interweaving the Strands

When students master these, the rope strings are intertwined into flowing, rich reading. When one or more strands are weak, the rope won't stick to itself, and you will be unable to read it. For instance, a student who is good at word recognition but not so great at language understanding might not know what he reads, and vice versa for decoding and fluency.

The Importance of Scarborough's Reading Rope

Scarborough's Reading Rope highlights some essential ideas for educators:

- Reading Is Complex: Proficient reading is the application of many skills, not just fluency or comprehension in isolation.
- Proper Instruction: In a literacy program that works, word recognition and language comprehension must be covered, and all the threads are formed.
- Targeted Interventions Are Key: With the rope, we can pinpoint the areas of student need so teachers can provide specific interventions.
- It Aligns with Research: Based on decades of cognitive science and linguistics research, the model offers a scientifically sound model for literacy education.

Learning with Scarborough's Reading Rope can be used by educators to design solid, research-supported reading programs that will prepare their students for college and beyond. Because the model is so focused on skills-on-skills, any child can grow into an efficient, confident reader, regardless of his or her starting point.

Best Practices in Literacy Instructions

Best practices in literacy instruction are guided by research, evidence, and theory to ensure effective learning outcomes. The terms research-based, evidence-based, and theory-based are often used to describe educational practices, but they have distinct meanings rooted in different foundations of knowledge. Understanding the differences helps clarify how and why certain practices are recommended.

Research-Based

- Definition: Practice is considered research-based if derived from findings from systematic, peer-reviewed research studies. These studies often use scientific methods

such as controlled experiments or longitudinal studies to test the effectiveness of an approach or technique.

Examples:

- Teaching phonics explicitly is a research-based practice because numerous studies have demonstrated its effectiveness in developing decoding skills.
 - Using graphic organizers is research-based because research supports their impact on improving reading comprehension.
- Strength: Strong foundation in empirical evidence collected through scientific methods.
 - Limitation: Research may be generalized from studies that do not perfectly match the context of every classroom.

Evidence-Based

- Definition: Evidence-based practices are supported by data showing that they work in practice. This term is broader than research-based and may include a variety of data sources, such as case studies, program evaluations, or cumulative observations from educational practice.

Examples:

- Repeated reading to improve fluency is evidence-based because classroom data across various settings consistently shows that it enhances reading speed and expression.
 - Reading recovery programs may be considered evidence-based when multiple schools report significant improvements in student reading performance using the program's methods.
- Strength: Includes real-world application and effectiveness, not just controlled studies.

- Limitation: The quality of the evidence may vary, and it may not be as rigorously tested as research-based methods.

Theory-Based

- Definition: A theory-based practice is rooted in educational or psychological theories about how learning occurs, even if direct research evidence of its effectiveness is not yet available or entirely conclusive. These theories provide a conceptual framework for why specific strategies might work.

Examples:

- Using scaffolding to support student learning is theory-based, drawing on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development.
 - Emphasizing student choice to foster intrinsic motivation is theory-based, informed by the Self-Determination Theory.
- Strength: Provides a strong conceptual rationale for practices and often guides the development of innovative approaches.
 - Limitation: Theoretical support does not always guarantee proven effectiveness; it may need further empirical validation.

Best practices in literacy instruction often combine elements of all three—drawing on solid research, proven evidence in real classrooms, and sound theoretical understanding to provide the most effective teaching strategies.

Literacy Instruction guided by research, evidence, and theory

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

- **Research-Based:** Strong phonemic awareness (ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words) is a key predictor of reading success. Phonics instruction (learning the relationship between sounds and letters) is equally critical.
- **Best Practice:** Early and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics helps young readers decode words. Research supports the idea that phonics is especially essential for struggling readers.
- **Theory-Based:** Based on the Simple View of Reading theory, reading comprehension depends on decoding and language comprehension.

Fluency

- **Evidence-Based:** Fluency, the ability to read smoothly with speed and expression, improves comprehension. It can be developed through repeated reading and practice.
- **Best Practice:** Encourage guided oral, paired, and independent reading to improve fluency. It is vital to use appropriate-level texts for practice.
- **Research-Based:** Studies show that fluency interventions improve comprehension by allowing cognitive resources to be devoted to understanding the text rather than decoding individual words.

Vocabulary Instruction

- **Research-Based:** Explicit vocabulary instruction enhances comprehension, especially for struggling readers and English language learners.
- **Best Practice:** Teach breadth (the number of words students know) and depth (the understanding of word meanings). Use direct instruction, word learning strategies

(context clues, morphological analysis), and repeated exposure to words in meaningful contexts.

- **Theory-Based:** The "word consciousness" theory suggests that making students aware of words, their meanings, and their usage in various contexts is key to vocabulary development.

Comprehension Strategies

- **Evidence-Based:** Reading comprehension improves when students actively engage with the text through strategies like predicting, questioning, summarizing, and visualizing.
- **Best Practice:** Use metacognitive strategies to help students think about their thinking while reading. For instance, teach students to pause and summarize key points, ask themselves questions, and clarify confusing parts of the text.
- **Research-Based:** Reciprocal teaching (an interactive method where students take turns leading discussions) and guided reading support comprehension development by promoting higher-level thinking.

Motivation and Engagement

- **Evidence-Based:** Motivation plays a crucial role in literacy development. Engaged readers are more likely to invest time in practice, which improves literacy outcomes.
- **Best Practice:** Create a literacy-rich environment with a wide range of reading materials. Incorporate student interests into reading assignments and provide choice and autonomy.
- **Theory-Based:** The Self-Determination Theory emphasizes that students need autonomy, competence, and relatedness to be motivated. This means offering choice,

fostering mastery through scaffolding, and building positive relationships in the classroom.

Differentiated Instruction

- **Research-Based:** Differentiating instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners, including those with disabilities or English language learners, has increased engagement and achievement.
- **Best Practice:** Use various teaching methods (small-group work, individualized tasks, peer support) and adjust content, process, and products based on student needs.
- **Theory-Based:** Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development suggests that learning is most effective when students are challenged just beyond their current level of competence, with appropriate support.

Writing and Reading Interconnection

- **Research-Based:** Writing instruction supports reading development and vice versa. Writing helps students solidify their understanding of language structures and improves comprehension.
- **Best Practice:** Incorporate writing into literacy instruction by encouraging students to write summaries, reflections, or responses to reading. Writing to explain or elaborate deepens understanding.
- **Evidence-Based:** Studies show that integrating writing with reading comprehension instruction can improve both areas.

Assessment and Feedback

- **Research-Based:** Ongoing, formative assessments are essential for understanding student progress and adjusting instruction accordingly.

- **Best Practice:** Use data from assessments to inform instructional decisions. Provide timely, specific feedback that helps students understand their mistakes and how to improve.
- **Theory-Based:** Feedback aligns with theories of self-regulation and formative assessment, which emphasize the importance of students being able to monitor their progress and adjust strategies.

Chapter 1- Assessments

Literacy Assessments are tools and processes used to evaluate students' reading and writing skills, providing insights into their literacy development. These assessments help educators identify strengths, weaknesses, and instructional needs, guiding the teaching of foundational literacy skills. Practical literacy assessments are essential for creating personalized learning experiences that improve student outcomes and promote lifelong reading and writing proficiency.

Assessing students is crucial for providing effective and tailored literacy instruction. It allows educators to understand students' strengths, weaknesses, and instructional needs. Proper assessment informs teaching strategies and ensures that instruction is data-driven, targeted, and impactful. Here's why assessing students is essential for literacy instruction:

Identifying Individual Skill Levels

Assessment helps determine students' literacy development, such as their abilities in phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. This information is vital for placing students in appropriate reading groups or selecting materials that match their current level.

Guiding Instructional Planning

Teachers can design lessons that address those gaps by understanding the specific areas where students struggle. For example, if assessments reveal a student has difficulty with phonics, the teacher can incorporate more focused instruction on sound-letter correspondence.

Monitoring Progress

Regular literacy assessments track student progress, showing whether students are improving with current instruction or if adjustments are needed. This allows for timely interventions to prevent students from falling behind.

Differentiating Instruction

Assessment data enables teachers to differentiate instruction, providing advanced learners with more challenging content while offering remediation for students who need additional support. Tailoring instruction helps maximize student engagement and success.

Informing Interventions

Early and continuous assessments help identify students at risk for reading difficulties, such as dyslexia. This ensures that interventions can be implemented promptly, improving literacy outcomes and preventing long-term struggles.

Setting Goals and Expectations

Assessments provide a basis for setting measurable learning goals. Teachers, students, and parents can use this information to focus efforts on specific literacy outcomes, fostering a clear path toward improvement.

Evaluating Instructional Effectiveness

Assessment results also reflect the effectiveness of teaching strategies. If many students struggle in a particular area, it may indicate the need for instructional changes or the adoption of new literacy programs or resources.

Assessing students is foundational to literacy instruction. It provides the necessary insights for personalized learning, ensures appropriate intervention, and helps measure the impact of teaching methods. Practical literacy assessment leads to more informed teaching, higher engagement, and better literacy outcomes, preparing students for academic success and lifelong learning.

Literacy tests are essential for reading instruction because they offer information on students' current reading levels, their strengths, and where they need to improve. Literacy skills are regularly tested, which can help teachers find deficits in understanding, fluency, vocabulary, and decoding to ensure the instruction is tailored to the student's needs. Such tests are also helpful to see how students' progress throughout the years so that they know they're improving. Literacy assessments can also help teachers make informed decisions on interventions, teaching, and classifying to allow them to provide personalized support. Ultimately, they ensure all students are equipped with tools for success at school and in life. Several types of literacy-based assessments are designed to evaluate different aspects of reading and writing skills. These include diagnostic, formative, and summative evaluations; informal reading inventories (IRI); running records; Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS); portfolio assessments; curriculum-based Measurements (CBM); norm-referenced assessments, and criterion-referenced assessments. Each type of literacy assessment serves a different purpose and provides valuable information for guiding instruction and supporting students in their literacy development.

Types of Literacy Assessments

There are several types of literacy assessments, each serving a unique purpose:

1. Screening Assessments
 - Used to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulties.
 - Example: A kindergarten phonemic awareness assessment to detect early reading challenges.
2. Diagnostic Assessments
 - Provide detailed information about specific strengths and weaknesses in literacy.
 - Example: A phonics inventory to assess decoding skills and letter-sound recognition.
3. Progress Monitoring Assessments
 - Track students' progress over time to determine the effectiveness of instruction.
 - Example: Oral reading fluency checks performed weekly or monthly.
4. Formative Assessments
 - Conducted during instruction to inform immediate teaching strategies.
 - Example: Asking students to summarize a story to gauge comprehension during a lesson.
5. Summative Assessments
 - Evaluate overall literacy achievement at the end of a unit or term.
 - Example: A standardized reading comprehension test.

Key Components of Literacy to Assess

1. Phonemic Awareness: The ability to hear and manipulate word sounds.
2. Phonics: Understanding the relationship between letters and sounds.
3. Fluency: The ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression.

4. Vocabulary: Knowledge of word meanings.
5. Comprehension: Understanding and interpreting what is read.

Importance of Literacy Assessments

1. Personalized Instruction: Assessments inform tailored teaching strategies that meet individual learning needs.
2. Early Intervention: Screening helps identify students who require additional support before literacy gaps widen.
3. Progress Tracking: Regular monitoring ensures students are on track and helps teachers adjust instruction.
4. Data-Driven Decision-Making: Assessment results guide resource allocation, curriculum choices, and instructional methods.

Types of Literacy Assessments

Screening Assessments

Screening Assessments are brief, standardized tools used to quickly evaluate a student's foundational reading and writing skills to determine if they are at risk for literacy difficulties. These assessments are typically administered to all students at the beginning of a school year or instructional period. The primary goal of screening assessments is to identify students who may need further diagnostic evaluation or early intervention to support their literacy development.

Screening assessments are meant to be brief, quick and easy to administer, and provide early indicators of future reading performance. They are universal, meaning they are usually administered to an entire class or grade level to ensure all students are evaluated. This provides targeted student support based on further diagnostic assessments and tailored interventions.

Educators can use literacy screening assessments effectively to ensure timely and appropriate student support, laying the foundation for successful reading and writing development.

Examples of Literacy Screening Assessments:

- a) Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS): Measures early literacy skills like letter naming, phonemic awareness, and oral reading fluency.
- b) Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS): This screening assesses young children's knowledge of key literacy fundamentals, including letter sounds and word recognition.
- c) Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA): Screens for pre-literacy skills in young learners.

1. Diagnostic Assessments

Diagnostic Assessments are detailed evaluations used to pinpoint specific strengths and weaknesses in a student's reading and writing abilities. Unlike screening assessments, which identify students who may need additional support, diagnostic assessments provide in-depth information about the areas where students are struggling. These assessments help educators develop targeted, individualized instruction to address specific learning needs.

Unlike screening assessments, diagnostic assessments are meant to be comprehensive to assess a broad range of literacy skills, which include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and even writing. Diagnostic assessments provide insights into the specific nature of a student's literacy challenges. They are used to guide the design of personalized teaching strategies and interventions. Diagnostic assessments offer flexibility because they are often administered individually to enable the gathering of detailed data about a student's performance. By using literacy diagnostic assessments, educators can provide focused and

practical instruction, ensuring that students receive the support they need to become successful, confident readers and writers.

Examples of Literacy Diagnostic Assessments:

- Running Records: Used to analyze reading fluency and identify error patterns to determine reading levels.
- Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP): Evaluates phonological awareness, memory, and rapid naming skills.
- Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI): Assesses reading comprehension and word identification strategies.
- Words Their Way Spelling Inventory: Diagnoses students' spelling and phonics knowledge.

Progress Monitoring Assessments

Monitoring Assessments are ongoing, frequent evaluations used to track a student's progress in developing reading and writing skills over time. These assessments measure how well students respond to instruction and interventions, helping educators determine if teaching strategies are effective or need adjustment. Progress monitoring is essential for students receiving targeted support or interventions as part of a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework or similar instructional approach.

Progress monitoring assessments should be regular and frequent. Ideally, they should be administered weekly, biweekly, or monthly. They should also be quick and efficient because they are designed to provide immediate, actionable data. These assessments should be focused on specific skills. They assess key areas such as phonemic awareness, reading fluency, vocabulary,

and comprehension. The results help to guide data-driven instruction by providing specific data to make instructional adjustments and help set learning goals or targets.

Examples of Literacy Progress Monitoring Assessments:

- Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) Tests: Measure how many words a student reads correctly in one minute to track fluency growth.
- Maze Passages: Assess reading comprehension by having students fill in missing words from a text.
- Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) Tools: Track skills such as letter naming, sight word recognition, and spelling accuracy.
- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS): Often used to monitor progress in foundational reading skills.

2. Formative Assessments

Formative assessments are ongoing, and informal evaluations are conducted during learning to gather real-time feedback on a student's literacy skills. Their primary purpose is to inform and guide instruction by identifying areas where students need support or additional practice. Unlike summative assessments, which evaluate learning at the end of an instructional period, formative assessments are used continuously to adapt teaching strategies and enhance learning outcomes.

Formative assessments should be continuous and embedded throughout instruction rather than at fixed intervals. These are designed to be low-stakes assessments where they provide feedback rather than assign grades. These are also action-oriented because data is immediately available and should be used to adjust teaching methods. These also focus on literacy skills such as decoding, comprehension, or fluency. Formative assessments in literacy are vital tools for

dynamic, student-centered instruction, allowing teachers to create responsive and effective learning environments that foster literacy growth and engagement.

Examples of Literacy Formative Assessments:

- a. Exit Tickets: Students write a summary of what they learned during a reading lesson to demonstrate comprehension.
- b. Reading Response Journals: Students reflect on a book, providing insight into their understanding and engagement with the text.
- c. Think-Pair-Share Activities: Students discuss their thoughts about a reading passage with a partner, allowing the teacher to observe comprehension and critical thinking.
- d. Running Records: Used informally to assess reading fluency and error patterns as a student reads aloud.
- e. Graphic Organizers: Tools like story maps or Venn diagrams to help students organize their thoughts while reading.

3. Summative Assessments

Summative Assessments are evaluations conducted at the end of an instructional period, such as a unit, semester, or academic year, to measure a student's overall literacy achievement. These assessments are designed to evaluate the extent to which students have mastered the key literacy skills taught during a course or program. Summative assessments often serve as a final measure of learning, assigning grades or scores reflecting a student's reading and writing proficiency.

Summative assessments are done at the end of instruction. They are administered after a teaching period, usually after a unit, semester, or academic year. Summative assessments are

comprehensive and cover various content and skills learned during the instructional period. They are often high stakes testing as they are frequently used for grading, certification, or determining whether students are ready for the next level of learning. Summative assessments are often objective and standardized across a class, school, or district to ensure fairness and consistency in evaluation. While summative assessments provide important final data, they are most effective when combined with ongoing formative assessments, which allow for real-time feedback and instructional adjustments throughout the learning process.

Examples of Literacy Summative Assessments:

- End-of-Unit or Chapter Tests: These might include multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and essays that assess a student's overall understanding of the material covered in a specific unit or chapter.
- Standardized State Assessments (e.g., SAT, ACT): These large-scale tests measure literacy skills (reading, writing, and sometimes grammar) across a wide range of students, often to assess readiness for college or graduation.
- Final Exams: A comprehensive exam at the end of a semester or year, covering all topics studied.
- Research Papers or Essays are large writing projects that evaluate students' ability to develop and communicate ideas effectively, demonstrating their mastery of writing skills and content knowledge.
- Portfolio Assessments: A collection of student work over a period, assessed at the end of a course to evaluate overall literacy development.

Chapter 2- The Reading Rope: Word Recognition

The Reading Rope: Word Recognition

The Word Recognition strand of Hollis Scarborough's Reading Rope is essential to effective literacy instruction. This strand focuses on developing skills necessary for students to recognize and understand words quickly and accurately. Word recognition is a critical foundation for fluent reading and comprehension, allowing students to move from decoding words to understanding their meaning. Educators can craft targeted instruction that supports students' growth as skilled readers by breaking down this strand into its subcomponents—phonological awareness, decoding (phonics), sight word recognition, and spelling patterns. Here's how to best use this strand in literacy instruction.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in spoken language. It is the first skill students must develop before they can decode written words. Teachers should focus on activities that help students recognize and work with individual sounds, syllables, and rhymes in words.

Best Practices:

- **Activities:** Engage students with rhyming games, syllable clapping, and sound segmentation. For example, ask students to say the word “bat” and then identify the first sound: /b/. Gradually move to more complex tasks, such as blending sounds to form words.
- **Songs and Rhymes:** Nursery rhymes and songs can reinforce sound patterns in a fun and memorable way.

Why It's Important:

Phonological awareness lays the groundwork for decoding, helping students hear sounds corresponding to letters and letter combinations, essential for fluency in reading.

Decoding through Phonics Instruction

Once students have a solid understanding of phonological awareness, they can begin learning how to decode words by connecting sounds to letters, a process known as phonics. Phonics instruction teaches students how to use letter-sound relationships to read unfamiliar words.

Best Practices:

- **Systematic Phonics:** Provide explicit, systematic phonics instruction that moves from simple to complex. Start with teaching the most common letter-sound relationships, such as consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words like “cat” and “dog,” before progressing to more complex patterns like vowel teams or consonant blends.
- **Word Families:** Teach students to recognize common word families (e.g., -at, -ing, -ed) to help them decode a group of words with similar patterns.
- **Practice:** Encourage students to practice decoding through controlled texts emphasizing the phonetic rules they are learning. Use decodable books that match students’ phonics knowledge, helping them build confidence as they sound out words.

Why It’s Important:

Decoding enables students to read unfamiliar words by sounding them out, a crucial skill for becoming an independent reader. Mastery of phonics also supports spelling and writing skills.

Teaching Spelling Patterns to Enhance Word Recognition

Understanding spelling patterns is essential to word recognition, as it helps students recognize groups of words that share similar letter patterns. Spelling patterns are rules or

conventions that guide how words are constructed and recognizing them helps students read and write more efficiently.

Best Practices:

- **Explicit Instruction:** Teach students common spelling patterns such as consonant blends (e.g., "bl," "st"), vowel digraphs (e.g., "ea," "ai"), and suffixes (e.g., "-ing," "-ed").
- **Word Sorts:** Use word sorts to help students identify and categorize words with similar patterns. For example, sort words by their vowel sounds (short a vs. long a) or by their endings (-ing vs. -ed).
- **Spelling Practice:** Encourage students to practice spelling words that follow their learning patterns. This reinforces their ability to decode and spell unfamiliar words.

Why It's Important:

Spelling patterns give students tools for recognizing various words that follow predictable rules. This helps them read and write more effectively and supports their overall language development.

Develop Sight Word Recognition

Not all words follow predictable phonetic patterns, and some words (like “the,” “have,” or “said”) must be recognized by sight. Sight word recognition is the ability to instantly identify high-frequency words without decoding them. Fluency in recognizing sight words is critical for reading speed and comprehension, as it allows readers to focus on understanding the text rather than getting stuck on individual words.

Best Practices:

- **Sight Word Lists:** Introduce sight words using high-frequency word lists such as the Dolch or Fry. Focus on teaching the most common sight words, then integrate them into reading practice.
- **Repetition and Review:** Repeated exposure reinforces sight word recognition. Use flashcards, word walls, and interactive games like Bingo or memory matching to keep students engaged while practicing.
- **Contextual Practice:** Encourage students to practice sight words in context by reading simple sentences or passages that include familiar words. This helps students understand how sight words are used in meaningful ways.

Why It's Important:

Sight word recognition helps students read more fluently. By recognizing common words instantly, students can maintain their reading flow without pausing to decode every word, which leads to better overall comprehension.

Monitor Progress and Adjust Instruction

Word recognition is a skill that develops over time, and students may need support in different areas depending on their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers should continuously assess students' progress in each word recognition component and adjust instruction accordingly.

Best Practices:

- **Formative Assessments:** Use running records, word recognition tests, and phonics assessments to track students' ability to decode, recognize sight words, and apply spelling patterns.
- **Differentiation:** To support struggling readers, offer targeted interventions, such as additional phonics practice or one-on-one sight word review. For more advanced

readers, they provide enrichment activities that build on their existing word recognition skills.

Why It's Important:

Ongoing assessment allows teachers to identify areas where students may need additional support and help ensure that each student is progressing in their word recognition development.

Using the Word Recognition strand of Hollis Scarborough's Reading Rope as a foundation for literacy instruction helps build the essential skills students need to read fluently and with comprehension. By focusing on phonological awareness, decoding (phonics), sight word recognition, and spelling patterns, educators can provide students with the tools to become confident and skilled readers. The key is to offer systematic, engaging, and differentiated instruction that supports all learners as they build their word recognition abilities. Through consistent practice and targeted teaching, students will strengthen their reading skills and develop a lifelong love of reading.

Chapter 3- The Reading Rope: Language Comprehension

The Reading Rope: Language Comprehension

The Language Comprehension strand of Hollis Scarborough's Reading Rope is a vital component of literacy instruction, focusing on the skills students need to understand, interpret, and derive meaning from text. While word recognition helps students decode and recognize words, language comprehension enables them to make sense of the words in context. This strand encompasses a range of interconnected skills, including vocabulary development, background knowledge, listening comprehension, syntax (grammar and sentence structure), and text structure. In literacy instruction, it's essential to target these skills together, as they all work together to help

students understand and analyze what they read. Here's how to best use the Language Comprehension strand in literacy instruction.

Vocabulary: Build Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary development is one of the most critical aspects of language comprehension. A strong vocabulary allows students to understand and analyze complex texts, and it supports reading comprehension by giving students the tools to interpret new information.

Best Practices:

- **Explicit Vocabulary Instruction:** Introduce new words through direct teaching, using the word's meaning and its context. For instance, when reading a story, explain unfamiliar words before or during reading and connect them to students' prior knowledge.
- **Word Maps and Semantic Gradients:** Use word maps to define new vocabulary regarding synonyms, antonyms, and context. Introduce semantic gradients (scales of word intensity) to help students understand the nuances of words. For example, in a lesson on emotions, students could examine the differences between "happy," "content," and "ecstatic."
- **Contextual Learning:** Encourage students to infer word meanings from context. For example, when encountering a new word in a sentence, ask students to think about the surrounding words and the overall meaning of the passage.
- **Interactive Activities:** Use games like word sorts, vocabulary journals, and flashcards to help students internalize new vocabulary. Encourage students to use new words when speaking and writing.

Why It's Important:

Vocabulary knowledge directly impacts reading comprehension. The more words a student knows, the easier for them to understand what they are reading. A robust vocabulary also enhances students' ability to express themselves in speaking and writing.

Background Knowledge: Activate and Expand Background Knowledge

Background or prior knowledge is the information and experiences students bring to the reading process. Students with strong background knowledge related to the text can make connections, infer meanings, and better understand complex ideas.

Best Practices:

- **Pre-Reading Activities:** Before diving into a new text, activate students' prior knowledge by asking questions about the theme, topic, or key concepts. For example, before reading a story about the ocean, ask students about their experiences with the beach or what they know about marine animals.
- **Building Background Knowledge:** Use various materials, such as videos, pictures, or short articles, to help students build relevant background knowledge before reading. For example, if students are about to read a historical novel, introduce them to the historical period through multimedia resources.
- **Connect to Real-Life Experiences:** Encourage students to make connections between the text and their own lives. This builds comprehension and deepens students' engagement with the text.

Why It's Important:

Background knowledge allows students to make sense of new information by relating it to what they already know. It also helps them fill in gaps when encountering unfamiliar concepts or vocabulary, making comprehension smoother and more natural.

Verbal Reasoning: Improve Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is closely linked to reading comprehension, and both are essential for understanding language. Students need to be able to listen to, process and understand spoken language before successfully reading and comprehending written language.

Best Practices:

- **Read Aloud:** Regularly read aloud to students, modeling fluent reading while engaging them in discussions about the story. Encourage students to listen actively, asking them questions to check for understanding and encouraging them to ask questions about the story.
- **Interactive Discussions:** After reading aloud, hold class discussions where students can share their thoughts, ask questions, and analyze the text. This helps students strengthen their ability to listen and comprehend spoken language while simultaneously improving their critical thinking skills.
- **Story Retelling and Summarizing:** Have students retell the story in their own words or summarize key points. This reinforces their understanding and helps them organize the information they've heard.

Why It's Important:

Listening comprehension skills lay the foundation for reading comprehension. By actively listening to and processing spoken language, students gain the skills to understand text when they read it themselves.

Language Structures: Teach Syntax and Sentence Structure

Syntax refers to the rules that govern sentence structure and word order. A strong understanding of syntax helps students understand how sentences are put together and how grammar conveys meaning.

Best Practices:

- **Explicit Grammar Instruction:** Teach students about sentence structure, including recognizing different sentence types (e.g., simple, compound, complex). Help them identify subject-verb agreement, punctuation, and sentence parts.
- **Sentence Reconstruction:** Use activities where students rearrange words or phrases to form grammatically correct sentences. This reinforces their understanding of syntax and helps them see how changing word order can alter meaning.
- **Sentence Expansion:** Teach students how to expand simple sentences into more complex ones by adding adjectives, adverbs, or additional clauses. For example, turn “The dog ran” into “The big brown dog ran quickly through the park.”

Why It’s Important:

Understanding sentence structure allows students to interpret more complex texts. When students grasp how sentences are formed and how they convey meaning, they become more adept at understanding intricate ideas within reading materials.

Literacy Knowledge: Teach Text Structure and Genre

Different types of texts- narratives, informational texts, or persuasive writing—follow distinct structures. Teaching students to recognize and understand text structures helps them make sense of the text and anticipate what they’ll encounter as they read.

Best Practices:

- **Identify Text Types:** Help students identify different genres (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, poetry) and understand their unique structures. For example, teach them how informational texts are often structured with headings, subheadings, and bullet points.
- **Graphic Organizers:** Use graphic organizers such as story maps, Venn diagrams, or compare-and-contrast charts to help students visualize the structure of the text. This allows them to understand how ideas are organized and how different parts of the text relate.
- **Teach Text Features:** In nonfiction texts, teach students how to use features like indexes, glossaries, charts, and diagrams to aid in understanding.

Why It's Important:

Understanding text structure allows students to navigate complex texts more efficiently. When students recognize a text's framework, they can more effectively predict, interpret, and summarize its content.

Monitor Progress and Provide Feedback

Language comprehension skills develop gradually and are influenced by factors such as students' prior knowledge, vocabulary base, and ability to process complex syntax. Therefore, it's essential to assess and adjust instruction regularly based on students' needs.

Best Practices:

- **Formative Assessments:** Monitor student progress through ongoing assessments, such as reading comprehension quizzes, discussions, and written reflections. These assessments can reveal which areas of language comprehension need further attention.

- **Feedback:** Provide timely, specific feedback to help students refine their comprehension strategies. For instance, additional vocabulary exercises or one-on-one support can be provided if a student struggles to understand vocabulary in context.

Why It's Important:

Regular monitoring and feedback help teachers identify areas where students need additional support. Adjusting instruction based on these insights ensures all students progress toward complete comprehension skills.

The Language Comprehension strand of Hollis Scarborough's Reading Rope is key to effective literacy instruction. By focusing on vocabulary development, background knowledge, listening comprehension, syntax, and text structure, teachers can provide students with the skills they need to understand and interpret texts across various genres. A comprehensive approach to teaching language comprehension will equip students to become proficient, thoughtful readers and thinkers, prepared to navigate the complexities of both academic and everyday texts. Educators can support their students' growth into skilled, independent readers by weaving these elements together.

Chapter 4- The Writing Rope

The Writing Rope

Joan Sedita's Writing Rope is a structured, research-based model for teaching writing that emphasizes the complexity of writing as a multifaceted process requiring explicit, systematic instruction. It draws on the metaphor of a rope with multiple strands that, when woven together, create strong, proficient writers. Sedita's Writing Rope highlights the importance of integrating various skills and strategies to develop students' writing proficiency.

Integrated Skills and Strategies

1. Focus on Multiple Components of Writing

The Writing Rope model breaks writing instruction into five key strands that work together:

- Critical Thinking: Generating ideas, planning, and organizing content.
- Syntax (Sentence Structure): Writing clear, coherent, and varied sentences.
- Writing Craft: Using voice, tone, and style appropriate for the audience and purpose.
- Spelling and Transcription: Mastering spelling, punctuation, and handwriting/keyboarding.
- Text Structure: Understanding and applying different structures for various genres and purposes.

This comprehensive approach underscores that writing is not a single skill but a combination of interrelated processes.

Research-Based Instructional Framework

Sedita's Writing Rope is aligned with cognitive science and evidence-based literacy research. It parallels the structure of Scarborough's Reading Rope, which integrates word recognition and language comprehension. Sedita's model helps students strengthen all aspects of their writing skills by simultaneously addressing multiple writing strands.

Emphasis on Explicit and Systematic Instruction

The Writing Rope stresses that students, especially struggling writers, benefit from explicitly teaching each strand. This method includes modeling, guided practice, and opportunities for independent application, ensuring students gain mastery in every component of the writing process.

Integration of Cognitive and Language Skills

Writing is a cognitive-intensive task. The model highlights the need to develop executive functioning skills such as planning, revising, self-monitoring, and language skills like vocabulary and syntax. By weaving these together, students build the capacity for clear, purposeful, and effective writing.

Practical Applications for Teachers

Sedita's Writing Rope provides a structured, actionable guide for teachers to plan and implement writing instruction. It supports differentiated instruction, scaffolding for diverse learners, and alignment with standards like the Common Core. Teachers can use this model to develop targeted interventions for struggling writers while reinforcing skills for all students.

Joan Sedita's Writing Rope breaks down writing into five interconnected strands that work together to develop skilled and confident writers. Each strand represents an essential component of writing instruction, and understanding these strands helps educators provide comprehensive support for students.

Strands of the Writing Rope

Critical Thinking (Generating and Organizing Ideas)

This strand involves the cognitive processes required for idea generation, planning, organizing, and structuring content. It encompasses brainstorming, selecting relevant information, and determining the purpose and audience for writing. Critical thinking helps students develop coherent and purposeful writing.

Examples:

- Brainstorming key points for a persuasive essay on environmental conservation.

- Creating an outline for a narrative that includes a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Using graphic organizers like mind maps or storyboards to organize ideas before drafting.

Syntax (Sentence Structure)

This strand focuses on sentence construction, including grammar, word order, and using varied sentence types (simple, compound, complex) to create fluent and coherent writing. Mastery of syntax helps students write clear and grammatically correct sentences.

Examples:

- Writing a variety of sentence types: "The dog barked loudly." (simple) vs. "The dog barked loudly, and the cat ran away." (compound).
- Using conjunctions, clauses, and modifiers to improve sentence complexity and meaning.
- Avoid common grammatical errors, such as run-on sentences or fragments.

Text Structure (Genre and Organization)

Text structure refers to the organizational patterns and frameworks used to develop different types of writing (narrative, expository, persuasive). It includes the introduction, body, conclusion, and genre-specific elements like thesis statements or topic sentences.

Examples:

- Writing a narrative with an apparent problem, climax, and resolution.
- Crafting a persuasive essay with an introduction that states a thesis, body paragraphs that present evidence, and a conclusion that restates the main argument.

- Using headings and subheadings in an informational piece for clarity and flow.

Writing Craft (Style and Voice)

The writing craft is the artistic elements that make writing engaging and appropriate for the intended audience and purpose. It includes tone, word choice, imagery, and rhetorical techniques that enhance the writer's voice and style.

Examples:

- Using descriptive language to create vivid imagery: "The sunset painted the sky in hues of orange and purple."
- Adopting a persuasive tone when writing an opinion piece: "Imagine a world where everyone recycles—together, we can make it a reality."
- Varying sentence length and using rhetorical questions for effect in an argumentative essay.

Spelling and Transcription (Mechanics and Conventions)

This strand includes the mechanical aspects of writing, such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, handwriting, and keyboarding. It ensures that writing adheres to the rules of written language, contributing to clarity and readability.

Examples:

- Correct spelling of homophones like "their" vs. "there" vs. "they're."
- Using proper punctuation: "Let's eat, Grandma!" vs. "Let's eat Grandma!"
- Typing assignments efficiently using appropriate keyboarding techniques

By weaving these strands together, Sedita's Writing Rope ensures a comprehensive approach to writing instruction, strengthening students' overall writing proficiency.

Conclusion and Implication

Introduction

This study and project provides secondary educators with a simple and efficient tool to help emergent readers improve their literacy skills. This conclusion summarizes key findings, implications for secondary education, impact on technology in education, limitations of the study and project, and recommendations.

Summary of Key Findings

Importance of Literacy Skills

Literacy skills are fundamental in achieving academic success and career growth, enabling individuals to engage actively in society. Even after improvements to primary education, secondary school students continue to face substantial difficulties with reading and comprehension.

Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS)

This curriculum product recommends school districts establish MTSS as a framework to deliver targeted interventions and support to academically struggling students. Through MTSS, schools can shift from a reactive method to a proactive system, which enables immediate identification and assistance for struggling students.

Challenges Faced by Educators

The research identified that many general education teachers lack the training and resources to implement MTSS effectively. This gap leads to increased service requests without sufficient documentation or understanding of student needs.

Curriculum Product Focus

This curriculum product investigated the causes of secondary literacy deficiencies and the challenges both students and educators encounter while providing successful instructional methods and interventions for classroom use. Use of this product can alleviate the barriers many secondary educators face in their attempts to help students reach proficient literacy skills.

Significance of Curriculum Product

This curriculum product guides educational practitioners, policymakers, and researchers toward successful methods for enhancing secondary students' literacy achievements. The curriculum product delivers actionable tools and techniques for teachers to support students facing literacy challenges.

Theoretical Framework

Situational Leadership Theory guides the study and online program content as it stresses the importance of flexible leadership approaches that respond to students' particular needs and educational settings.

Implications for Secondary Education

Addressing the Gap in Literacy Skills

Filling Critical Gaps: Secondary students who face difficulties with basic reading abilities may see their performance suffer across all subjects in school. Targeted literacy tools enable students to develop essential skills that promote their academic success in high school and future educational pursuits.

Tailored Support: Emergent reader products address students' specific needs as they encounter difficulties with decoding, comprehension, vocabulary, or fluency. The product makes instructional content suitable for students' developmental stages.

Empowering Educators

Evidence-Based Practices: Educators who utilize resources combining evidence-based strategies can apply scientific methods to enhance their classroom teaching approaches.

Teacher Guidance: This product delivers professional development to teachers, enhancing their ability to teach reading while enabling them to create differentiated instruction and measure student achievement. It offers frameworks designed to help emergent readers succeed effectively.

Reduced Teacher Burnout: The availability of ready-made, high-quality materials and strategies allows educators to minimize their preparation time to dedicate more effort to teaching, which can help reduce burnout and stress levels.

Promoting Equity

Access for All Students: The product provides resources for emergent readers, supporting equal educational opportunities for students from various backgrounds, including learners with disabilities and English as a second language students.

Differentiation and Inclusivity: Designing products that support differentiated instruction allows teachers to meet diverse learning needs while fostering an inclusive classroom environment where students grow at their own pace.

Enhancing Engagement and Motivation

Interactive Features: Reading education becomes more captivating when products include multimedia components like videos, games, and interactive texts. Students who find traditional learning methods challenging will maintain their motivation and become active participants in their education through these approaches.

Building Confidence: When students improve their reading skills, they become more self-assured about their capabilities, which leads to an ongoing cycle of learning and enhanced self-efficacy

Improving Long-Term Academic Success

Better Academic Outcomes: Early and consistent literacy support through the product will improve academic achievement across different subjects because reading comprehension is fundamental to learning in every field.

Preparation for Future Success: Strong literacy skills are required for success in higher education and career environments. The product becomes crucial for students' future preparation when it supports emergent readers during their secondary education years.

Ongoing Assessment and Improvement

Continuous Feedback: When the product provides monitoring tools for student progress through assessments or analytics, teachers can track student growth and adapt their teaching methods.

Iterative Improvement: Educator feedback enables product refinement, which helps align student and teacher needs while ensuring the product stays current with literacy research and best practices.

A product for secondary educators to support emergent readers can lead to better literacy results while enabling teachers and promoting fairness among students, which helps them succeed throughout their academic journey. By addressing key educational deficiencies, this intervention product provides equal opportunity for all students to acquire essential academic abilities that lead to success in further education.

Implications for Technology in Education

Personalized and Adaptive Learning

Individualized Instruction: Technology enables educators to develop customized learning experiences that address each student's educational requirements and capabilities. Adaptive learning platforms respond to student progress by modifying content to narrow achievement gaps.

Targeted Interventions: Data analytics enables educators to rapidly recognize students requiring support in literacy areas like decoding, comprehension, and fluency so they can administer precise interventions. Students who receive assistance tailored to their highest need areas can advance at their own speeds.

Enhanced Engagement and Motivation

Interactive Tools: Students find reading more interesting using educational apps, games, and interactive e-books. These resources maintain student motivation through immediate feedback and gamified experiences alongside multimedia content, which proves more attractive than conventional teaching techniques.

Multimodal Learning: Technology enables multimodal learning by integrating text, visual, and audio/video elements. This approach allows multiple learning methods that accommodate different styles (auditory, visual, kinesthetic) to assist emergent readers effectively.

Increased Access to Resources

Rich Content Library: Digital technology enables students to access multiple types of digital texts, audiobooks, and literacy tools that benefit struggling readers and advanced learners. Educators can effortlessly modify these resources to align with the requirements of different classroom settings.

Equitable Access: Students in remote or underserved regions gain access to quality literacy instruction through technology, which overcomes resource scarcity and helps close educational equity gaps.

Efficient Assessment and Data-Driven Decisions

Real-Time Feedback: Technology allows educators to assess student work instantly and deliver feedback without delay. Through real-time feedback, educators can promptly discover student difficulties, enabling them to modify their teaching methods quickly to prevent any student from falling behind.

Data Analytics: Digital tools supply educators with performance data for individual students and entire classes through time-based tracking and analysis of student progress. The collected data helps educators create better lesson plans and curriculum designs while making instruction more effective in addressing student needs.

Supporting Diverse Learners

Differentiation: Technological tools and learning materials can be customized to satisfy the educational requirements of various students, such as those with disabilities, English language learners, and students with dyslexia. Text-to-speech tools alongside speech-to-text programs help students overcome difficulties with reading and writing tasks.

Accessibility Features: Educational platforms contain accessibility features, such as adjustable text size options and audio narration, to improve student content engagement.

Collaboration and Communication

Collaborative Learning: Technology allows students to participate in reading and writing activities together through platforms that support group projects, shared documents, and interactive

discussions. Through this approach, students gain more profound content insights while simultaneously developing their ability to communicate effectively.

Teacher Collaboration: Through technology, educators can exchange lesson plans, teaching resources, and instructional strategies with their colleagues. Professional development platforms combined with online communities help teachers share their best practices, which leads to better literacy instruction for all students.

Supporting Literacy Outside the Classroom

Homework and Self-Directed Learning: Technology provides students with opportunities to participate in literacy activities beyond school boundaries. Educational apps and platforms enable independent practice, reading assignments, and virtual book clubs. Students can strengthen their knowledge base through activities after school hours.

Family Engagement: Digital platforms and applications enable parents and guardians to actively participate in their children's literacy development. Digital tools that enable progress tracking empower families to provide more effective support for their children's home learning.

Continuous Professional Development for Educators

Ongoing Training: Through technology, educators gain access to professional development resources and training programs, which enable them to remain updated with the latest research tools and strategies in literacy instruction.

Instant Resources: Educators gain immediate access to updated teaching materials and lesson plans to enhance their literacy instruction methods while staying current with the latest educational practices.

Potential Challenges and Considerations

Digital Divide: Technology access remains uneven among different student populations. Schools must provide fair access to devices and internet services to students from low-income backgrounds or those living in rural communities.

Teacher Readiness: Teachers require appropriate training and support to harness the full potential of technological tools that deliver numerous benefits. Teachers will find that technology remains unused or ineffective without proper professional development.

Over-reliance on Technology: Technology functions best when it supports traditional teaching methods instead of replacing them. Educators need to maintain a balance between using digital tools and promoting crucial in-person interactions and critical thinking exercises in their classrooms.

Technology integration in literacy instruction can significantly improve student learning results while delivering personalized educational experiences that boost literacy outcomes. Technology enables customized learning experiences while offering effective data tracking and improved resource access to help educators and pupils reach literacy objectives. Effective implementation of technology in literacy instruction requires educators to tackle equity issues while delivering professional development and integrating technology into a comprehensive instructional strategy.

Limitations of the Program

Insufficient Professional Development

Lack of Comprehensive Training: Educators may not receive sufficient instruction to properly implement novel literacy tools and technology in their teaching. They need ongoing

professional development to implement new teaching strategies, tools, and curricula properly because their classroom effectiveness diminishes without it.

One-Time Training: Without additional training sessions or refresher courses following the initial training, teachers can forget critical techniques and lose confidence in applying new methods. Long-term success depends on providing consistent professional development and support.

Teacher Resistance to Change

Comfort with Traditional Methods: Teachers who have long relied on traditional methods often resist new instructional approaches when they see them as unfamiliar or demanding extra time. Resisting new teaching methods can prevent evidence-based innovative literacy practices from being implemented.

Fear of Technology: Instructors who lack confidence in technology face challenges when trying to implement digital literacy tools into their teaching. Their lack of confidence leads teachers to either underuse or avoid tech tools, which restricts students' access to these educational resources.

Varying Levels of Teacher Readiness

Differing Skill Sets: Teachers' knowledge about literacy instruction, ease with technology use, and capacity to tailor instruction to meet diverse student needs all differ. Certain teachers possess advanced literacy teaching skills, while others lack the essential knowledge or methods to assist struggling readers effectively.

Inconsistent Implementation: The success of a literacy program relies entirely on its consistent and precise implementation. Curriculum delivery becomes inconsistent when teachers

who lack proper training or misinterpret guidelines fail to execute the program as intended, resulting in discrepancies in student performance.

Overloading Teachers

Time Constraints: Educators deal with demanding workloads that include teaching large classes and performing administrative tasks, among other responsibilities. These restrictions restrict their ability to pursue professional development or provide personalized student support. Limited time also makes it impossible for teachers to completely adopt or integrate new programs into their everyday teaching practices.

Burnout: Teachers' workloads become particularly overwhelming in high-need schools or districts where they are already working at their limits. Teachers face burnout when they manage full classrooms while meeting academic standards and addressing students' varying needs. Reduced motivation due to overwhelming work pressures diminishes educators' ability to participate in new literacy programs.

Lack of Support Systems

Limited Collaboration Opportunities: Teachers in numerous schools face limited chances to collaborate with colleagues to exchange literacy teaching strategies or address instructional challenges. They work in isolation without collaboration, which prevents them from gaining valuable insights from more experienced peers about literacy teaching methods.

Insufficient Support Staff: The presence of support staff members like literacy coaches and specialists determines the success of a literacy program. When support staff positions remain unfunded or nonexistent, teachers must handle program implementation alone, intensifying their struggle to support every student effectively.

Inadequate Differentiation for Diverse Learners

One-Size-Fits-All Approach: Literacy programs fail to deliver optimal outcomes when they lack sufficient differentiation for students from diverse learning backgrounds, such as English language learners and those with disabilities or reading difficulties. Teachers need additional training to differentiate instruction so that every student can access and benefit from the program.

Limited Resources for Special Populations: Students with unique literacy requirements need tailored and more intense instructional support. Students will struggle without adequate support if their educational program lacks accommodation for their needs and their teachers miss out on special education strategy training.

Lack of Data-Driven Instruction

Inadequate Use of Assessment Data: Educational training programs may fail to teach teachers the necessary skills to use formative assessments and data-driven methods to track student progress and make instructional changes. Continuous assessment is essential to identify students who require additional support and determine which instructional strategies produce the best results.

Data Overload: Teachers can feel swamped when faced with excessive data. Teachers need proper guidance to interpret and utilize data for instruction because they struggle to maximize available information without it.

Misalignment Between Program and Classroom Reality

Curriculum Mismatch: The classroom requirements may not match the literacy program because it fails to address specific student needs, such as cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Teachers will struggle to make the program content relevant and engaging for their students if the program fails to consider these factors.

Time Constraints: Literacy programs can demand more instructional time than teachers can dedicate to literacy teaching. Teachers often manage several subjects during the school day, resulting in inadequate program implementation time.

Teacher Evaluation and Accountability Pressure

High-Stakes Testing: Although literacy programs emphasize critical thinking and reading skills development, teachers often receive pressure to concentrate on test preparation instead. The emphasis becomes centered around test scores at the expense of developing permanent literacy abilities.

Focus on Short-Term Results: School districts' or policymakers' drive for quick outcomes often results in short-term improvements taking precedence over sustained literacy development. Educators frequently feel pressured to implement immediate solutions at the expense of promoting substantial literacy growth.

Budgetary Constraints

Funding for Professional Development: Due to limited budgets, schools might struggle to offer continuous professional development programs for educators. The lack of proper training and resources prevents teachers from effectively implementing the program.

Resource Allocation: Teachers face implementation challenges in literacy programs when schools have restricted access to materials like textbooks, technology, and staff resources.

Educator training limitations show the necessity of continuous professional development, sufficient resources, and teacher support systems. If we overcome the existing challenges, literacy programs will have a meaningful and lasting impact on student learning outcomes.

Educator training limitations require comprehensive professional development, a support system, and adequate resources to enable literacy program implementation. By tackling these

obstacles, educators can create literacy programs that produce sustainable improvements in student learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Strengthening Educator Training and Readiness

Provide Comprehensive and Ongoing Professional Development

- Create structured training programs consisting of multiple sessions that surpass one-time workshops so teachers can fully grasp and apply literacy strategies effectively.
- Maintain teacher engagement by delivering continuous coaching sessions and refresher courses emphasizing best practices.
- Foster peer collaboration and professional learning communities (PLCs) so teachers can exchange challenges and insights and celebrate successes.

Address Teacher Resistance to Change

- Design professional development and program implementation plans integrating teacher feedback and perspectives.
- Demonstrate the program's benefits through classroom success cases to gain teacher support.
- Experienced educators should serve as mentors to help their colleagues implement new literacy strategies in their teaching.

Improve Technology Training for Educators

- Provide educators with practical training on literacy technology tools to enhance their confidence while making classroom integration smoother.
- The program should feature an intuitive interface and detailed instructional steps for teachers who find digital tools challenging.

- Provide ongoing tech support and troubleshooting assistance.

Enhancing Program Effectiveness and Scalability

Ensure Differentiation for Diverse Learners

- The program requires flexible teaching methods to support English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and those who struggle with reading.
- Use culturally relevant teaching materials to connect with students from different backgrounds.
- Implement adaptive learning features based on student progress and individual requirements.

Align with Classroom Realities

- The program needs to align with current curriculum guidelines while remaining adaptable for use in everyday teaching practices.
- Teachers can save lesson planning time by receiving clear lesson plans and pacing guides along with implementation models.
- Create brief yet effective educational interventions that schools with tight schedules can quickly implement into their daily routines.

Supporting Data-Driven Instruction

Improve the Use of Assessments and Feedback

- Develop easy-to-use assessment tools that allow teachers to monitor student progress efficiently.
- Train teachers on interpreting data to guide instruction and personalization interventions.

- Ensure that data collection is manageable and not overwhelming, reducing teacher workload.

Focus on Long-Term Literacy Growth

- Shift emphasis from short-term test preparation to deep, meaningful literacy skill development.
- Implement longitudinal studies to track student literacy progress and refine instructional strategies accordingly.
- Encourage schools to set realistic, developmentally appropriate literacy goals rather than focusing only on immediate performance metrics.

Addressing Budgetary and Resource Constraints

Sustainable Funding for Professional Development and Implementation

- Advocate for state and district-level funding to ensure all educators receive proper training.
- Explore public-private partnerships to provide technology and instructional resources at a lower cost.
- Offer tiered pricing models for schools with limited budgets to access essential literacy interventions.

Increase Support Staff and Literacy Specialists

- Schools should hire and train literacy coaches to support teachers and students directly.
- Advocate for smaller class sizes or more reading interventionists to ensure individualized attention for struggling readers.
- Integrate volunteer or peer-tutoring programs to supplement teacher instruction.

Recommendations for Future Research

Conduct Longitudinal Studies on Program Effectiveness

- Investigate the long-term impact of the literacy program on student outcomes over multiple years.
- Study how different levels of teacher training affect student success in literacy.
- Examine whether improvements in early literacy led to higher academic performance in later grades.

Expand Research on Technology Integration in Literacy Instruction

- Assess which digital tools are most effective for different student populations.
- Study how artificial intelligence (AI) and adaptive learning platforms can personalize reading instruction.
- Investigate how hybrid models (in-person + digital) impact student engagement and learning outcomes.

Examine the Role of Socioeconomic Factors

- Research shows how access to literacy resources (books, technology, parental support) impacts program success.
- Identify strategies to bridge the literacy gap in underfunded schools.
- Investigate how community involvement (libraries, after-school programs) can support emergent readers.

The literacy program's effectiveness depends on resolving issues related to teacher preparation, program consistency, and support structures. Its success depends on continuous professional development, differentiated instruction, data-driven strategies, and sustainable funding models. Research must examine long-term effectiveness and technology integration while considering socioeconomic disparities to improve literacy instruction for every student.

Conclusion

Secondary educators working with emerging readers require comprehensive products and tools to support their teaching efforts. Emergent readers often enter middle and high school lacking basic literacy skills, which restricts their capacity for academic achievement and limits their future possibilities. If educators do not implement specific interventions, these students risk academic failure, heightening their likelihood of dropping out and diminishing their preparedness for future careers.

Educators gain the power to close learning gaps through a carefully structured literacy program that includes research-based approaches and technology-enhanced instructional tools. Through structured training, adaptive learning resources, and data-driven assessment tools, educators can provide personalized instruction that meets students individually while promoting measurable progress.

Through investment in quality resources, educators become more effective while student literacy development improves, guaranteeing that every student reaches confident reading proficiency. Secondary educators require a specific program for emergent readers because it is critical to establish equal educational outcomes and sustainable academic achievements.

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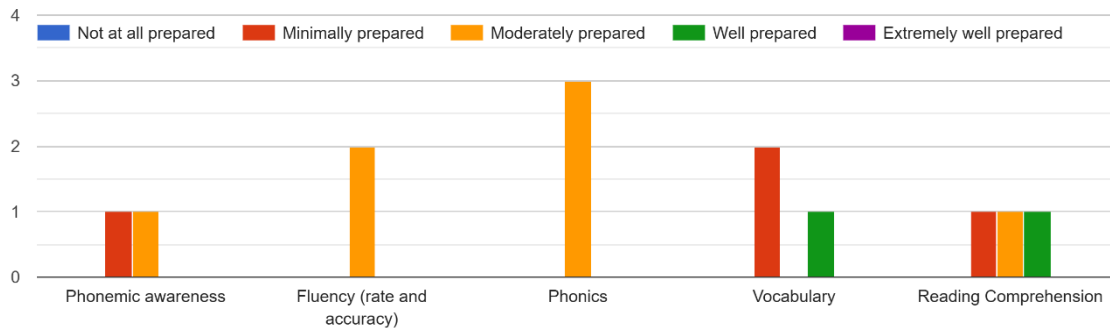
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Appendix A - Survey Questions / Result Graphs

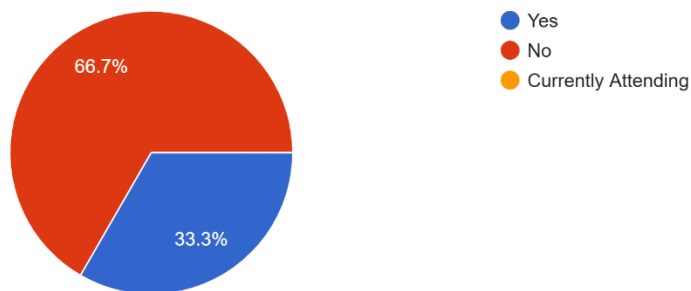
1. Where did you receive your teacher preparation training?
2. What current certificate(s) do you hold?
3. How prepared did you feel to teach the following to struggling readers after completing your teacher preparation program? [Phonemic Awareness, Fluency (rate and accuracy), Phonics, Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension] Potential answers: Not at all prepared, minimally prepared, moderately prepared, well prepared, extremely well prepared
4. Overall, how prepared did you feel to teach reading to struggling readers after completing your teacher preparation program? Likert Scale from 1(Not prepared) to 4 (Fully prepared)
5. How many years have you taught?
6. Have you attended any literacy-related professional development training sessions or workshops such as Orton Gillingham, Wilson Reading System, Reading Recovery, etc which significantly enhanced your ability to teach reading? (Yes, No, Currently attending)
8. Please rate how prepared you felt to teach the following to struggling readers after the following experiences: Undergraduate education course, Post-degree or graduate school course, student teaching (Internship), On the Job Experience, or Other: please list in #9
9. If you answered "other: please list" on question 8, please list below:
10. What are your biggest challenges in regard to teaching struggling readers?
11. If you could receive any additional training regarding teaching struggling readers, what areas would you like the training to cover?
12. Is Literacy Instruction a part of your curriculum at the level you are in as an educator?
13. What literacy program does your district/school currently have available for you to use?
14. Does your district/school allow you to deviate from the program they have purchased for you?
15. What is the time allotment for ELA standards and Literacy instruction/remediation in your school? (Answers range from 45 minutes to more than 90 minutes)

16. Is Literacy instruction or remediation done by a classroom teacher, or by an interventionist/specialist?

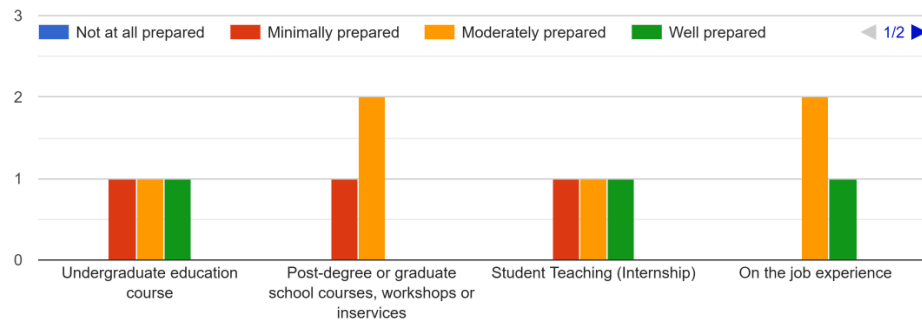
3. How prepared did you feel to teach the following to struggling readers after completing your teacher preparation program?



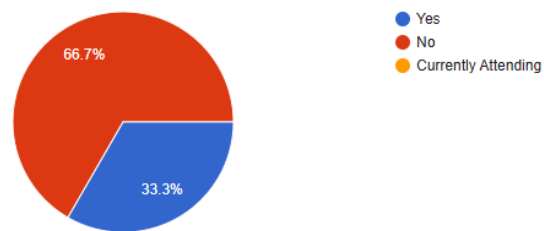
6. Have you attended any literacy-related professional development training sessions or workshops such as Orton Gillingham, Wilson Reading System, R...nificantly enhanced your ability to teach reading?
3 responses



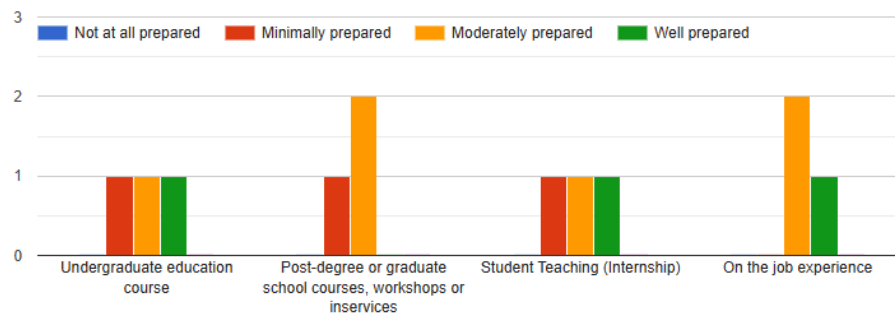
8. Please rate how prepared you felt to teach the following to struggling readers after the following experiences:



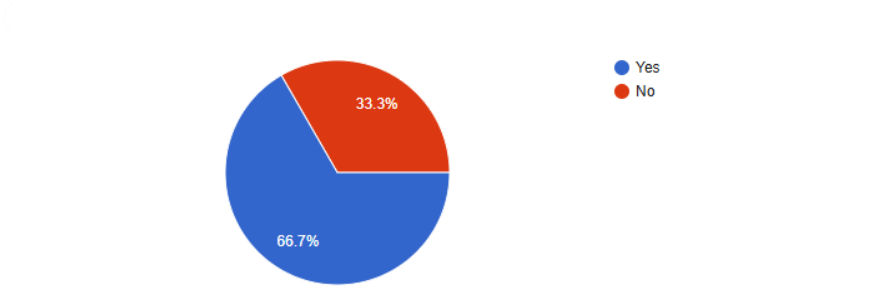
6. Have you attended any literacy-related professional development training sessions or workshops such as Orton Gillingham, Wilson Reading System, Reading Recovery, etc which significantly enhanced your ability to teach reading?



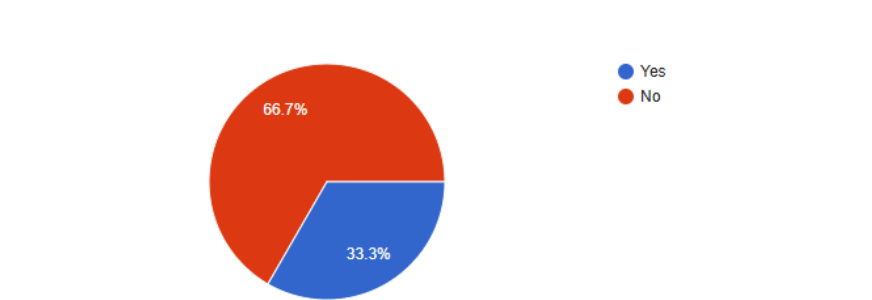
8. Please rate how prepared you felt to teach the following to struggling readers after the following experiences:



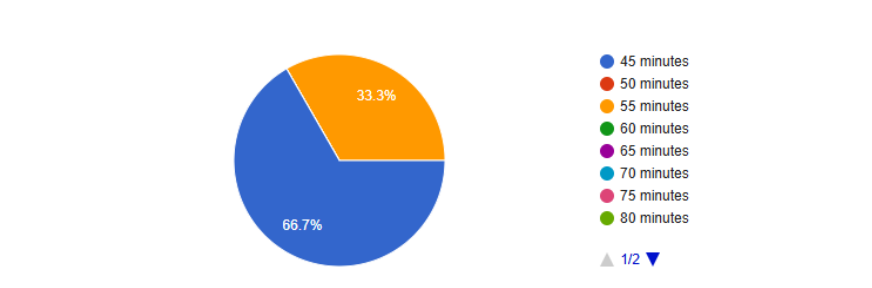
12. Is Literacy Instruction a part of your curriculum at the level you are in as an educator?



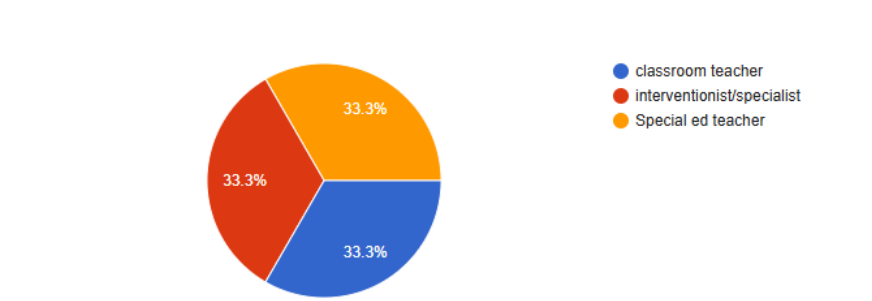
14. Does your district/school allow you to deviate from the program they have purchased for you?



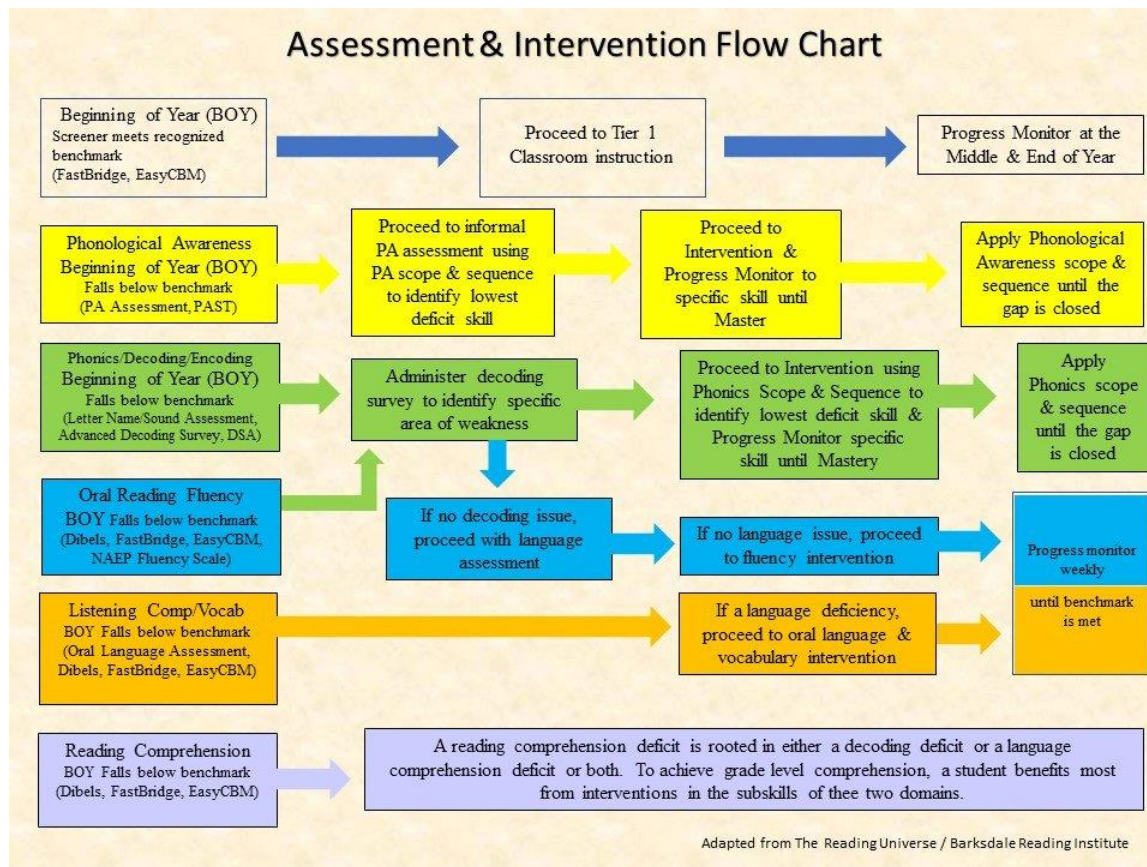
15. What is the time allotment for ELA standards and Literacy instruction/remediation in your school?



16. Is Literacy instruction or remediation done by a classroom teacher, or by an interventionist/specialist?



Appendix B - Literacy Assessment & Instruction Flow Chart



Appendix C - Sample Lesson Plan

Decoding the Digraph "fl"

Target Group: Students struggling with decoding words containing the digraph 'fl'

Grade Level: 6-8 (Adaptable for other secondary levels)

Time Allotment: 20-30 minutes

Learning Objective: Students will accurately decode and read words containing the digraph 'fl'

Materials:

- Whiteboard or small whiteboard/dry-erase sleeves
- Markers or dry-erase markers
- Flashcards with 'fl' words (e.g., flip, flat, flow, flame, fly, floor)
- Short, simple sentences with 'fl' words (written on strips or whiteboard)

Procedure:

1. Review and Explicit Instruction (5-7 minutes):

- **Quick Review:** "Today, we're going to work on the sound made by the letters 'f' and 'l' together. Remember, when these two letters are together, they make one sound."
- **Introduce/Reinforce 'fl':** Write 'fl' on the board. Say the sound clearly: /fl/.
- **Sound Practice:** Have students repeat the sound several times.
- **Word Examples:** Write a few simple 'fl' words on the board (e.g., fly, flat). Pronounce each word slowly, emphasizing the /fl/ sound. Have students repeat the words.

2. Direct Practice with Flashcards (10-15 minutes):

- **Flashcard Drill:** Show students the flashcards one at a time.
 - Ask them to say the /fl/ sound and then read the entire word.
 - If a student struggles, break the word down: /fl/ - /i/ - /p/ (flip).
 - Repeat the word together.
- **Word Sorting (Optional):** If time allows, have students sort the flashcards into categories (e.g., short vowel sounds, long vowel sounds).

3. Application in Sentences (5-8 minutes):

- **Sentence Reading:** Present short, simple sentences with ‘fl’ words.
 - Example: "The flag can fly."
 - Example: "The floor is flat."
- **Choral Reading:** Read each sentence aloud together, emphasizing the ‘fl’ words.
- **Individual Reading:** Have students take turns reading sentences aloud.
- **Word Identification:** Have students identify the words containing the ‘fl’ sound within each sentence.

Differentiation:

- **For struggling students:**
 - Use fewer flashcards.
 - Focus on only a few target words.
 - Use visual aids (pictures of ‘fl’ words).
 - Provide one on one support.
- **For students who grasp the concept quickly:**
 - Introduce more complex ‘fl’ words.
 - Have them create their own sentences using ‘fl’ words.
 - Find the definitions of the words.

Assessment:

- Observe students' ability to pronounce the /fl/ sound and read ‘fl’ words.
- Note any specific words or sounds that students struggle with.
- Collect anecdotal data on student participation and progress.
- Have the students read a short list of words with the ‘fl’ digraph, and record the data.

Appendix D - Sample Spelling Feature Worksheet

Name: _____ *spell* Blend: fl _____

Word bank: Circle the **fl** in each word.

inflammation	shuffleboard	nonflammable	inflatable
reflexology	flameproof	reflectivity	riboflavins
cauliflower	fluctuational	flawlessness	conflict
flabbergasted	fluorocarbons	influential	camouflage

1, 2 or 3 syllable- yellow

4, 5 or 6 syllables- blue

ABC order

Unscramble

inflammation	fluctuational
flameproof	influential
flawlessness	shuffleboard
camouflage	cauliflower
reflexology	fluorocarbons

flabbergasted	
nonflammable	
riboflavins	
reflectivity	
inflatable	

emalf	ylfcl
etulf	galfer
yzoolf	elffip
elffoe	elfrup
xelfib	hetilf

Name

Spelling Feature: fl

Read the passage below and highlight words with "fl".

The Floating Classroom
from ReadWorks.org

"All aboard!" the captain yelled. She stood at the entrance of the small boat, her short, gray hair covered by a blue baseball cap that had "Cayuga Lake Floating Classroom" embroidered on the front. Laurel smiled at her as she stepped onto the boat with her two friends, Jack and Emilia, who were trailing behind. They fanned themselves with their notebooks as their classmates boarded the boat after them—the temperature was climbing up toward 90 degrees Fahrenheit. The trio found refuge in the shade that the boat's overhang provided.

After everyone had taken a seat on the deck of the boat, the captain rattled off the safety rules and plan for the day trip. Laurel's class was spending the day on Cayuga Lake in upstate New York to learn about water clarity, how to collect water samples, and even how to examine plant life. Captain Matthews, as she introduced herself, pointed to the life jackets that were hanging above them, and mentioned that everyone should always have a buddy in case anything happened to the boat.

"But let's get to the fun stuff, right?" the captain said into her microphone. Laurel and her friends cheered. They loved being out on the water—they often went over to Emilia's house, right on the shore of the lake, to go swimming and boating.

"First on the list today is testing the lake's water clarity," Captain Matthews said. She pulled out a small disk from behind her. The surface was divided into four black and white quadrants, and it was attached to a long, thick string. "This is a Secchi disk," she explained. "This string here is marked with yellow and red tape at half-meter intervals. We slowly lower the disk into the water until we can't see it any longer. Who wants to come up here and help me?" she asked. Everyone raised their hands. Jack was sitting closest to her, so the captain asked for him to come up and hold the string. "We always have two people administer the water clarity test, so we don't drop the Secchi disk into the water," explained Captain Matthews.

"But how does this measure water clarity?" Jack asked.

"Very good question," replied the captain. "Anyone have any ideas?" Mostly everyone remained silent, and a few shifted in their seats.

Then Emilia raised her hand. "I think I remember my mom saying something about how sunlight helps in measuring water clarity," she said. Her mother was an environmental science professor at Cornell University, near Cayuga Lake, and always told her interesting facts about the environment.

"Sure thing!" replied Captain Matthews. "The sunlight reflects off the disk so that we can see it even when it's in the water. But when the sunlight can no longer reach the disk, we can no longer see it. So depending on the water clarity, the sunlight can only travel so far through the water."

The captain and Jack began to lower the disk into the water. Finally, Jack said he could no longer see the disk, and the captain agreed. They read the measurement, and the tape revealed that the disk was six meters beneath the surface of the water.

As the captain and Jack tugged on the string to bring the disk back to the surface, Captain Matthews explained the importance of the measurement: "If the disk is at six meters, then that means the sunlight has to travel down to the disk and then back up to our eyes. So actually, the sunlight has traveled 12 meters. That's important to remember when studying photosynthesis and plant life down in the water."

Laurel had been quiet throughout the lesson so far. She wondered what else you could learn about aquatic life with such simple tools. Even though they still had an hour on the boat, she was already feeling like she didn't want to leave. And when Captain Matthews asked for a volunteer to help her collect water samples, Laurel's hand shot straight up.

Why is Laurel's class spending the day on Cayuga Lake in upstate New York?

Why does Captain Matthews want to lower a Secchi disk into the water?

Why does Laurel feel like she doesn't want to leave the boat?

Sample Spelling Feature Worksheet

Name _____ Spelling Feature: fl

Highlight affixes (prefixes & suffixes) in the words below. Sort the words into the correct columns.

Less than 3 Syllables	3 or 4 Syllables	5 or more Syllables

Add your own word in each category.

camouflageable	inflationary	fluoridation	flattery
camouflage	parainfluenza	inflation	fluctuate
inflammatory	fluorocarbon	flabbergasted	reflection

Name _____ Spelling Feature: fl

Elkonin (Sound) Boxes

flexible	fluctuate
floriculturist	inflation
conflict	parainfluenza
influential	camouflage
flatulent	flirtatiousness
affluent	flourish
inflammatory	reflection

Syllabication

Use 2 words above that you didn't put into sound boxes to identify the syllables.

Sample Spelling Feature Worksheet

Syllabication

Mark the vowels, then the consonants between the vowels, and finally place a line between letters where the syllables should break.

reflexology

camouflage

flabbergasted

flameproof

riboflavins

influential

reflectivity

fluorocarbons

nonflammable

fluctuational

inflatable

conflict