Top Ten Things that Every Literacy Leader (Administrator) Needs to Know

mdek12.org

Office of Curriculum and Instruction

Division of Literacy

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Fall 2025

VISION

To create a world-class educational system that gives students the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and the workforce, and to flourish as parents and citizens

MISSION

To provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global community

State Board of Education STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

1. **ALL** Students Proficient and Showing Growth in All Assessed Areas
2. **EVERY** Student Graduates from High School and is Ready for College and Career
3. **EVERY** Child Has Access to a High-Quality Early Childhood Program
4. **EVERY** School Has Effective Teachers and Leaders
5. **EVERY** Community Effectively Uses a World-Class Data System to Improve Student Outcomes
6. **EVERY** School and District is Rated “C” or Higher

The GOAT: Greatest *HITTER* of All Time

Initial Passing Percentage: 77.3% (Level 3)

Proficiency Percentage: 49.3% (Levels 4 and 5)

- **Confidence vs. Competence**: Will is confident, but he did not actually hit the ball. Likewise, passing does not always mean the student is proficient.
- **Reframing**: This is a *mental shift* to avoid facing where improvement is needed.
- **The Danger**: If we only celebrate "passing" and ignore the lack of proficiency, we might end up just like Will… never actually learning to hit the ball.

What was Will's initial goal? What is ours?

Reading proficiency predicts long-term academic achievement and is directly linked to career/college opportunities and success.

"We have a societal obligation to improve literacy because…"

Complete the sentence with ten (10) words or less.

Launch Activity: Literacy Leadership Truths for Administrators

Part 1: Silent Brainstorm (Alone)	Part 2: Pair & Share	Part 3: Group Gallery Walk & Discussion
3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes

• Reflect silently on the question: **"What should every principal know about teaching students to read and supporting struggling readers?"**
• Write one idea per sticky note or card — aiming for 3–5 ideas.
• Think deeply: Ideas may range from instructional strategies and materials to leadership mindsets, school-wide assessments and interventions, or staff development needs.
	• Pair up.
	• Share ideas from your silent brainstorm with each other.
	• Discuss common themes or surprising insights.
	• Choose the top 2–3 "must-know" ideas to share with the group.
		• Each pair posts their top ideas on chart paper (group by themes if possible).
		• Discussion Questions:
		  • What patterns are emerging?
		  • Are there any gaps or overlooked areas?
		  • What stands out as urgent or essential?
		  • How do these insights reflect or challenge our current practices?

*"If you were mentoring a brand-new principal tomorrow, what is **one literacy truth** you would make sure they understood before walking into their school?"*

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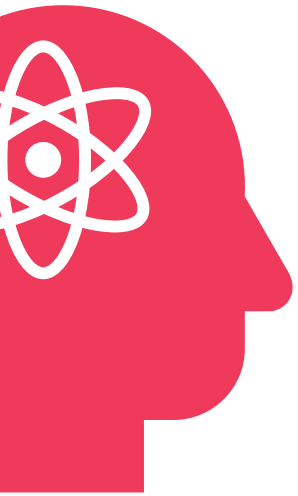
Top Ten Session Goals

1. What is the Science of Reading (SOR)?
2. What models support the SOR?
3. What is the difference in structured literacy and balanced literacy?
4. What is the difference in standards-based and standards-aligned instruction?
5. Why are High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) important?
6. What is effective Tier I instruction?
7. What is the difference in remediation, enrichment, and intervention?
8. What is the difference in screeners, diagnostics, and progress monitoring?
9. What is the importance of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)?
10. What is effective feedback?

1 Science of Reading

The Science of Reading (SOR) aims to equip every individual with the essential skill of reading to improve literacy outcomes by understanding how the brain learns to read, leading to greater academic success and lifelong learning.

Science of Reading



WHAT

- A research-based framework that explains how people learn to read and identifies the most effective teaching methods.
- Emphasizes that reading comprehension is dependent on two key components: **word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension**.

WHY

The Science of Reading (SOR) is crucial in education because it provides a research-backed, evidence-based approach to teaching reading and writing, leading to improved literacy outcomes and empowering teachers with effective strategies.

HOW

Applied through a **systematic, explicit,** and **sequential** approach for teaching literacy skills called Structured Literacy, which addresses both word recognition and language comprehension.

Science of Reading

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Resources


2025-26
MISSISSIPPI
Science of
Reading Training
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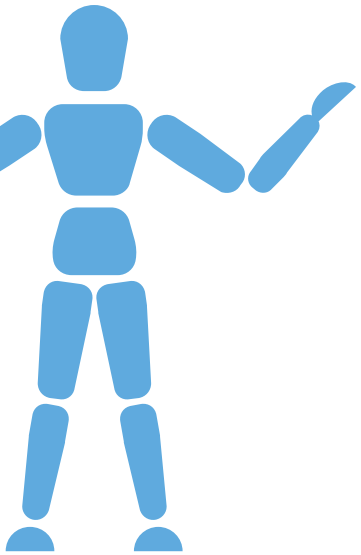
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
AIM Institute
for Learning & Research


Science
of Reading
THE PODCAST
Amplify.

2 SOR Models

Scarborough's Reading Rope is an expansion of the Simple View of Reading. The models suggest that reading comprehension is the product of two complex and crucial components, meaning that if either word recognition or language comprehension is weak, reading comprehension will suffer.

SOR Models



WHAT

- Simple View of Reading (Gough and Tumner 1990)
- Scarborough's Rope (2001)

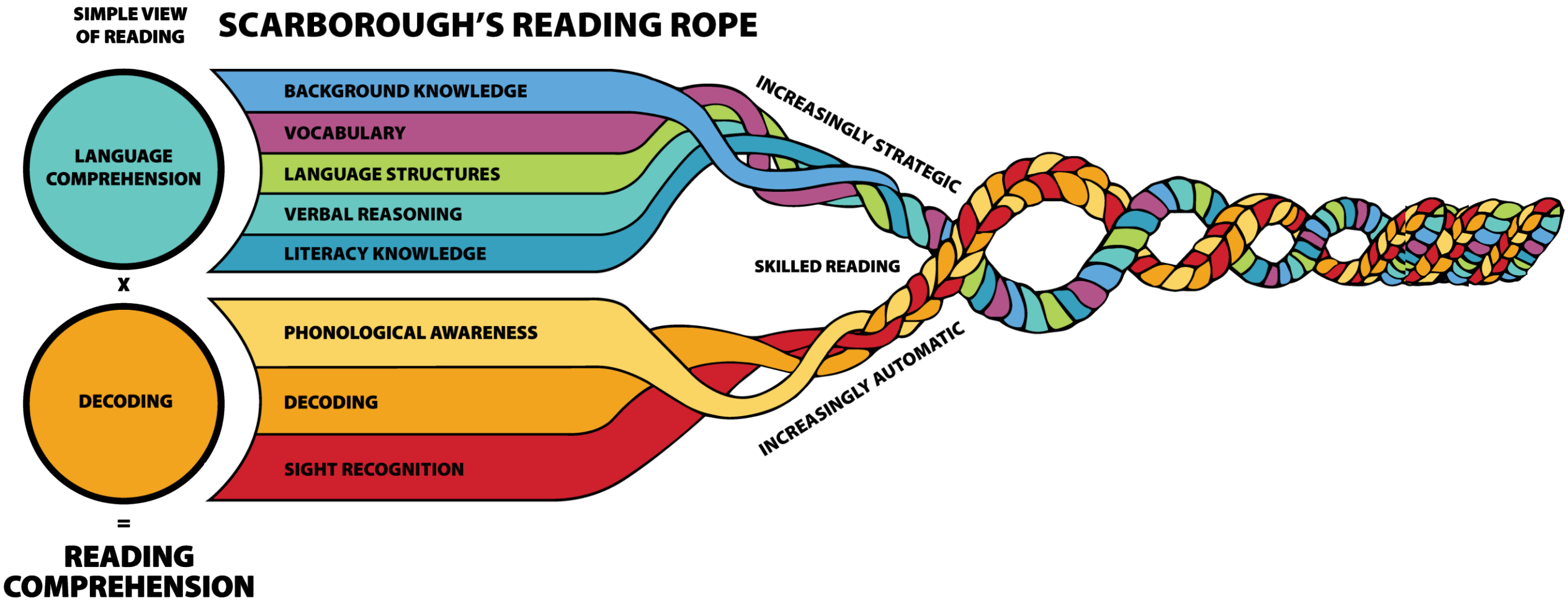
WHY

Word Recognition and **Language Comprehension** are THE two (2) components that lead to reading comprehension.

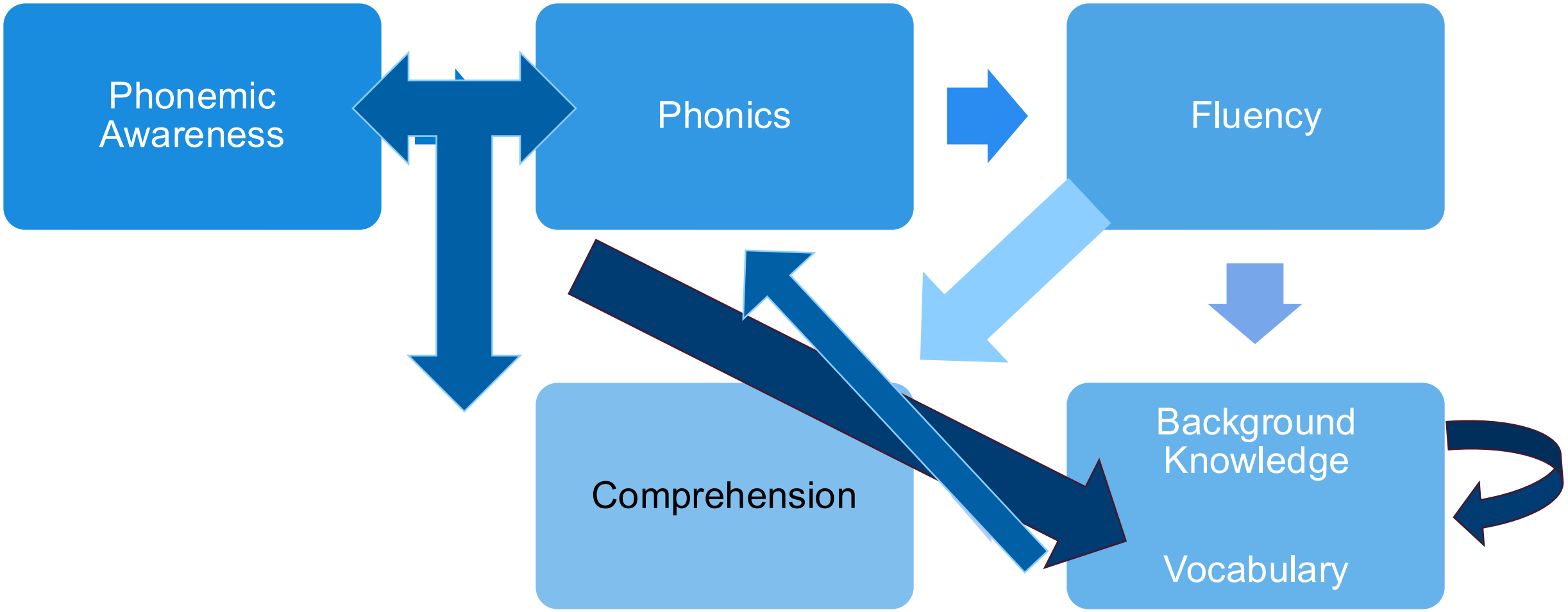
HOW

Use HQIM to effectively teach word recognition and language comprehension, focus on explicit phonics instruction, vocabulary development within reading contexts, fluency practice, and engaging students in text-based discussions and comprehension strategies.

SOR Models


SIMPLE VIEW OF READING
SCARBOROUGH'S READING ROPE
LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION
X
DECODING
=
READING COMPREHENSION
BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE
VOCABULARY
LANGUAGE STRUCTURES
VERBAL REASONING
LITERACY KNOWLEDGE
PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
DECODING
SIGHT RECOGNITION
INCREASINGLY STRATEGIC
SKILLED READING
INCREASINGLY AUTOMATIC

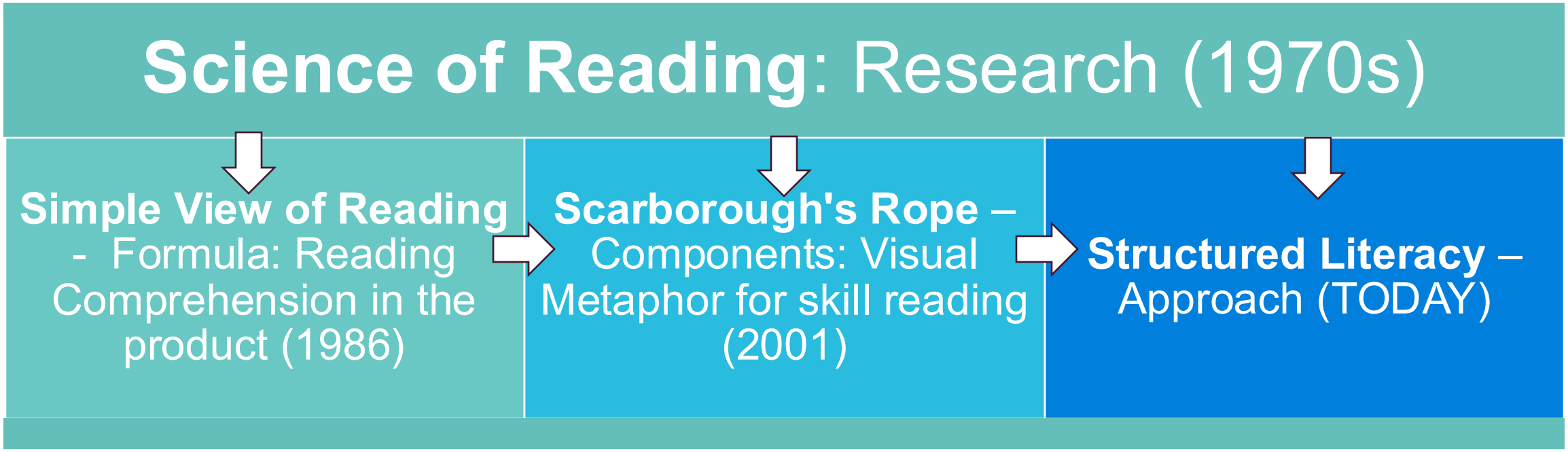
The Acquisition of Reading: Strands DO NOT Develop Independently.



One strand often affects the growth of the other.

Science of Reading

The science of reading is a vast **body of research** about reading and issues related to reading and writing. The science of reading has culminated in a vast quantity of evidence to inform how **proficient reading and writing develop**, **why some have difficulty**, and **how we can most effectively assess and teach**.



3 Structured Literacy vs. Balanced Literacy

Structured literacy, with its explicit and systematic approach to teaching reading, is superior to balanced literacy because it provides a more robust foundation for decoding and language comprehension, particularly for struggling readers, and is grounded in the science of reading.

Structured Literacy

WHAT

Structured Literacy (SL) is an approach to teaching reading and writing that emphasizes explicit and systematic instruction in all essential components of literacy including:

Phonology, Orthography, Syntax, Semantics, Morphology, and Discourse.

WHY

SL is particularly beneficial for students who are learning to read, by providing them with the direct, explicit instruction they need to develop strong reading skills, rather than relying on implicit learning or guessing.

HOW

To implement structured literacy, focus on explicit, systematic, sequential instruction, using a diagnostic approach to assess student needs and adjust instruction accordingly.

The Ladder of Reading & Writing

Art: Dean Stanton

Learning to read seems effortless; some instruction for spelling/writing may be needed (5-10%)

Learning to read is relatively easy with broad instruction; some explicit instruction for spelling/writing likely needed (35-40%)

Learning to read/spell/write proficiently requires code-based & explicit instruction (40-45%)

Learning to read/spell/write requires code-based, explicit, intensive instruction & frequent repetition (10-15%)

Extended learning or acceleration likely essential

Faster pace & increased implicit learning opportunities likely valuable

A comprehensive analytical approach to learning language structure likely essential

Differentiation: Systematically designed & data-informed

Environmental & within-student factors

Terms/references at www.nancyyoung.ca

Nancy Young

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Structured Literacy Approach

TEACHING PRINCIPLES	ELEMENTS	FEATURES
Explicit Systematic Sequential Cumulative Diagnostic	Phonology Orthography Semantics Syntax Morphology	• Students gain conscious awareness of sounds in spoken language • Students learn phonemes and graphemes in a sequence • Students learn decoding strategies • Students use decodable text to apply phonics skills • Students spend extended time in complex texts • Students build background knowledge • Students connect background knowledge to prior knowledge • Students participate in the gradual release model (student application with deliberate practice and feedback)

Structured Literacy Teaching Principles

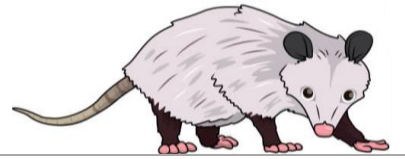
EXPLICIT: This emphasizes direct and clear teaching, where the teacher models each step and provides multiple examples to make the concept easily understandable. It avoids leaving anything implied or open to interpretation.

SYSTEMATIC/SEQUENTIAL: This involves a planned progression of instruction, where skills are introduced in a logical order, starting with the basics and building to more complex concepts. This ensures students have a solid foundation before moving on to more challenging material.

CUMULATIVE: This approach emphasizes that new concepts build upon previously learned skills. Frequent review and practice are crucial to ensure mastery and automaticity.

DIAGNOSTIC: This involves ongoing assessment to monitor student progress and identify areas where they may be struggling. This information is then used to inform instruction, providing targeted support and differentiation to meet individual needs.

Structured Literacy Elements: "POSSM"



PHONOLOGY: The study of the sound systems of a language. <How sounds function in a particular language; Sound patterns; Phonemes and how they're organized; *In English, the sounds /p/ and /b/ differentiate pat and bat.*>

ORTHOGRAPHY: The conventional spelling system of a language. <Rules for writing words; Use of letters, punctuation, and capitalization; Spelling conventions (even when they don't match pronunciation); *The word knight has silent letters that don't reflect how it's spoken.*>

SEMANTICS: The study of meaning in language. <Word meanings, sentence meanings, and how context influences meaning; Literal vs. figurative meaning; Word relationships (e.g., synonyms, antonyms); *The word bank can mean a financial institution or the side of a river.*>

SYNTAX: The set of rules that governs the structure of sentences. <Word order; Sentence structure (e.g., subject-verb-object); How phrases and clauses are combined; *In English, "The cat chased the mouse" is correct, but "Chased cat the mouse the" is not.*>

MORPHOLOGY: The study of the structure and formation of words. <Morphemes (the smallest units of meaning); Word roots, prefixes, and suffixes; How words change form (e.g., for tense or number); *The word unhappiness has three morphemes: un- (negation), happy, and -ness (state or quality*).>

Activity: Sort the Literacy Elements

Balanced vs. Structured Literacy

Clarify your understanding of literacy practices by identifying which elements align with *Balanced Literacy* and which with *Structured Literacy*.

- **Work in pairs or small groups.**
- **Sort each card** into one of two categories:
  - 🔴 **Balanced Literacy**
  - 🟢 **Structured Literacy**
- Place cards into two columns or designated areas.
- When finished, review your choices and discuss uncertainties.

Be ready to **share 1–2 cards** that sparked the most discussion or surprise.

BALANCED LITERACY	FEATURES	STRUCTURED LITERACY
Holistic; Discover how to read by immersion, Integrates various methods and activities	INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH	Explicit, systematic, and sequential Students get better at reading by learning to decode and building knowledge
Meaning-making, context, and visual cues	FOCUS	Decoding skills, phonics, and the structure of language
May be short and not systematic; 3 Cueing; Leveled Readers; Memorization of HF Words	WORD RECOGNITION STRATEGIES	Decodable Texts using phonics skills; HF words identify phonics patterns; Irregular words taught explicitly
Disconnected texts and mini-vocabulary lessons; Isolated Skills; Text are chosen on quantitative measures	LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES	Focus on building knowledge with multiple texts on one theme/topic for a period of time; Use of diverse, complex texts
Based on reading level, which can be arbitrary	GROUPING	Based on skill gaps and strengths
Less emphasis on evidence-based practices	EVIDENCE BASE	Rooted in the Science of Reading, which is an extensive compilation of studies
Running Records and isolated standard assessments	ASSESSMENTS	Screeners, Diagnostics, HQIM Suite of Assessments
For students to learn to love reading	OUTCOMES	Produce literate students

Resource

MISSISSIPPI'S APPROACH TO *K-3 Literacy Instruction*

OVERVIEW

The Literacy-Based Promotion Act (LBPA) places an emphasis on grade-level reading skills, particularly as students progress through grades K-3. The LBPA calls for effective reading instructional practices grounded in the Science of Reading.

STRUCTURED LITERACY INSTRUCTION

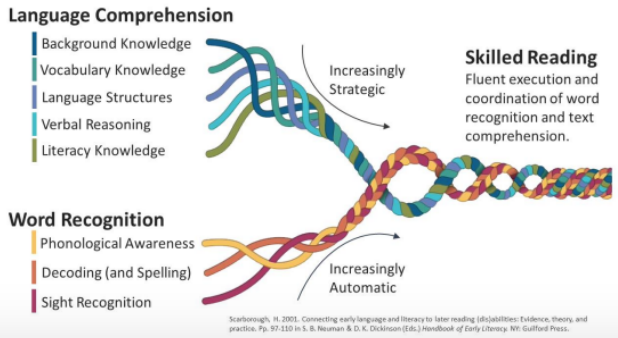
Application of the Science of Reading

Structured Literacy is representative of reading instruction that applies the Science of Reading to classroom practice. *Structured Literacy* teaches all the components that evidence has found to be foremost in ensuring reading success.

Structured Literacy is **not** just about phonics; it includes much, much more. The Simple View of Reading (Gough and Tummer, 1986) and Scarborough's Rope Model (Scarborough, 2001) serve as frameworks for understanding and identifying Structured Literacy.

SIMPLE VIEW OF READING

SCARBOROUGH'S READING ROPE MODEL



Scarborough, H. 2001. Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. Pp. 97-110 in S. B. Neuman & D. K. Dickinson (Eds.) *Handbook of Early Literacy*. NY: Guilford Press.

4

Standards-Aligned Instruction vs. Standards-Based Instruction

Standards-aligned instruction is arguably more critical because it ensures that all aspects of instruction, curriculum, and assessment are intentionally and consistently connected to the MSCCR standards, leading to more effective teaching and learning.

Standards-Aligned vs. Standards-Based Instruction

WHAT

- **Coherence:** Alignment ensures that all components are working together to achieve mastery of the standard by EOY.
- **Accuracy:** When instruction and assessment are aligned, educators can gain a more accurate understanding of student learning and progress.

WHY

- **Effectiveness:** Alignment helps to ensure that students are provided with the opportunities and support they need to master the standards.
- **Fairness:** Alignment can help to close learning gaps and promote fairness by ensuring that all students have access to the same HQIM and assessment.

HOW

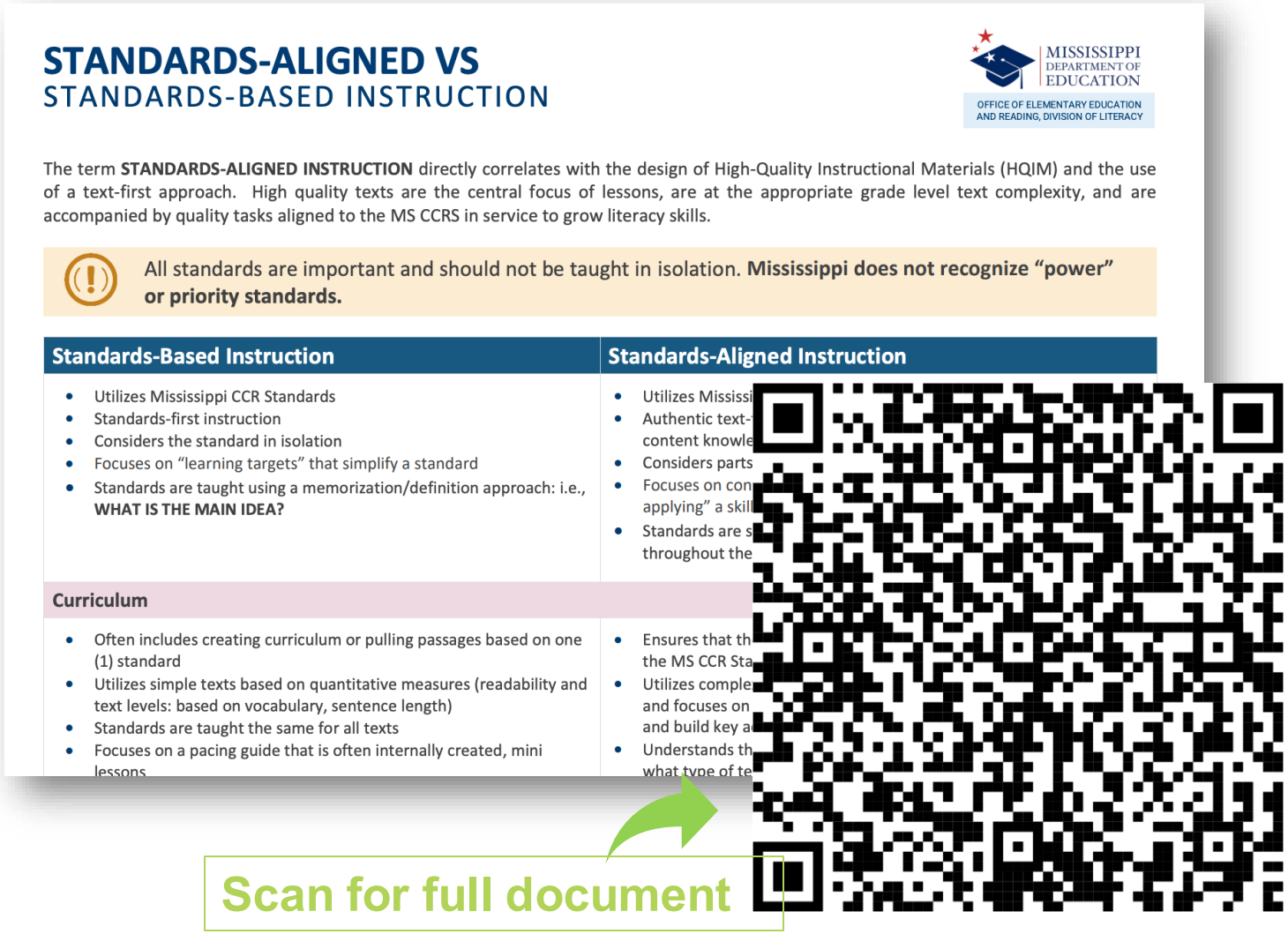
Consistently implement high quality instructional materials (HQIM) as designed, following the intended scope and sequence and utilizing formative and summative assessments provided by the HQIM.

Resources

Standard mastery takes time.

Students need exposure and extended time on themes/topics with different types of texts.

Standards spiral throughout HQIM units for end of year mastery.



STANDARDS-ALIGNED VS
STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION

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OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AND READING, DIVISION OF LITERACY

The term **STANDARDS-ALIGNED INSTRUCTION** directly correlates with the design of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) and the use of a text-first approach. High quality texts are the central focus of lessons, are at the appropriate grade level text complexity, and are accompanied by quality tasks aligned to the MS CCRS in service to grow literacy skills.

All standards are important and should not be taught in isolation. **Mississippi does not recognize "power" or priority standards.**

Standards-Based Instruction	Standards-Aligned Instruction
• Utilizes Mississippi CCR Standards • Standards-first instruction • Considers the standard in isolation • Focuses on "learning targets" that simplify a standard • Standards are taught using a memorization/definition approach: i.e., **WHAT IS THE MAIN IDEA?**	• Utilizes Mississi • Authentic text- content knowle • Considers parts • Focuses on con applying" a skil • Standards are s throughout the
Curriculum	
• Often includes creating curriculum or pulling passages based on one (1) standard • Utilizes simple texts based on quantitative measures (readability and text levels: based on vocabulary, sentence length) • Standards are taught the same for all texts • Focuses on a pacing guide that is often internally created, mini lessons	• Ensures that th the MS CCR Sta • Utilizes comple and focuses on and build key a • Understands th what type of te

Scan for full document

Standards-Aligned Activity

- Self-reflection:
  1. What does ‘standards-aligned instruction’ mean to you?
  2. How does it differ from simply teaching to an isolated standard?
- On chart paper, list distinctions between standards-based instruction vs. standards-aligned instruction.
- Discuss:
  - 1 major misconception in your practice
  - 1 strength in your current instruction guidance
  - 1 opportunity for growth

Reflect on lesson plans:

- Is this lesson **text-first** or **standard-first**?
- Are the **tasks** aligned to the **full intent** of the MS CCRS?
- Does the lesson **spiral** and build toward end-of-year mastery?
- How are **text complexity** and **academic vocabulary** addressed?

What is one specific shift you can make in your planning or delivery to move toward standards-aligned instruction using a text-first approach?

5 High-Quality Instructional Materials

Access to High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) is a critical piece in providing a fair opportunity for instruction to ALL students in Mississippi.

High-Quality Instruction Materials

WHAT

Mississippi Definition:

- **aligned** with the Mississippi College- and Career- Readiness Standards
- **externally validated**
- **comprehensive**
- includes **engaging** texts (books, multimedia, etc.), problems, and assessments

WHY

- Identifies students' strengths and weaknesses
- Builds knowledge of the world
- Provides consistency in delivery of instructional practices
- Supports students with diverse needs
- Supports teachers in delivering high quality instruction

HOW

- Form an implementation team
- Provide high-quality professional learning on the selected HQIM
- Follow the HQIM design and pacing for standards aligned instruction
- Ensure fidelity and consistency in the delivery of HQIM lessons

ELA HQIM Materials

ELA HQIM Materials	Previous ELA Materials (Basal)
Evidence-Based Phonics Scope and Sequence	Based on "Whole Word" Method
Decoding Strategies	Memorization Tactics
Authentic, Complex Texts	Simplistic, Repetitive Texts
Standards-Aligned Tasks	Disconnected Tasks
Decodables and Additional Texts Based on Unit/Theme	Disconnected "Readers"

High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)

https://msinstructionalmaterials.org/

Mississippi defines **High-Quality Instructional Materials** as materials that

- are **aligned** with the Mississippi College- and Career- Readiness Standards,
- are **externally validated,**
- are **comprehensive**, and
- include **engaging** texts (books, multimedia, etc.), problems, and assessments.

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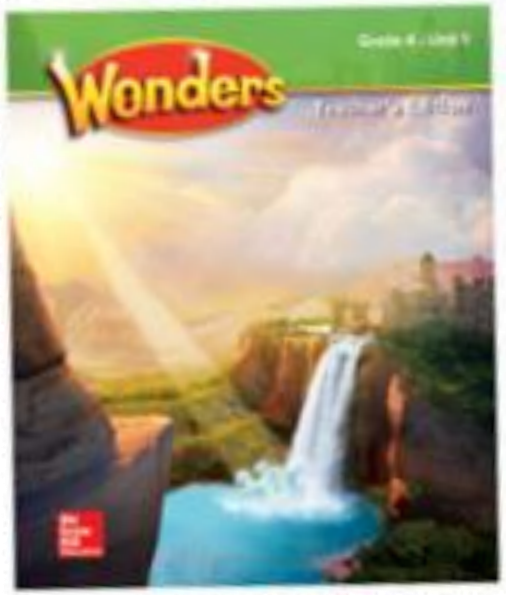
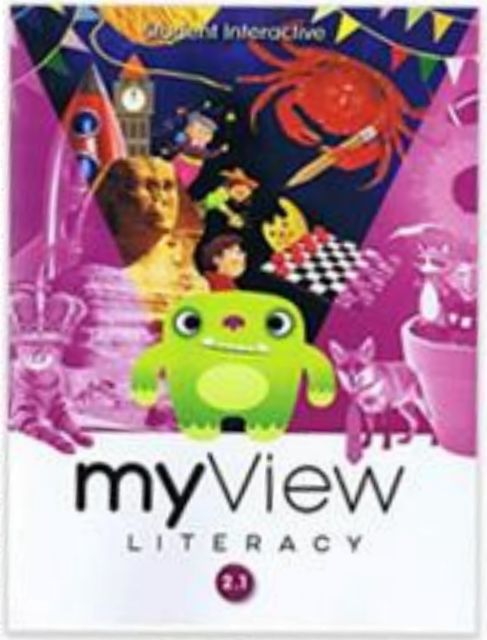
Building Background Knowledge

Encourage topic-focused, knowledge-building reading through High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM).



Wonders *2020



Astronauts...

Have 12-hour schedules written by 50 people in Houston

Adapt to situations Houston did not expect using expert judgement

Must follow Houston's very, very detailed instructions

"to replace a light bulb, I have to have safety glasses and a vacuum cleaner handy. This was In case the bulb broke. However, the actual bulb is encased in a plastic enclosure, so even if the glass bulb did break, the shards would be completely contained. Also, I had to take a photo of the installed bulb, before turning it on. Why? I have no idea! It's just the way NASA does things."

News Article: Astronauts Use Brute Force to Rip Handrail Off Hubble

Teachers...

Follow program guidelines for instructional time

Tier I: 90-120 minutes

Core Instruction

Intervention Time

Adapt to needs that the program authors did not address- using expert judgment

Use the instructional routines for the reading activities as designed

Introduction:

*Tell students you will say the sounds slowly and move your finger under the sound boxes. Say that they can play the **Blending Game** if they get them all right.*

Blending Routine:

- *Say the sounds slowly*
- *Slide your finger across the arrow when students are ready*
- *Draw a big checkmark with a dry erase marker on the board next to the boxes*

News Flash: Teacher Shortens Dictation to Have More time for Read Aloud

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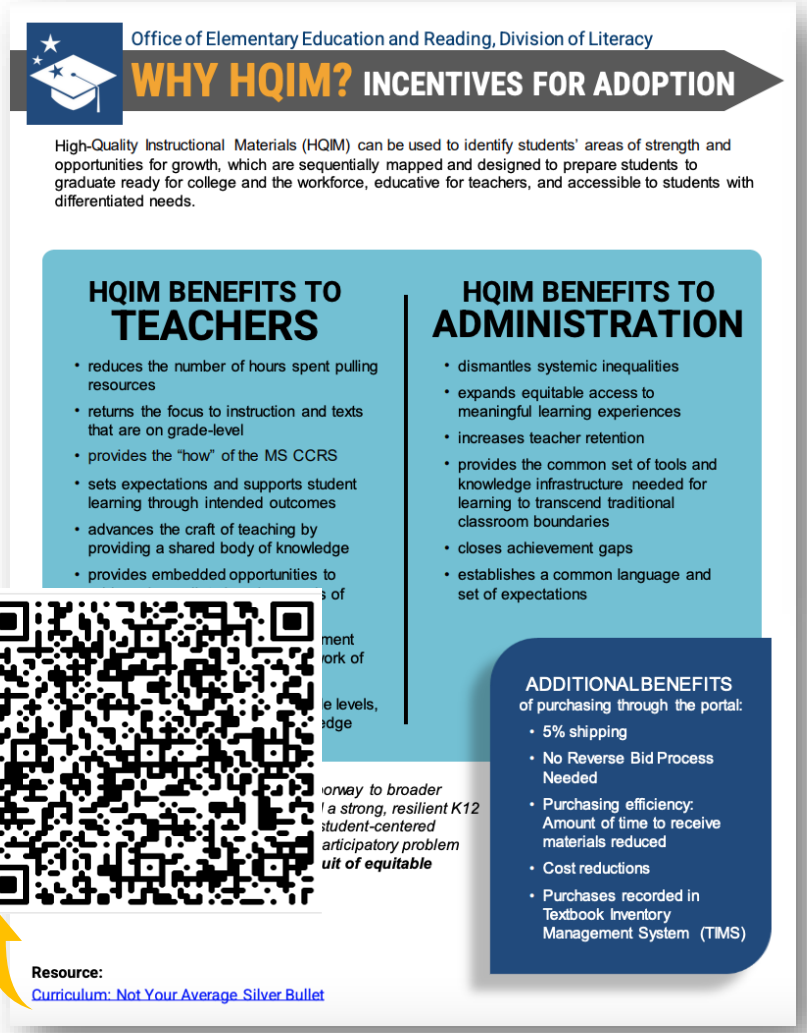
Resources



Office of Elementary Education and Reading, Division of Literacy

WHY HQIM? INCENTIVES FOR ADOPTION

High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) can be used to identify students' areas of strength and opportunities for growth, which are sequentially mapped and designed to prepare students to graduate ready for college and the workforce, educative for teachers, and accessible to students with differentiated needs.

HQIM BENEFITS TO TEACHERS

- reduces the number of hours spent pulling resources
- returns the focus to instruction and texts that are on grade-level
- provides the "how" of the MS CCRS
- sets expectations and supports student learning through intended outcomes
- advances the craft of teaching by providing a shared body of knowledge
- provides embedded opportunities to

HQIM BENEFITS TO ADMINISTRATION

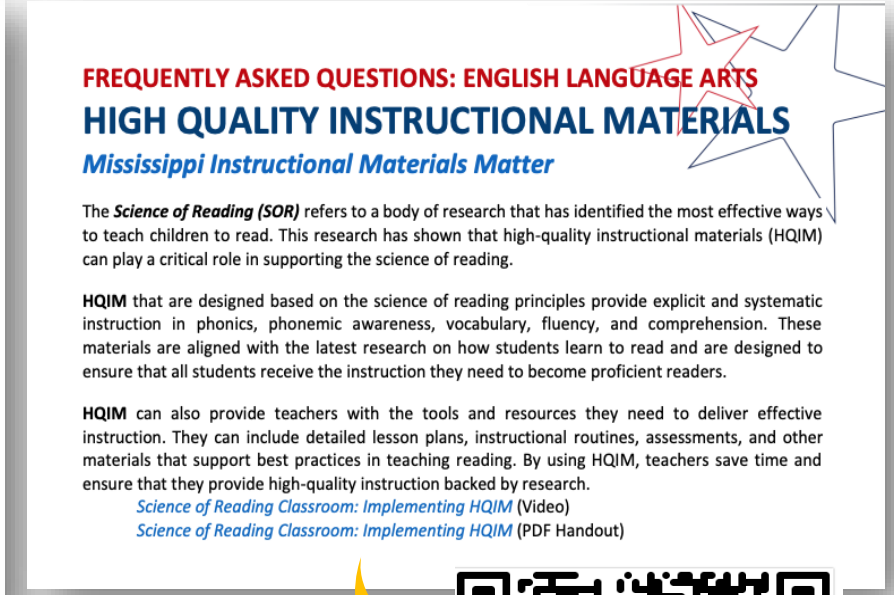
- dismantles systemic inequalities
- expands equitable access to meaningful learning experiences
- increases teacher retention
- provides the common set of tools and knowledge infrastructure needed for learning to transcend traditional classroom boundaries
- closes achievement gaps
- establishes a common language and set of expectations

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

of purchasing through the portal:

- 5% shipping
- No Reverse Bid Process Needed
- Purchasing efficiency: Amount of time to receive materials reduced
- Cost reductions
- Purchases recorded in Textbook Inventory Management System (TIMS)

Resource:
Curriculum: Not Your Average Silver Bullet



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

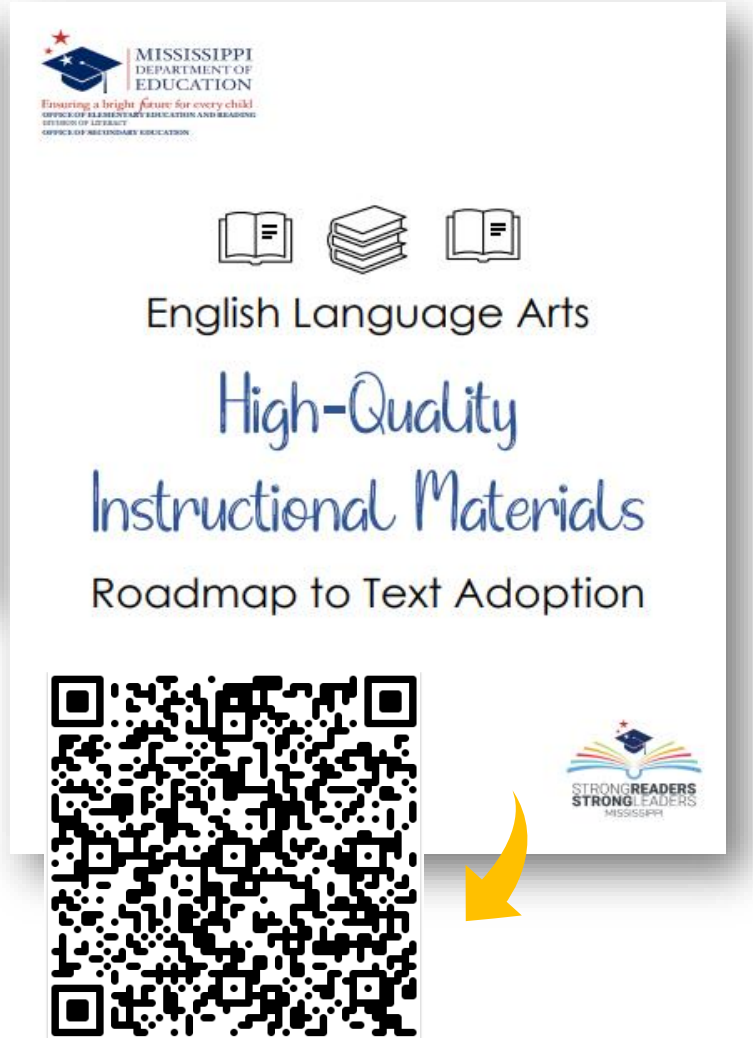
Mississippi Instructional Materials Matter

The ***Science of Reading (SOR)*** refers to a body of research that has identified the most effective ways to teach children to read. This research has shown that high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) can play a critical role in supporting the science of reading.

HQIM that are designed based on the science of reading principles provide explicit and systematic instruction in phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. These materials are aligned with the latest research on how students learn to read and are designed to ensure that all students receive the instruction they need to become proficient readers.

HQIM can also provide teachers with the tools and resources they need to deliver effective instruction. They can include detailed lesson plans, instructional routines, assessments, and other materials that support best practices in teaching reading. By using HQIM, teachers save time and ensure that they provide high-quality instruction backed by research.

Science of Reading Classroom: Implementing HQIM (Video)
Science of Reading Classroom: Implementing HQIM (PDF Handout)



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English Language Arts

High-Quality Instructional Materials

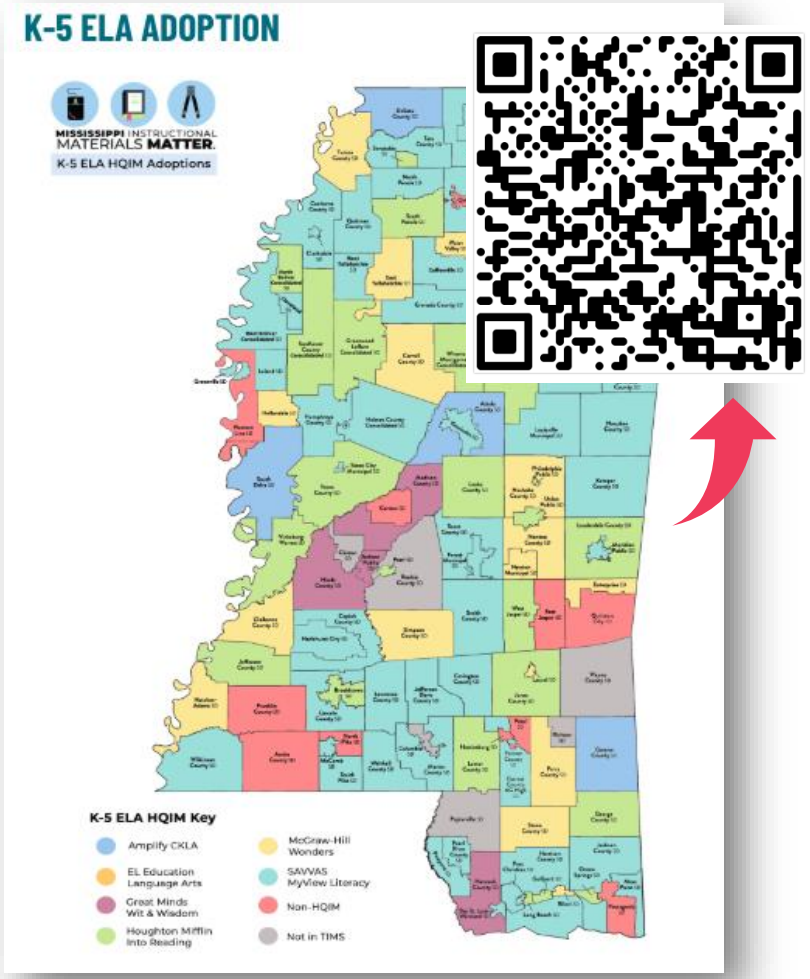
Roadmap to Text Adoption

STRONG READERS STRONG LEADERS MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Instructional Materials Matter Resources (MIMM)

MIMM provides resources for districts that have adopted or not yet adopted.

https://msinstructionalmaterials.org/



The **Division of Literacy** provides district-requested training on each of the adopted ELA high quality instructional materials.

HQIM PD Request: Lydia Aderholt, laderholt@mdek12.org

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"At the one low-income school in the study, the gains were large enough to eliminate altogether the achievement gap associated with income."

Robert Pondiscio, Senior fellow at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute

- Income-based achievement gaps were eliminated.
- Tests scores significantly improved with the knowledge-building curriculum.

Research Studies - Core Knowledge Foundation

REFLECTION Activity: Where are you in the HQIM process?

Adoption Without Implementation	Fidelity of Implementation	Integrity of Implementation
The curriculum is officially selected or purchased, but not regularly or fully used in classrooms.	Using the curriculum exactly as written, following all lessons, pacing, and instructional strategies.	Following the curriculum's scope and sequence while enhancing lessons to meet student needs and engagement.
- May rely heavily on teacher-created or supplemental materials - Lack of alignment across classrooms - Curriculum becomes a "shelf product"	- High consistency across classrooms -Lessons taught "as is" - Prioritizes strict adherence over teacher flexibility	- Aligned to goals and pacing - Uses educator expertise to elevate learning - Intentional adaptations without altering core content

Cognitive Load Theory: Routines and Models Must Be Consistent

Working memory is limited (3-5 skills) so introducing three (3) or more new skills at once results in cognitive ***overload.***

- Unclear routines
- Unrelated phonics patterns
- Inconsistent explanations (focusing on format, not content)
- Inconsistent terminology

- Confuse rules (i.e. “th” vs. “ch”)
- Memorize words without learning patterns (decoding)
- Fail to generalize to new words

The Literacy Blog:
Cognitive load theory, element interactivity and phonics teaching

Cognitive Load Theory: One Curriculum = Less Extraneous Load

WITH ONE CURRICULUM

- Consistent lesson formats
- Shared vocabulary routines
- Clear instructional sequence
- Repetition builds automaticity
- Schema formation is accelerated
- Prevents instructional fragmentation
- Better transfer and generalization
- Simplifies planning and differentiation

WITH MULTIPLE CURRICULA

- Mental Juggling
- Split attention
- Conflicting Rules
- Fragmented learning
- Missed logical progressions

Consider cognitive load when determining curriculum across all Tiers of support.

Using **one comprehensive, well-designed curriculum** aligns with Cognitive Load Theory, accelerates learning, supports teachers, and provides the structure students need to thrive.

HQIM Support Teachers in Implementing Cognitive Load Theory

Feature of HQIM	Impact on Cognitive Load	Classroom Implication
Clear learning goals: Materials are clearly organized, developmentally appropriate, and intentionally structured	Reduces extraneous load	Students know what to focus on
Embedded scaffolds: HQIM sequence content from simple to complex, scaffolding skills and concepts appropriately	Manages intrinsic load	Gradual release of responsibility
Modeling & exemplars: Materials are designed to encourage productive thinking, connections, and metacognition (e.g., reflection questions, concept maps, modeled thinking.)	Enhances germane load	Students internalize strategies
Visuals and manipulatives	Reduces extraneous load	Multimodal learning pathways
Built-in formative checks	Prevents overload	Adjust pacing and instruction

Cognitive Load Theory: Why Writing About Reading Matters

When **students** write about what they read...

They reduce cognitive load by *connecting ideas, organizing thoughts, and reinforcing memory-making learning deeper and more efficient.*	*They think more deeply, learn more efficiently, and retain knowledge longer—* while reducing the unnecessary mental burden of disconnected tasks.	*It improves comprehension and learning* by reducing extraneous cognitive load and encouraging meaningful engagement with content.

When writing tasks are aligned to reading, **teachers** *can...*

Focus instruction on fewer, deeper learning goals—rather than trying to "cover" separate reading, writing, and content standards.

HQIM Writing to Text Supports Teachers in Cognitive Load Theory

Feature of HQIM	Impact on Cognitive Load	Classroom Example
Integrates Skills, Reducing Split Attention	When students **read and then write about the same content**, they are not juggling unrelated tasks which reduces the unnecessary mental effort caused by switching between disjointed ideas.	Instead of reading a story, then writing a random opinion piece, students write a response to the text.
Reinforces Comprehension Through Processing	Writing forces students to **process, organize, and reflect** on what they read. *Think of writing as thinking on paper.*	Students need time and space to make sense of ideas, build meaning, and move information from short-term to long-term memory.

HQIM Writing to Text Supports Teachers in Cognitive Load Theory

Feature of HQIM	Impact on Cognitive Load	Classroom Example
Supports Retrieval and Transfer	When students write about reading, they are pulling information from memory, which strengthens long-term retention. It also helps them apply what they have learned to other situations.	Writing a response to a historical text or scientific explanation can help students transfer vocabulary, structure, and key ideas to new writing tasks.
Builds Vocabulary and Language Systems	Writing in response to reading exposes students to **academic vocabulary** and **sentence structures** within context, allowing them to replicate and internalize these patterns in their own writing.	A student reading a nonfiction article about animals might adopt phrases like “habitat,” “adaptation,” or “in order to survive” in their writing—without needing isolated vocabulary drills.

Cognitive Load Theory: One Curriculum = Less Extraneous Load

WRITING TO TEXT (HQIM)

- Builds knowledge and academic vocabulary
- Promotes evidence-based thinking
- Strengthens reading comprehension, analysis, and critical thinking
- Aligns to instructional goals and standards
- Reading and writing share context – less mental jugging
- All students can access rich content

WRITING WITHOUT TEXT

- Relies on student's prior experience or imagination
- Often subjective or surface-level
- Often doesn't align to grade-level standards or complex thinking
- Offers little reinforcement of reading skills
- May drift from learning goals
- May overlook structure, evidence, or clarity

Writing to text, especially with HQIM, deepens **comprehension, r**einforces **text analysis skills, and s**upports **language development.**

EQUIPPED TO *Inspire*

HQIM

HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

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6

MTSS: Tier 1 Instruction

Tier 1 instruction, also known as core instruction or universal support, is the foundational level of teaching and learning that all students receive, forming the basis for a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework and is crucial for ensuring high-quality learning for all students.

MTSS: Tier 1 Instruction

WHAT

- **Foundation for Learning:** It establishes the base level of instruction and learning for all students, ensuring they have access to high-quality, standards-aligned learning.
- **Data-Driven:** Tier 1 instruction should be informed by data to ensure that instruction is effective and responsive to student needs.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** While Tier 1 is designed for all students, it should also incorporate strategies for differentiating instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners within the classroom.

WHY

- **Prevents Learning Gaps:** Strong Tier 1 instruction can reduce the need for more intensive interventions (Tiers 2 and 3) by addressing the needs of students in a general classroom setting.
- **Promotes Fairness:** By providing high-quality instruction to all students, Tier 1 helps to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background or learning needs.

HOW

- Clear and consistent instruction
- Engaging activities
- Positive classroom environment
- Regular feedback
- Collaboration

3 Tier Instructional Model

- **Tier 1: Quality classroom instruction aligned with Mississippi standards.**
- Tier 2: Focused supplemental instruction.
- Tier 3: Intensive interventions specifically designed to meet the individual needs of students.

If Tier 1 and 2 instruction is unsuccessful, students must be referred to the Teacher Support Team (TST). The TST is the local team responsible for interventions developed at Tier 3. Each school must have a TST implemented in accordance with the process developed by the Mississippi Department of Education.

https://mdek12.org/elementaryedu/interventionservices/

Tier I Core Instruction

Intervention Time

Core HQIM* with differentiation, language supports, and scaffolds for ALL

HQII** based on student needs and grounded in Structured Literacy

*HQIM – High-Quality Instructional Materials; **HQII – High-Quality Instructional Interventions

Reducing Clutter: Why Less is More

The idea that **"less is more"** is rooted in the principle that **simplicity enhances clarity, efficiency, and focus**.

In cognitive science, this ties directly to the concept of **cognitive load—the amount of mental effort being used in working memory.** When cognitive load is too high, learning, decision-making, and comprehension suffer.

In what area(s) does reducing clutter seem beneficial? Why?

Reducing Clutter: Why Less is More

- Donating or selling clothes you haven't worn in a year
- Unsubscribing from email lists you never read
- Deleting unused apps on your phone
- Tossing expired spices or duplicates
- Limiting exposure to news or social media that cause anxiety

Decluttering doesn’t mean getting rid of everything. It’s about **removing the non-essential to make space for what truly adds value**. Small steps can lead to powerful change.

Coherence Across Tiers

- "… there is a good understanding of the symbiotic role of core reading instruction and intervention and the potential benefits from when these two approaches are working in harmony."
- Some schools provide Tier 1 to students with reading difficulties and then a supplemental reading intervention that often has little alignment of correspondence with their core reading program.

  This means students with the most challenging reading problems are expected to integrate information from two (often very different) approaches to reading instruction.

Coherence Across Tiers

- Tiers 2 and 3 programs should provide additional instruction, **not replacement instruction**. Pulling students out of Tier I reading lessons, to get other reading lessons down the hall is unlikely to increase learning.
- Tiers 2 and 3 give students a chance for a **double dose of instruction**, but that means schools need to schedule Tier 2 and 3 instruction thoughtfully so that it **ADDS to the instruction** the students receive in Tier 1.

Activity: In Their Shoes

Imagine the following scenarios as a struggling student:

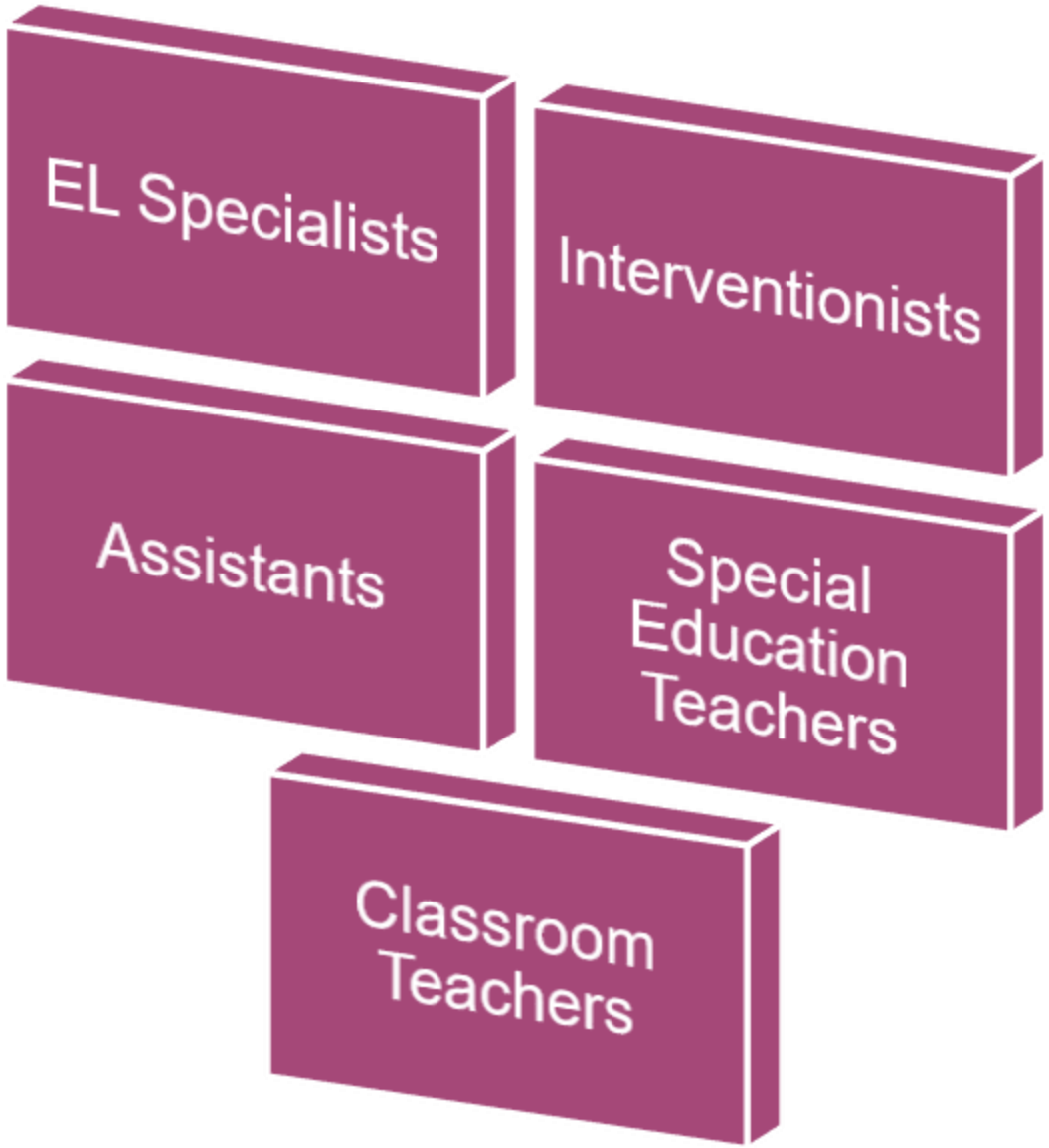
1. In your Tier 1 classroom, your teacher refers to “oa” as a vowel team. In your pull-out, the interventionist refers to it as a vowel variant.
2. Your interventionist uses dated materials and teaches cl as a single sound, whereas the Tier 1 curriculum teaches cl as a blend of two separate sounds. When the teacher gives you a phonemic awareness diagnostic, you mark “clap” as having 3 sounds. The teacher marks it incorrect; the interventionist marks it correct.
3. Your interventionist uses a finger spelling routine for isolating sounds and arm spelling for high frequency words (HFW), but in Tier 1 the teacher uses arm spelling for isolating sounds and finger spelling for HFW.

Activity: In Their Shoes

Discuss the following:

1. How does this confuse you?
2. How could this impede the effectiveness of both forms of instruction?
3. How does this impact cognitive load?

Managing Cognitive Load Optimizes Learning



Cohesion Across Tiers

- Consistent academic language
- Reliable routines
- Effective instruction with explicit instructional dialogue
- Data alignment

Cohesion Across Tiers

Consistency of high-impact instructional routines allows for students to focus cognitive energy from process to learning.

Consistency of academic language across all grades and tiers of instruction provides consistency and eliminates ambiguity.

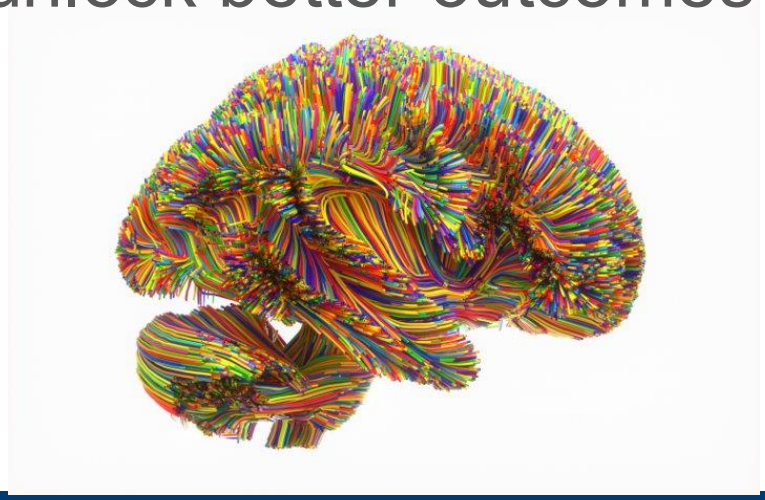
Data alignment connects tiers of instruction, pinpoints students' needs, informs grouping, and provides visibility for all invested parties.

Consistency of explicit instructional dialogue allows teachers to focus on student response and instructional moves.

(Adapted from 95% Group)

Activity: Reflection

1. How has your understanding of Tier 1 instruction deepened?
2. How might this shape your instructional decisions?
3. What mindset shifts will you take with you?
4. Consider how reframing beliefs around Tier 1 reading instruction can unlock better outcomes for students.



Reflection in action: **Choose one change you can make this week based on what you've learned today.**

7

The Difference Between Intervention, Remediation, and Enrichment

Understanding and effectively implementing intervention, remediation, and acceleration strategies are vital for supporting the diverse needs of all students.

	REMEDIATION	ENRICHMENT	INTERVENTION
FOCUS	Addressing learning gaps and providing additional instruction to help students master previously taught concepts at grade level.	Providing opportunities for students to explore their interests and delve deeper into subjects beyond the core curriculum at/above grade level.	Proactive and targeted support for students who are struggling or at risk of falling below grade level.
GOAL	To help students catch up and reach grade-level proficiency.	To develop critical thinking skills and promote higher-order thinking.	To prevent academic difficulties from escalating and to provide timely support.
EXAMPLES	Reteaching, providing extra practice, and using different instructional strategies.	Advanced projects, independent research, and specialized courses.	Small group instruction, one-on-one, and differentiated instruction.
TIMING	Implemented after learning gaps have been identified during Tier 1 instruction (Reading Block).	Implemented throughout the school year, providing opportunities for students to engage in instruction at a higher level during Tier 1 instruction (Reading and/or Plus Block).	Implemented early, before significant gaps in learning develop. Frequency, duration, and intensity determines the tier of instruction (Plus Block).
TRACKING AND ASSESSMENT	Informally monitored or tracked (Based on lack of skills mastered)	Informally monitored or tracked (Based on skills mastered)	Progress Monitoring (Specific to deficit area)

Remediation (Re-teaching a skill) Example – Phonemic Awareness

Scenario: A 1st-grade student has difficulty hearing and manipulating individual sounds in words (e.g., can't isolate beginning or ending sounds).

Remediation in Action:

- The teacher works with a small group during literacy centers, using Elkonin boxes (sound boxes) and counters.
- Students listen to a word like *"cat"* and push a counter into each box as they say /c/ /a/ /t/.
- The teacher adds movement by having students hop once for each sound or clap them out.
- Instruction is explicit, repetitive, and multisensory to strengthen sound awareness.

Real-World Tie-In:

- Students play a classroom game like "Sound Detectives," identifying mystery words in spoken riddles:
  "I start with /b/ and rhyme with 'hat.' What am I?"

Enrichment Example – Extending the Learning

Goal: Challenge students who have already mastered the core content.

Real-World Example:

- A student finishes their persuasive essay early and shows strong writing skills.
- The teacher invites them to create a podcast episode debating their topic, complete with sound effects and interviews.
- They're also tasked with mentoring a peer during writing time.

Real-World Example:

- A 4th-grade student finishes their required book and demonstrates strong comprehension.
- They're invited to create a book trailer using Canva or iMovie to recommend the book to peers.
- They analyze the author's style, compare it to another author, and lead a peer discussion.
- This builds critical thinking and communication skills beyond the core standards.

Intervention – Intensive, Targeted Support

Goal: Provide consistent, structured support to students at risk of falling behind.

Real-World Example:

- A 2nd grader shows persistent difficulty decoding words.
- The student attends daily 1:1 phonics-based reading sessions with a specialist using a program like Orton-Gillingham.
- Progress is tracked weekly, with data shared during RTI meetings.

Real-World Example:

- A 1st-grade student is reading below grade level and struggles with decoding CVC words.
- They attend daily 1:1 reading intervention using a research-based phonics program (e.g., UFLI or SIPPS).
- The reading specialist uses repeated practice with word sorts, decodable texts, and oral blending.
- Progress is tracked weekly and reviewed in RTI (Response to Intervention) meetings.

8 Assessment

Screener assessments, diagnostic assessments, and progress monitoring are vital in education because they help identify students at risk, pinpoint specific areas of need, and track the effectiveness of interventions, ultimately leading to more personalized and effective instruction.

Assessment

SCREENER

This involves assessing all students to identify those who may be at risk for academic difficulties, allowing for early intervention and support.

DIAGNOSTIC

These assessments delve deeper into specific areas of concern identified through screening, helping educators pinpoint the root causes of learning challenges, and tailor instruction accordingly.

PROGRESS MONITOR

This involves regularly assessing students' progress to determine if interventions are effective and to make adjustments as needed, ensuring students are making adequate growth.

Assessments *FOR* Learning

Type	Why	What	Who	When	Analogy	Examples
Universal Screeners	Which students are at risk? What systems are at risk?	Brief, standardized assessments of key literacy skills assessing all students to identify those who may be at risk for academic difficulties, allowing for early intervention and support.	ALL students	**Beginning, middle, and end of the year**	Blood pressure or temperature check Is there a problem?	• Istation (ISIP) • I-Ready • STAR • NWEA • FAST • mCLASS
Diagnostic Assessments	What skills does this student have? What skills need to be taught?	In-depth, often unstandardized assessments to determine specific areas of concern identified through screening, helping educators pinpoint the root causes of learning challenges, and tailor instruction accordingly.	Students at risk	**When problem-solving for differentiated instruction and intervention**	Blood test or diagnostic imaging What is the problem? What do we need to do about it?	• Core Phonics Survey • Really Great Reading Decoding Survey • Acadience Comprehension, Fluency and Oral Language Diagnostic

Assessments *FOR* Learning

Type	Why	What	Who	When	Analogy	Examples
Progress Monitoring	Is our instruction working? Do we need to change course?	Regularly assessing students' progress to determine if interventions are effective and to adjust as needed, ensuring students are making adequate growth.	Students at risk	Weekly or bi-weekly to allow for quick (1-3 minutes) adjustments based on response to instruction	GPS system Are we going in the right direction? Will we get there on time?	• Acadience (formerly DIBELS NEXT) • Dibels 8th Edition • AimsWeb Plus • FastBridge • easyCBM

Assessments *OF* Learning

Type	Why	What	Who	When	Analogy	Examples
Outcome Evaluation	Have students learned what we need them to know? Did our instruction work?	Evaluations of mastery of learning goals of curriculum expectations	ALL students	After unit completion or at the end of the school year	Time on a running race How did we do? What can we learn for next time?	• Summative assessments and (e.g. unit tests, projects and assignments) • HQIM Benchmark assessments • MAAP

Resources

STRONGREADERS STRONGLEADERS MISSISSIPPI

UNIVERSAL SCREENER

COMPANION GUIDE

Finding the Right Starting Point for Reading Interventions

Activity:
Using the flowchart on page 10, identify the 3 actions that a teacher should take after analyzing screener data.

9 Professional Learning Communities

The main purpose of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in education is to foster collaboration and shared responsibility among educators to improve teaching practices and ultimately enhance student learning and achievement.

Professional Learning Communities

WHAT

- Focus on student learning
- Collaboration and shared responsibility
- Inquiry and reflection
- Decision making

WHY

- Professional growth
- Improved teaching practices
- Enhanced student achievement

HOW

- Schedule a rotation of the following:
  - Data-Analysis
  - Content
  - Preparation
- Collaboratively create norms and assign roles

DATA: Analyzing for Action Use assessment data to drive decision-making and improve learning outcomes.
• Analyze HQIM data, screener, and formative assessments • Identify trends, gaps, and specific student needs • Create flexible groups for remediation, intervention, and enrichment • Set and monitor SMART goals for student achievement • Reflect on instructional strategies and adjust as needed
Instruction becomes targeted, responsive, and student-centered.

How do we encourage growth to proficiency?

- **Why is reading proficiency important?** Reading proficiency is crucial for academic success, career opportunities, and overall life skills. Strong reading skills enable individuals to comprehend information, learn new concepts, and communicate effectively, impacting various aspects of their lives.
- **How do we encourage proficiency—not just growth?** This requires intentional planning beyond remediation or teaching to the test.
- While **growth is essential for helping students catch up**, it's **proficiency that ensures they are meeting grade-level expectations** and are ready for academic advancement.
- **Focusing solely on growth can limit long-term progress**; students may reach grade level but still lack the depth of understanding needed for success on rigorous assessments.
- A **proficiency-focused approach** supports sustained achievement by preparing students to meet **college- and career-ready standards**.
- **Levels 4 and 5 represent true proficiency**, where students demonstrate mastery and readiness for the next academic challenge. **Level 3 simply indicates that the standard has been met**, not mastered.
- As educators, we must design instruction, intervention, and enrichment that **elevate students from "meeting" to "mastering" standards**—bridging the gap between adequacy and excellence.

PLC Types: Content

CONTENT: Deepening Expertise Strengthen teachers' understanding of what they teach and how students learn it.
• Study grade-level and vertical content standards • Explore content-specific misconceptions and instructional best practices • Align to the Science of Reading and high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) • Share classroom strategies and student work samples • Ensure consistent rigor across classrooms and grades
Teachers grow in instructional confidence; consistency improves across the school.

PREPARATION: Lesson impact Collaborate on lesson design to ensure alignment, clarity, and high-quality delivery.
• Co-plan upcoming lessons using HQIM • Unpack tasks and texts to align with grade-level standards • Identify potential barriers and pre-plan scaffolds • Develop common formative assessments • Coordinate pacing across classrooms and grades
Instruction is intentional, aligned, and well-prepared—ensuring stronger Tier I instruction for all students.

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Resources for Administrators

If you have questions,
please email
askacoach@mdek12.org

The "***Ask A Literacy Coach***" button is also available on the MDE Literacy > Resources for Teachers webpage.

Ask a Literacy Coach

10 Effective Feedback

Effective instructional feedback to teachers leads to **improved teaching practices**, **stronger teacher-leader relationships**, and a **culture of continuous improvement**.

Effective Feedback System

WHAT

The process of providing **specific**, **timely**, and **actionable** information to educators that helps them **improve their teaching practices** and **enhances student learning**

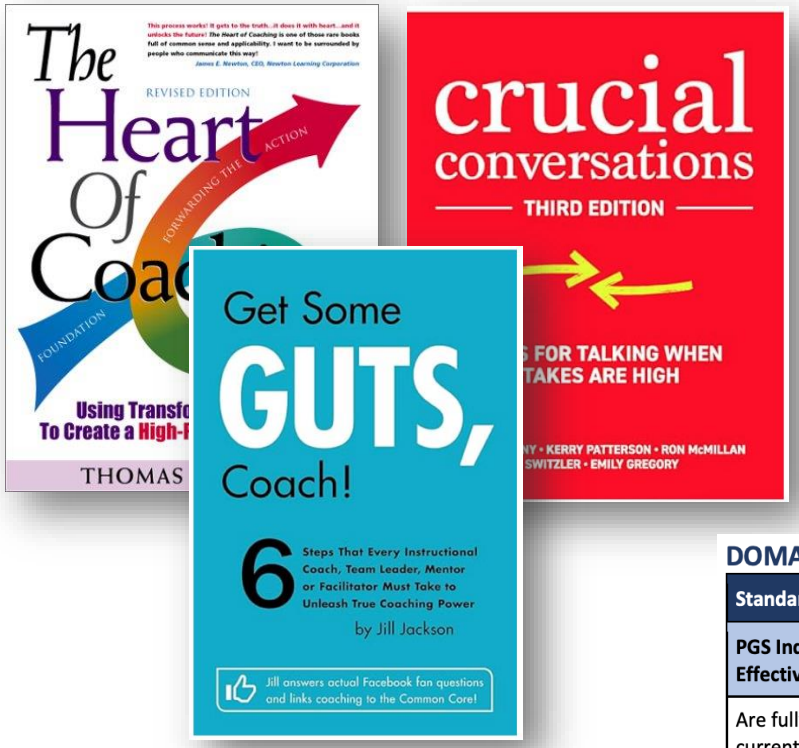
WHY

- Improves teaching quality
- Boosts student outcomes
- Fosters collaboration
- Supports ongoing growth through data and insights of teaching practices and performance

HOW

- Provide **actionable feedback** that teachers can use to improve immediately.
- **Regular check-ins** help track progress over time.
- Tailor feedback to each teacher's **unique** teaching style and needs.
- Align feedback to specific HQIM lessons and focus

Effective Feedback Resources



Mississippi Department of Education's COACHING MODEL

Coaching Model Components					
Comprehensive Coach Training	Goal Setting	Effective Communication	Reporting and Accountability	Educator Development	Collaboration and Effective Partnership

DOMAIN 1: LESSON DESIGN

Standard 1: Lessons are aligned to standards and represent a coherent sequence of learning.	
PGS Indicators of Highly Effective Practice	**Literacy Look-Fors and/or Coaching Stems**
Are fully aligned to current MCCRS or Framework	Lesson Planning and Preparation documentation of: • Instructional routines that support age- and developmentally appropriate practices to teach the Five Components of Reading through RF, RI, RL, SL, L, and W standards with applicable evidence of best practices of instructional routines for teaching reading for 1st-5th grades or Kindergarten • Practices and material alignment with the Science of Reading through high quality instruction with grade level, complex text • Annotated plans when using High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) that include preparation for whole and small group instruction based on current MCCRS *and* student needs

Professional Growth System (PGS) Literacy Look-Fors and Coaching Stems

Effective Feedback Resources

Learning Walk Protocols

Enhancing Instructional Leadership Cohort

Learning Walk Modules

Literacy Support Non-Negotiables

Top Ten Essentials Review

Understanding effective reading instruction involves knowing what the **Science of Reading (SOR)** is and which models support it, recognizing the importance of **High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)**, and differentiating between standards-based and **standards-aligned instruction**.

It is essential to grasp the differences among **screeners, diagnostics, and progress monitoring**, as well as between **structured literacy** and balanced literacy.

Effective **Tier I instruction**, along with the distinctions between **remediation, enrichment, and intervention**, plays a critical role.

Additionally, **Professional Learning Communities** (PLCs) and **effective feedback** are vital components that support ongoing educator growth and student success.

Administrator Reflection and Input Self-Reflection Activity

Professional Learning Priorities

- What knowledge, skills, or strategies are most needed right now?
- What areas would you like to focus on with your teams?

Resources & Support

- What tools, materials, or supports are most valuable to your role?
- Where do you see gaps?

Emerging Challenges

- What obstacles are most impacting your ability to serve *all* students?
- What new or evolving needs are showing up?

Opportunities for Collective Success

- Where do you see the greatest potential for collaboration?
- How can we align efforts for stronger outcomes?

Your voice shapes our direction—thank you for sharing your perspective.

Leading with Literacy: From Knowledge to Action
Activity: Identify Gaps, Focus Areas, and a Plan for Growth

✅ Step 1: Assess	✅ Step 2: Prioritize	✅ Step 3: Plan	✅ Step 4: Use Data for Literacy Growth
• Review each of the 10 essentials. • For each item, ask: 🟢 Well-implemented? 🟡 In progress? 🔴 Needs significant improvement?	• Identify 2–3 key areas where your school needs the most growth or focus.	For each priority area: • What actions will you take? • What professional learning is needed? • Who will lead the work? • What is your timeline?	• Monitor progress using screeners, diagnostics, and ongoing assessments? • Evaluate instructional quality through learning walks, coaching, or PLC feedback? • Track student growth toward proficiency?

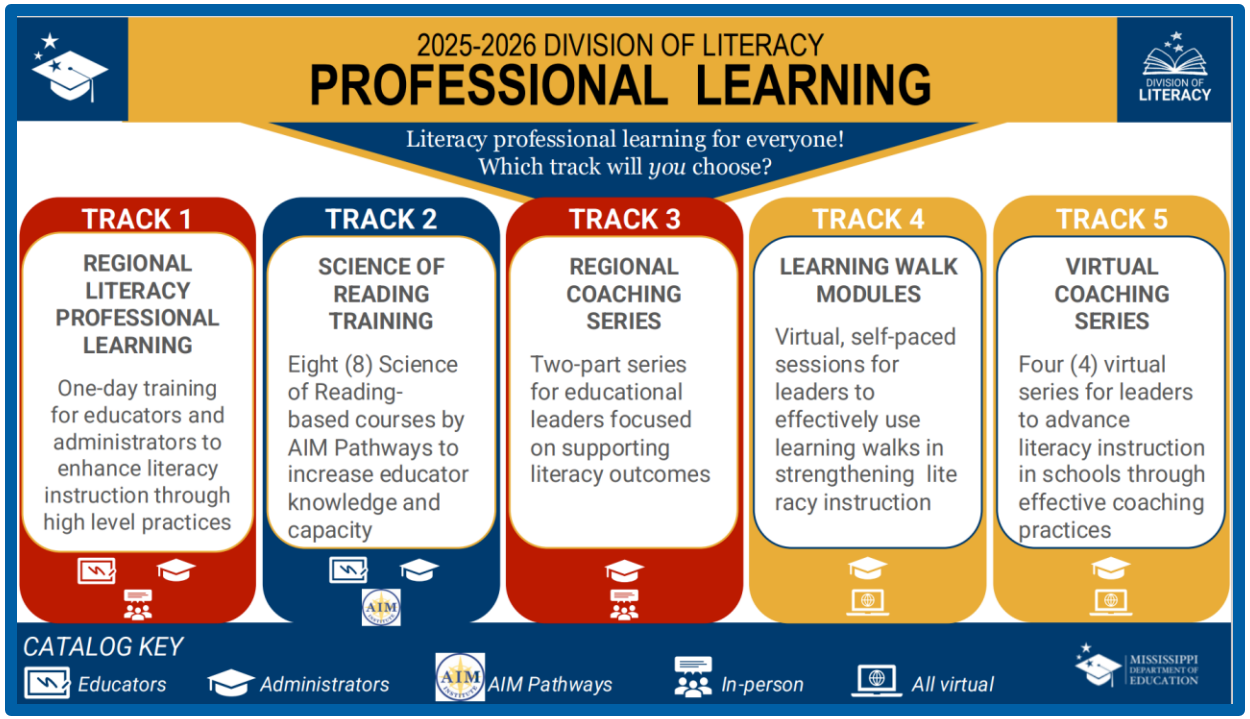
Celebration FINALE: What is your "win" so far?

"Real impact comes from consistent steps, not perfect ones—**celebrate the wins** that move us forward."

"Leadership is about progress, not perfection—**every step forward is worth celebrating**."

"When leaders lead with purpose, empower their people, and **celebrate every step forward**—schools thrive."

Literacy Updates: 2025-2026 Professional Learning



Literacy Professional Learning Catalog

Register here

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