

The Power of Tier 1

The First Line of Defense for ALL Students



mdek12.org

Office of Curriculum and Instruction
Division of Literacy



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Fall 2025



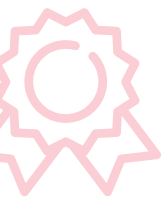
VISION

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



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

EVERY School Has Effective Teachers and Leaders

4



EVERY Community Effectively Uses a World-Class Data System to Improve Student Outcomes

5



EVERY School and District is Rated "C" or Higher

6



- Define Tier 1 instruction within a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)
- Explain the importance of high-quality Tier 1 instruction for all students
- Examine instructional best practices for Tier 1 instruction
- Examine how Tier 1 fits within the framework of MTSS

There is a bag of image cards on your table. With the people at your table, choose an image for the following prompts:

1. What does Tier 1 instruction currently look like at your school?
2. What do you think Tier 1 instruction should look like at your school?
3. How do you feel about getting teachers on board with Tier 1 best practices?

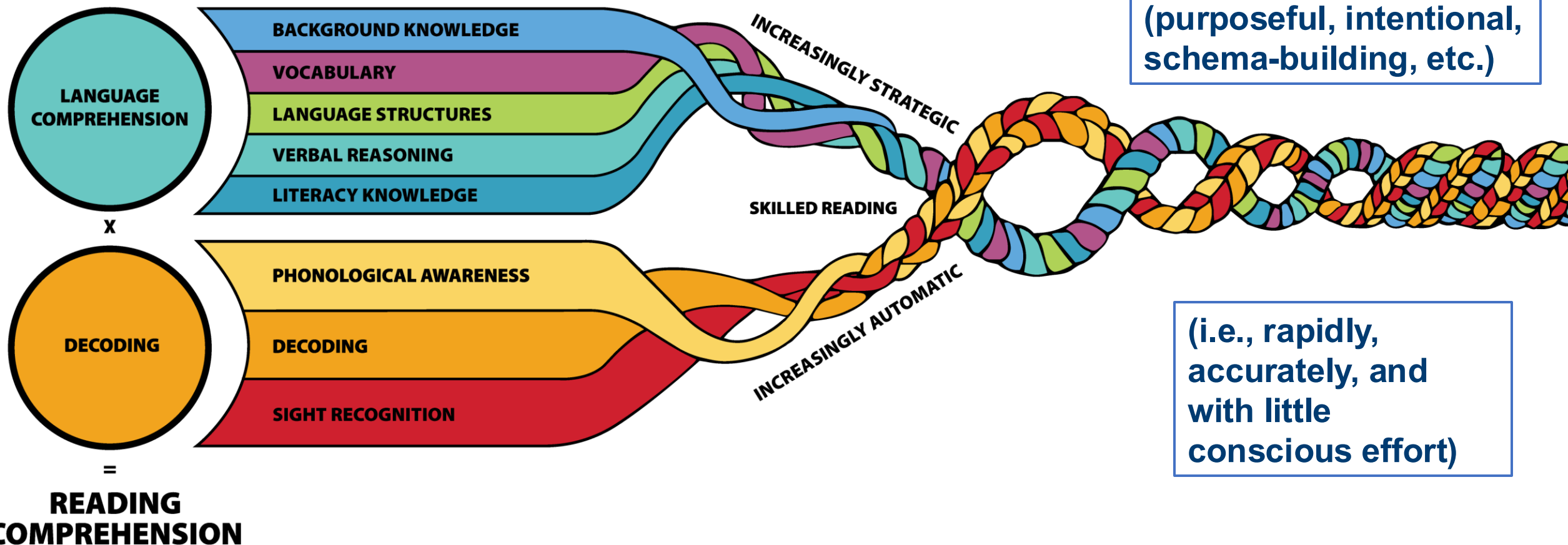
Pillars of Tier 1 Literacy

Grade-Level Content

Comprehension is the goal.

SIMPLE VIEW
OF READING

SCARBOROUGH'S READING ROPE



Reading comprehension is the ability to process written text, understand its meaning, and to integrate with what the reader already knows.



Phonemic Awareness

The ability to recognize and manipulate sound in spoken language from the phoneme to word level



Phonics

The ability to understand the relationship between graphemes and phonemes



Vocabulary

The ability to understand words in both spoken and written language



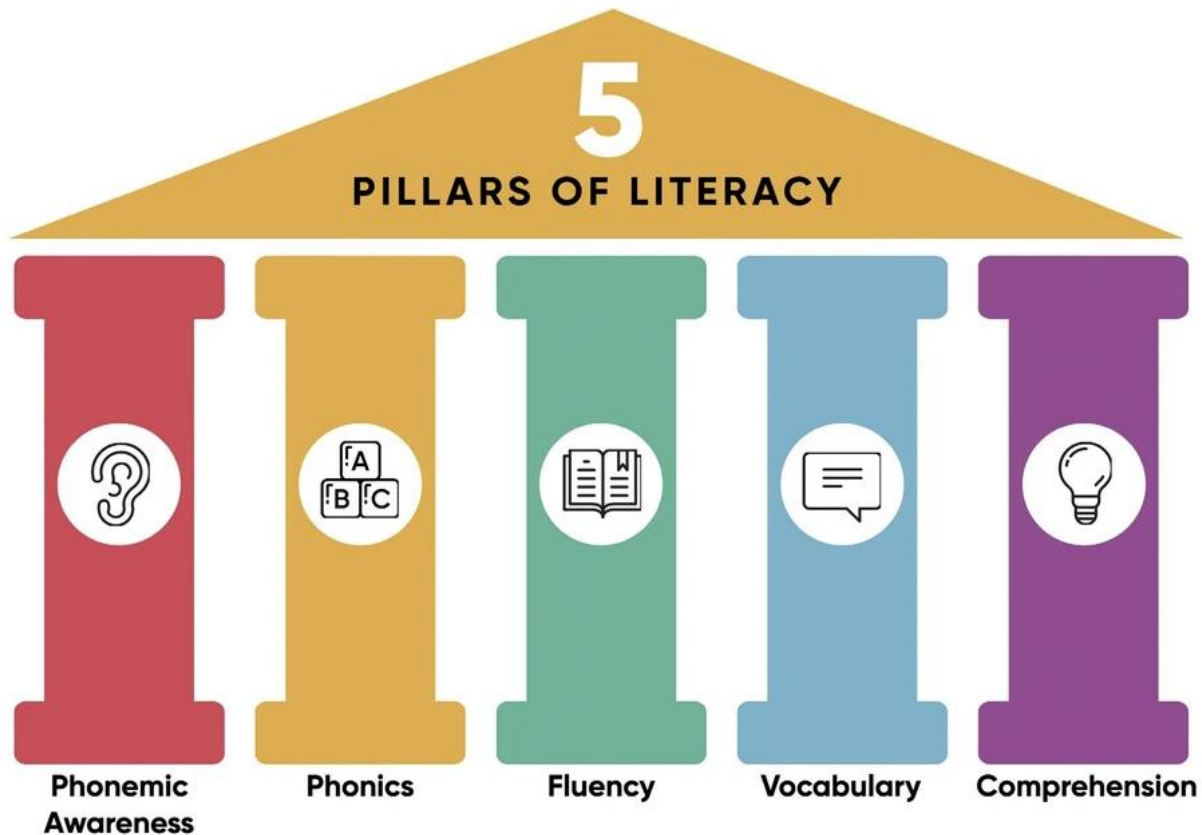
Fluency

The ability to read a text accurately, quickly, and with proper expression



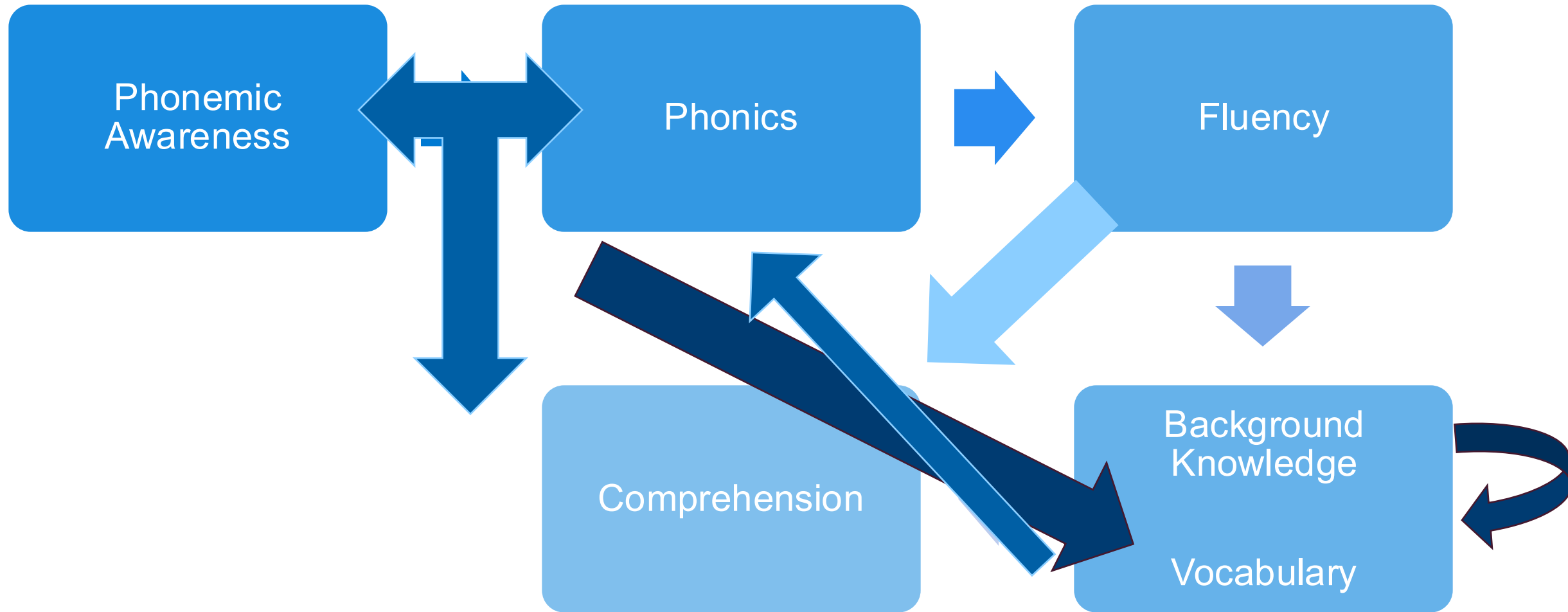
Comprehension

The ability to understand, remember, and make meaning of what is read



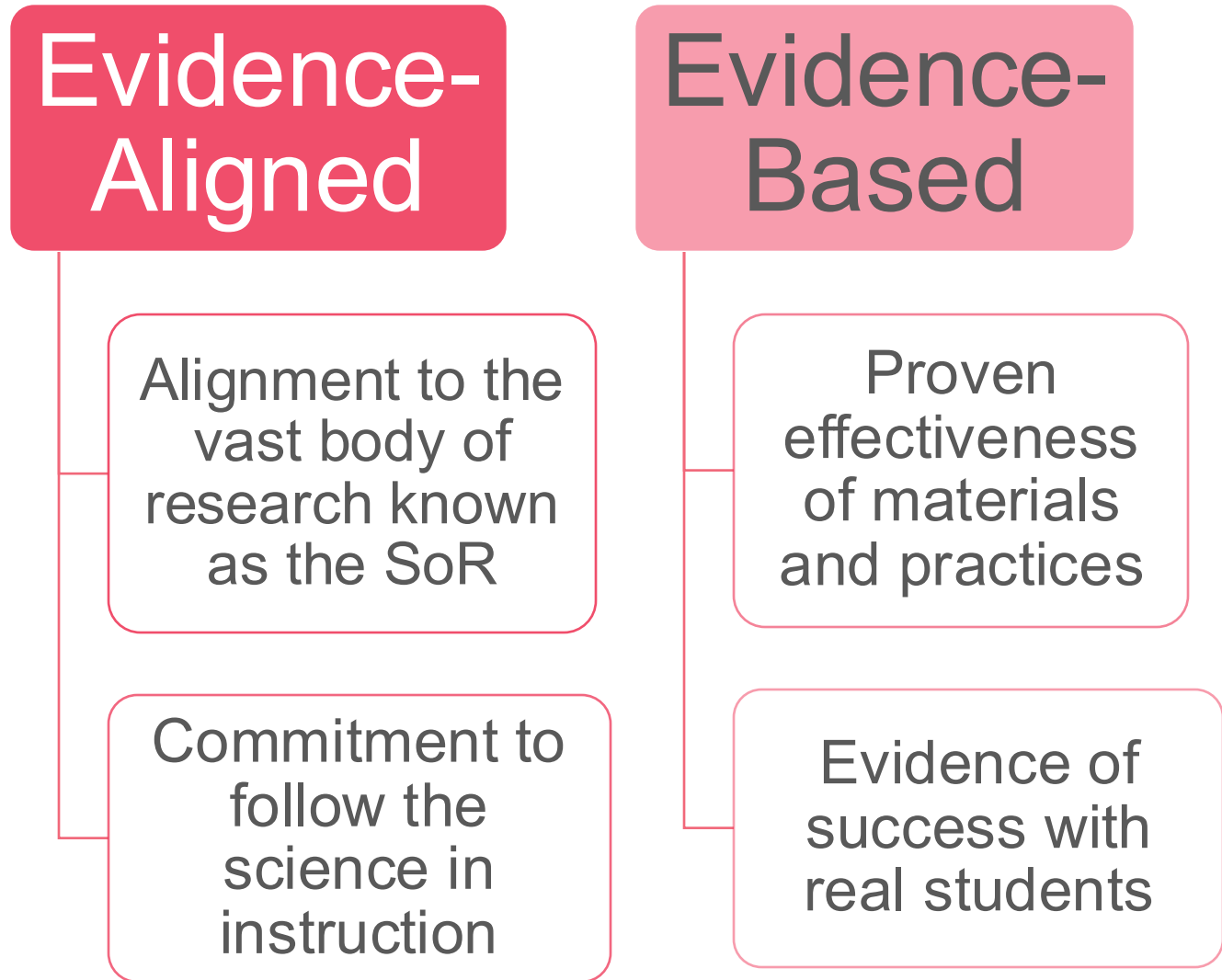
Discuss the following questions with your group:

1. How might the graphic cause confusion as it relates to comprehension?
2. What does instruction look like when components are taught in isolation?



One strand often affects the growth of the other.

What is the distinction?



(Adapted from 95% Group)

What is Tier 1 Instruction?

Ensuring All Students Receive Grade-Level Instruction

We need to create tutoring groups.

How will we intervene?

Students don't understand the material.

What program can we use to close these gaps?

Percentages were low across the board.

What system(s) can we put in place for students to retain skills?

With your table discuss the following:

1. In your PLCs, do any of these topics or questions often come up?
2. Are these topics and questions common when discussing data?
3. What is the primary focus of these questions or topics?
4. What part of instruction is not being addressed?

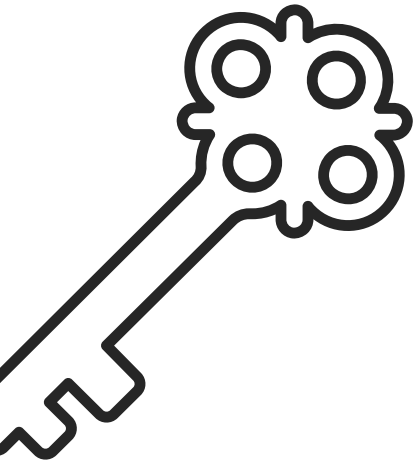
Tier 3: Intensive interventions specifically designed to meet the individual needs of students

Tier 2: Focused supplemental instruction

Tier 1: Quality classroom instruction aligned to Mississippi standards

frequency
duration
intensity





Universal: Delivered to 100% of students

High-quality, evidence-based curriculum and teaching strategies

Standards-aligned based upon grade-level expectations

Differentiated for student needs

Ongoing assessments from high-quality curriculum to monitor progress and guide instruction

Offers access to **grade-level** content for all students by

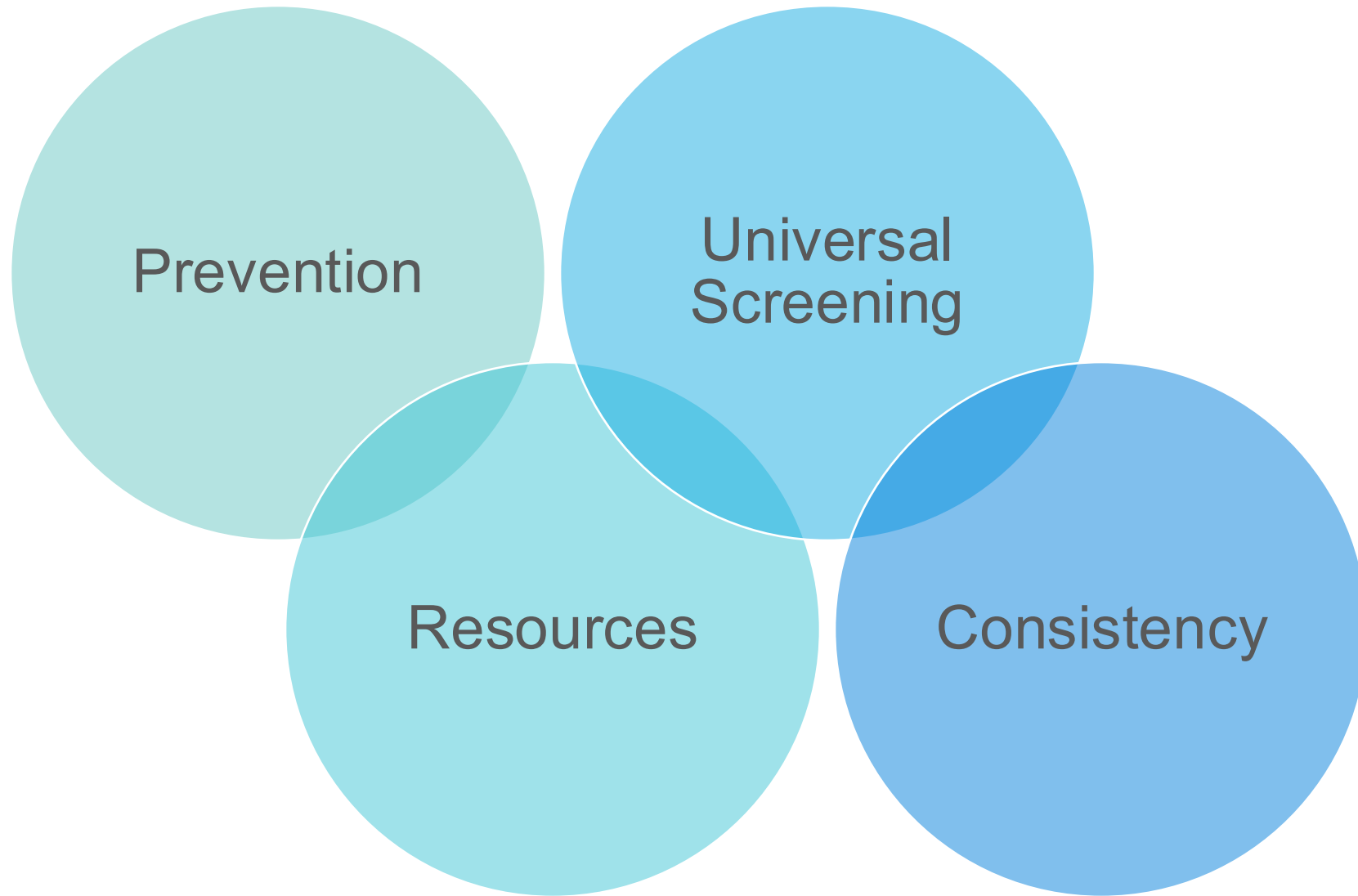
- Providing a common set of outcomes for all students
- Delivering high-quality instruction that supports most learners while differentiating for individual student needs.
- Supporting data-driven differentiated instruction
- Limiting the necessity for interventions
- Ensuring exposure to grade-level instruction and content



All children deserve Tier 1 instruction.

Number a scratch sheet of paper from 1-5. For each statement write down T for True and F for False.

1. MS CCRS should be taught in number order as they are written.
2. Foundational skills stop in second grade in Tier 1.
3. Standard 10 (read texts appropriately complex) does not have to be addressed.
4. Bootcamps can fix Tier 1 gaps.
5. Curriculum can make up for teacher knowledge.



Components of Tier 1 Instruction

01

02

03

04

05

06

07

Core Instruction

01

- Comprehensive instruction
- Cohesive content, strategies, and routines
- Common outcomes for all students
- Mastery of skills and content for 80% of students
- Clear and consistent instruction
- Engaging activities
- Collaboration
- Positive Classroom Environment

02

03

04

05

06

07

01

Grade-Level Content

02

- Contains foundational skills instruction
- Supports vocabulary and language development
- Uses complex text
- Incorporates structured writing development
- Integrates subject areas
- Includes progress monitoring, remediation, and differentiation

03

04

05

06

07

01

02

03

Standards-Aligned vs. Standards-Based



04

05

06

07

01

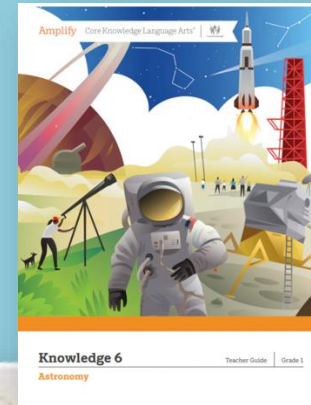
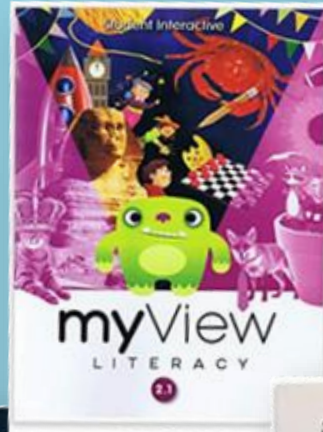
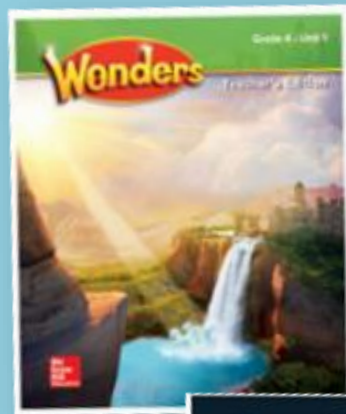
02

03

04

High-Quality Instructional Materials

- Encourages topic-focused, knowledge-building reading
- Includes evidence-based strategies



05

06

07

01

02

03

04

05

Explicit and Systematic Instruction

- Follows a sequential format, building on skills and content as the year progresses
- Includes gradual release model
- Allows for consistent routines
- Provides regular feedback

06

07

01

02

03

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06

Effective use of data, reducing Tier 2 and Tier 3

- Allow teachers to demonstrate the lesson in the order provided in the teacher's edition.
- Ensure teachers are delivering the lessons as they would in a classroom and not narrating the lesson.

07

01

02

03

04

05

06

07

Supports Learning for ALL Students

- Exposure to grade-level content
- Remediation and differentiation based on student need and implemented through Structured Literacy
- Multimodal
- Collaboration
- Purposeful tasks and text
- Targeted prompt feedback
- Interactive

Differentiation

Data-Driven, Personalized Instruction

"Differentiation means **tailoring instruction** to meet individual needs. Whether teachers differentiate content, process, products, or the learning environment, the use of **ongoing assessment and flexible grouping** makes this a successful approach to instruction."

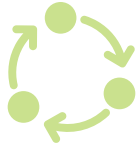
Carol Tomlinson

(Reading Rockets, 2000)



Content

What the student needs to learn and how they will **access** the information



Process

Activities that the students participate in to understand or master the content



Product

Culminating projects asking students to rehearse, apply, and extend what they have learned



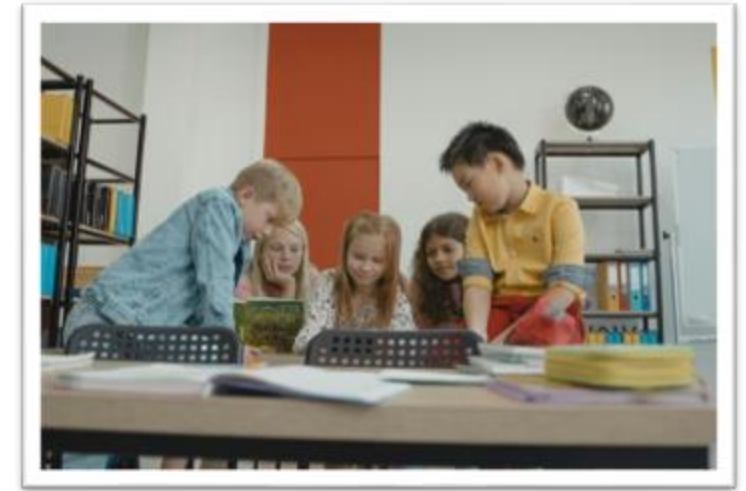
Environment

The way a **classroom** looks and feels

- Accelerates learning in content by providing content knowledge in advance for students that may lack prior knowledge
- Provides ample visual and auditory means for learning
- Re-teaches an idea or skill for students needing Tier 1 reinforcement



- Work one-on-one or in small groups with students needing extra support
- Repeat or provide written directions
- Scaffold so students can be successful with grade-level content



Not watering down instruction or changing the academic standards

- Modify scope by providing lower-level thought processes on grade-level content
- Provide extra time to complete tasks
- Offer fewer questions for student practice
- Allow choice on final output of knowledge gained



- Provide student choice
- Include student interests
- Arrange for independent, small group, and whole group interactions



Differentiation is not

- Fixed grouping
- Sustained silent reading
- No scaffolding or support
- Appealing to debunked learning styles
- Leveled readers



High-Quality Instructional Practices

HQIM Plus High-Quality Instructional Practices
Yields Student Growth

- Clear lesson goals aligned to the standards and curriculum
- Explicit and systematic instruction
- Modeled and guided practice
- Effective questioning
- Opportunities for student talk and collaboration



- When educators lack access to HQIM, we risk leaving teachers without the skills to give all their students access to high-quality academic experiences. ("The Opportunity Myth", TNTP).
- Materials not only influence the students but also the way teachers teach, which effects student outcomes.
- When students are taught using high-quality English Language Arts materials, they can make significant gains in ELA performance and college- and career-readiness (Niu, Li, Merriman, and Matos-Elfont, 2015).



Scan to access article



"Providing educators with **rigorous, aligned instructional materials** is a critically important **evidence-based reform.**"



Scan to access article

"Hiding in Plain Sight: Leveraging Curriculum To Improve Student Learning, Chiefs for Change"

“Knowledge is the key to comprehension.” –Hugh Catts

High-Quality Instructional Materials (Knowledge Building Materials)

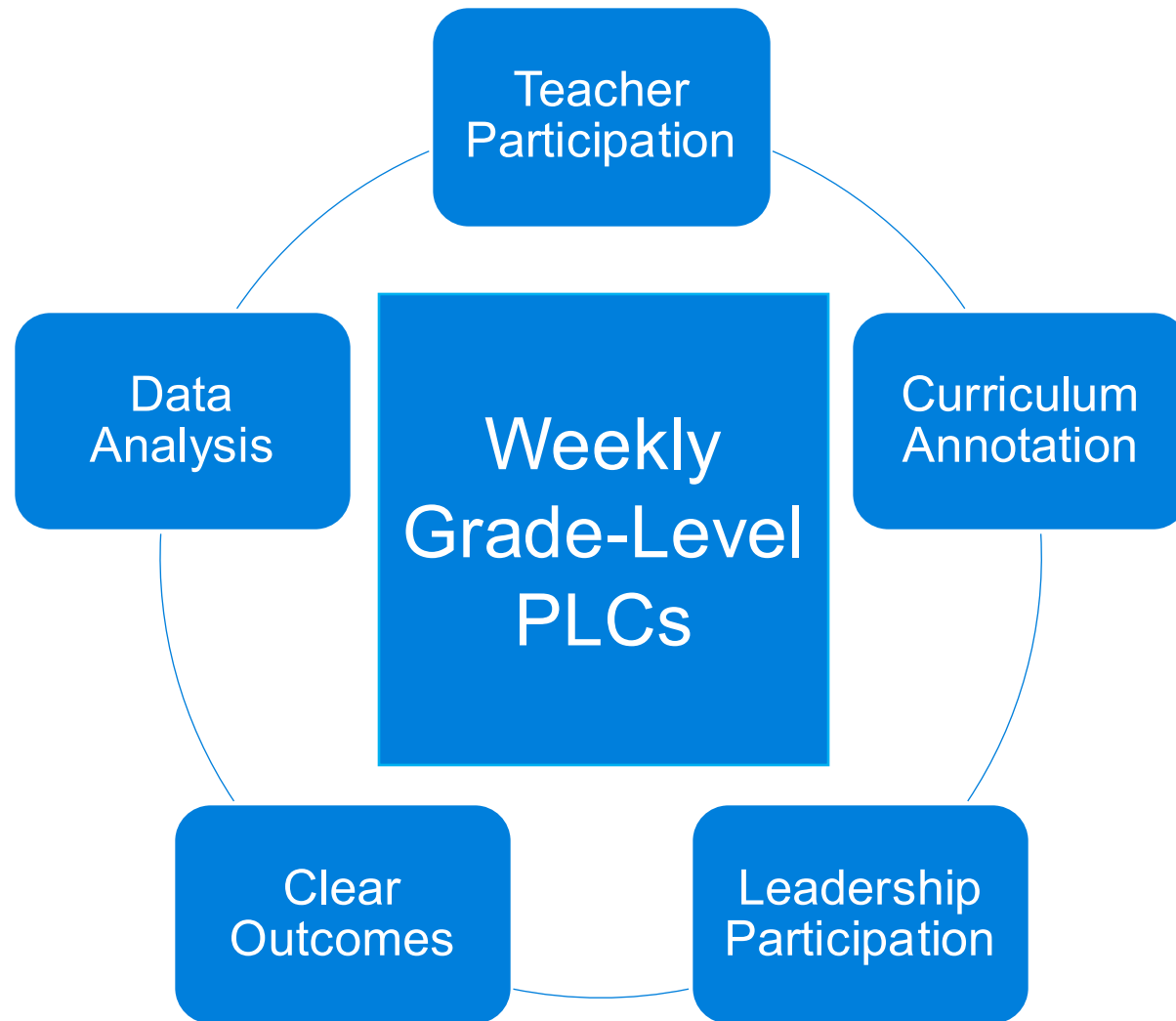
- build content knowledge through complex text
- build breadth and depth of vocabulary through topical and genre units of study
- provide embedded practices for scaffolding through text analysis
- include reader tasks that demonstrate comprehension

**Rethinking How to Promote
Reading Comprehension**



Preparing for Success

High-Quality Tier 1 Is All-Hands-On-Deck



Vertical Alignment

Third

Second

First

Kindergarten



A World of Homes: Animals and Habitats

Students explore the interconnectedness of life by learning about habitats, indigenous plants and animals, and fundamental principles of nature.



Fur, Fins, and Feathers: Animal Classification

Students explore the science of classification and develop critical scientific skills by identifying characteristics of organisms and objects and presenting evidence-based claims.



The Deep Blue World: Oceans

Students dive into the diversity of life in oceans, consider characteristics of ocean environments that support ecosystems, and collaboratively create and share their findings.



Scan to access

Atlas

Community

Characteristic

Aquatic

Ecosystem

Symbiotic

HQIM + Knowledge + Evidence + Motivation + Ongoing + Leadership

- Professional learning rooted in HQIM implementation
- Develops educators' knowledge in pedagogy and content
- Examines appropriate and timely data from curriculum-embedded assessments
- Elevates educators' voices and allows active engagement
- Ongoing through multiple modalities
- Led by qualified individuals within the context of their HQIM

(LA Dept of Ed, 2024)

- Establish classroom rules and procedures
- Teach positive behaviors
- Based on grade-level content
- Provide opportunities for student choice
- Foster positive relationships
- Test a variety of instructional strategies
- Provide consistent feedback
- Monitor student progress and use data to inform instruction
- Collaborate with colleagues and families

(Instructure, 2025)

Instructional Best Practices

For Tier 1



Explicit

TEACHING PRINCIPLES

Explicit
Systematic
Sequential
Cumulative
Diagnostic

ELEMENTS

Phonology
Orthography
Semantics
Syntax
Morphology

FEATURES

- 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)

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.



1. Follow the directions given.
2. Complete the assignment.

- What confused you? Why?
- Why was the activity easier the second time?
- How does this relate to what students experience in the classroom?



Torgesen (2004) described explicit instruction as “instruction that **does not** leave anything to chance and **does not** make assumptions about skills and knowledge that children will acquire on their own.”

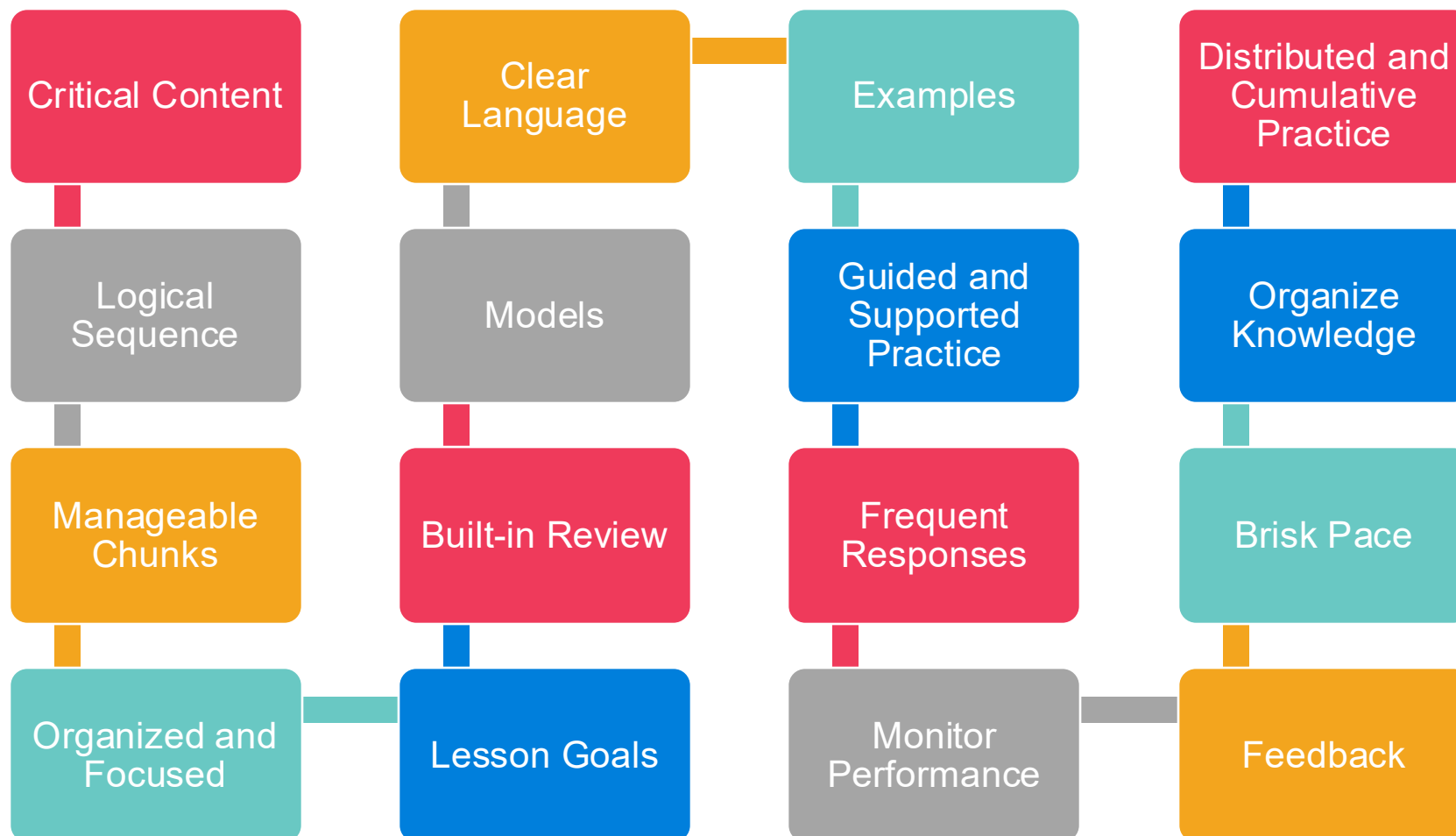
Rosenshine (1987) described explicit instruction as “a systematic method of teaching with emphasis on proceeding in **small steps**, checking for understanding, and achieving **active** and **successful participation** by all students.”

"Instruction is explicit when teachers tell students what they need to do using **direct explanations** along with **sharing** and **modeling** new knowledge" (Flethcer, Lynn, Fuchs & Barnes 2019).

Goal: Teach students to identify the first sound in a word.

- A. “The first sound in man is /mmm/. Everyone, say the first sound in man, /mmm/.”
- B. “Man starts with the same sound as the first sound in mountain, mop, and moon. Does anyone know any other words that begin with the same sound as man?”

(The Meadows Center)



16 Elements of Explicit Instruction
By: Anita L. Archer, Charles Hughes

With your table, sort the examples and non-examples of each element under the correct heading.



After sorting, discuss as a group:

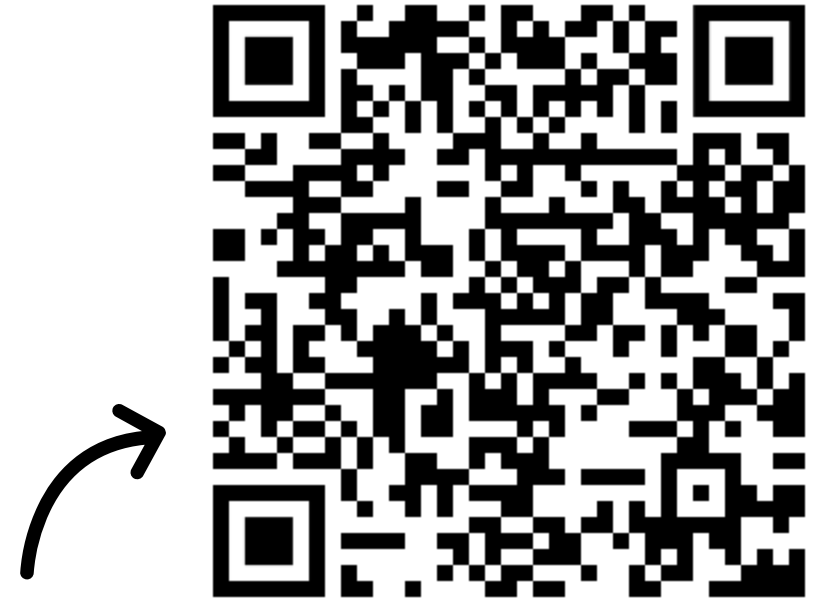
1. What patterns or surprises did you notice?
2. How might this affect your planning or instructional delivery?

Check your answers here →



Is my instruction explicit?

- Routines
- Explicit instructional dialogue
- Opportunities for application



Scan to access a checklist



Explicit



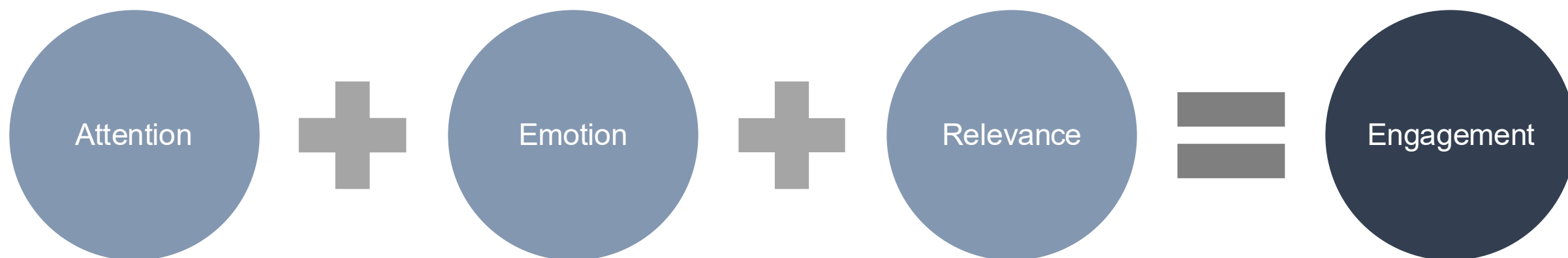
Engaging



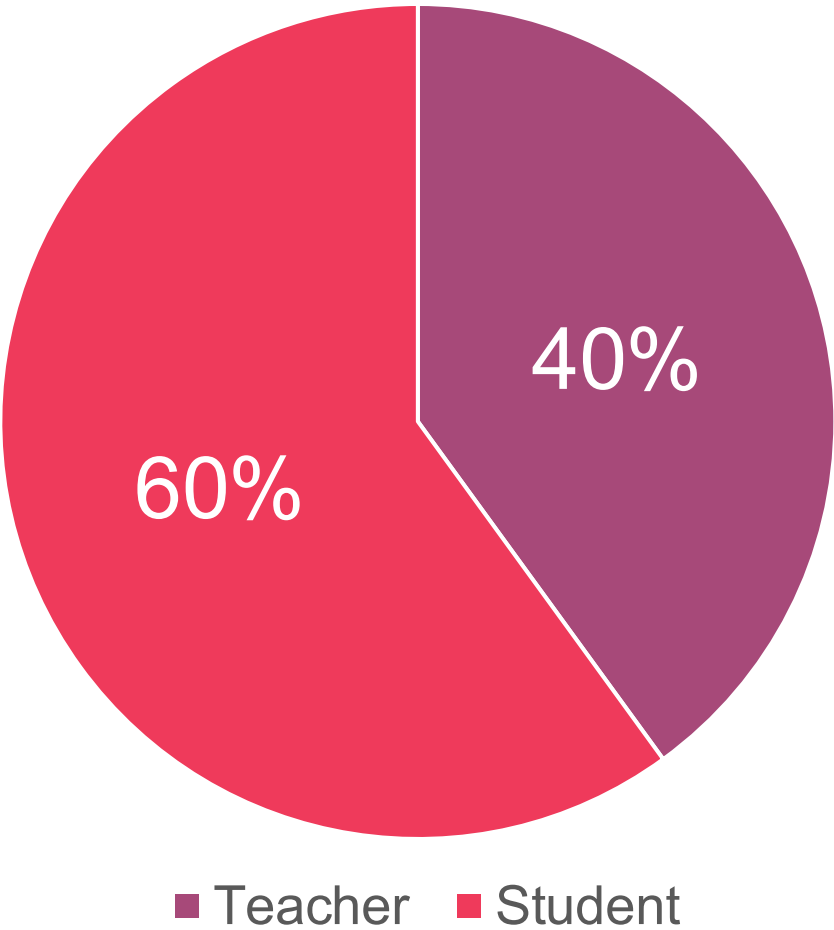
"Some research indicates that students are engaged during less than half of the time allocated for instruction, or **approximately 2 hours per day.**"

(Anderson & Walberg, 1994; Haynes & Jenkins, 1986)

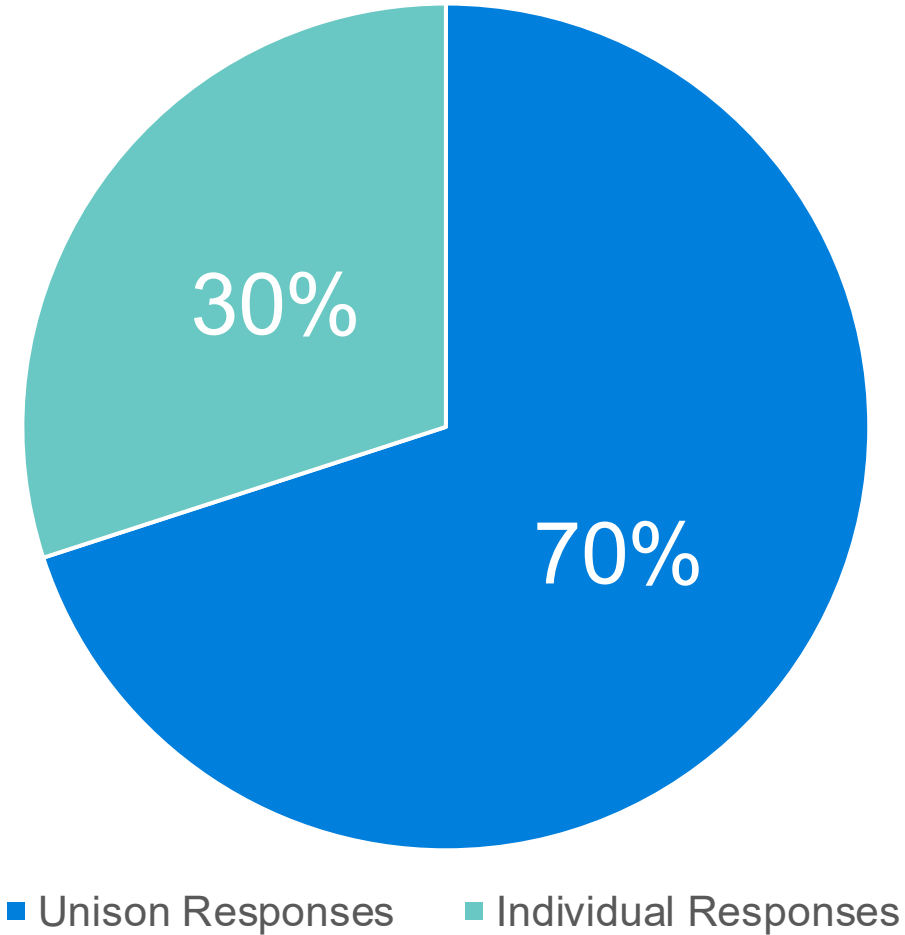
Kinross College. (n.d.). *Explicit Teaching*. Retrieved from <https://kinrosscollege.wa.edu.au/explicit-teaching/>



Classroom Talk



Student Responses





- **Eyes on the teacher, task, or materials** – Most students are visually focused and not distracted.
- **Active participation** – A range of students are answering questions, asking thoughtful ones, or contributing to discussions.
- **Checks for understanding** – Teacher is asking questions, using whiteboards, exit tickets, or thumbs-up/down to gauge comprehension.



Active Participation with Choral Reading

- **Unison Reading**

Everyone reads **together** at the same time, like a chorus.

- **Echo Reading**

Teacher reads a **line** and students repeat it back.

- **Antiphonal Reading**

The class is split into two groups, and **each group alternates lines or stanzas**.
Can be divided by sides of the room, boys/girls, or table groups.

- **Cumulative Reading**

One student or group begins, and **others join in** line by line until the whole class is reading together.

1. Scan the QR code to access the choral reading strategies.
2. Practice each strategy with your group.
3. Be prepared to answer the following question:

Engagement and Participation: In what ways might these choral reading strategies increase student engagement and participation in reading activities, especially for reluctant readers?



Benefits of Choral Reading

- Boosts Fluency
- Builds Confidence
- Encourages Teamwork and Engagement

*"Silence should be used **sparingly** during learning. Realistically, if students were to be silent for hours on end, they'll start to **detach** from their learning. The collaborative aspects of learning are important for building schema and understanding perspectives other than your own; too much silence can profoundly affect a learner's experience of your subject."*

Silence in the classroom – Why quiet lessons aren't always the answer. Teachwire.



Explicit



Engaging



Scaffolded

- Assess Prior Knowledge
- Break Down Tasks
- Provide Explicit Instruction and Modeling
- Offer Various Forms of Support
- Release Responsibility
- Provide Feedback

With scaffolding

When I taught my daughter to ride her bike, I sat on the bike to demonstrate how to ride. I started her out with training wheels. Then I gradually raised the training wheels. Once she was ready to remove the training wheels, I steadied her with my hand and walked beside her, and only then did I let her take off on her own.

Without scaffolding

When I taught my daughter to ride her bike, I explained to her how to do it. Then I put her on the bike and gave her a shove.

(Adapted from audio by Robert Reid)

Activity: Identify the Scaffolds

68

You have read Polar Bears.

Write to describe polar bears and what they eat using evidence from the text.

Word Bank


seals	polar bears	mammals
arctic	predator	cubs

Sentence Frames

The text states... on page _____

The author says...

Name: Connor Date: 4-16-20



The text states on page ¹⁴~~17~~ predators. The author says they eat seals.



Explicit



Engaging



Scaffolded



Assessed

Grade-level assessments should be administered in the same way to ensure objectivity, reliability, and validity of the results.

Measuring the Intended Construct: Consistent administration helps ensure that the assessment is measuring the intended grade-level standards and learning objectives, rather than being influenced by variations in the testing environment or procedures.

Accurate Interpretation: When an assessment is administered consistently, the scores obtained are more likely to reflect students' true understanding of the material. This allows for more accurate interpretations of student performance and better-informed instructional decisions.



What are assessments?

Assessments are the **shared processes** of **gathering purposeful** and **systematic measurement** for **documentation, reflection,** and **improvement** of both **student learning** and **instructional practices**.

Why are assessments important?

Assessments are important because **educators** can find out **what students know,** **how well they know it,** and if they need to **adjust their instruction** to **meet the needs of the learner**.

testing for the sake of testing

functioning in isolation of the curriculum

ranking children based on their performance

grouping for classroom rosters



Informal

- Given multiple times a week
- Provides quick checks of student understanding during a lesson



Formative

- Given during a defined instructional unit
- Provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning



Summative

- Given at the end of a defined instructional unit
- Evaluates student performance against a set of learning targets



Benchmark

- Given at various check points
- Evaluates student knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of goals

(EdWeek, 2015)

BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT



DESIGN – May or may not consider district pacing; controlled by local agency

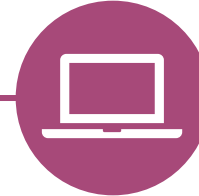
ITEMS – May be chosen based on a single, isolated standard; unknown method for item difficulty selection

FORM – Does not apply the same rigorous psychometric standards

PASSAGES – Unknown method for passage selection

MEASURES – Individual students or classes

ADMINISTERED – Intermittently, often at the end of a quarter or semester, or a midpoint of a curricular unit.



STATE ASSESSMENT

DESIGN – Guided by end of year standard expectations

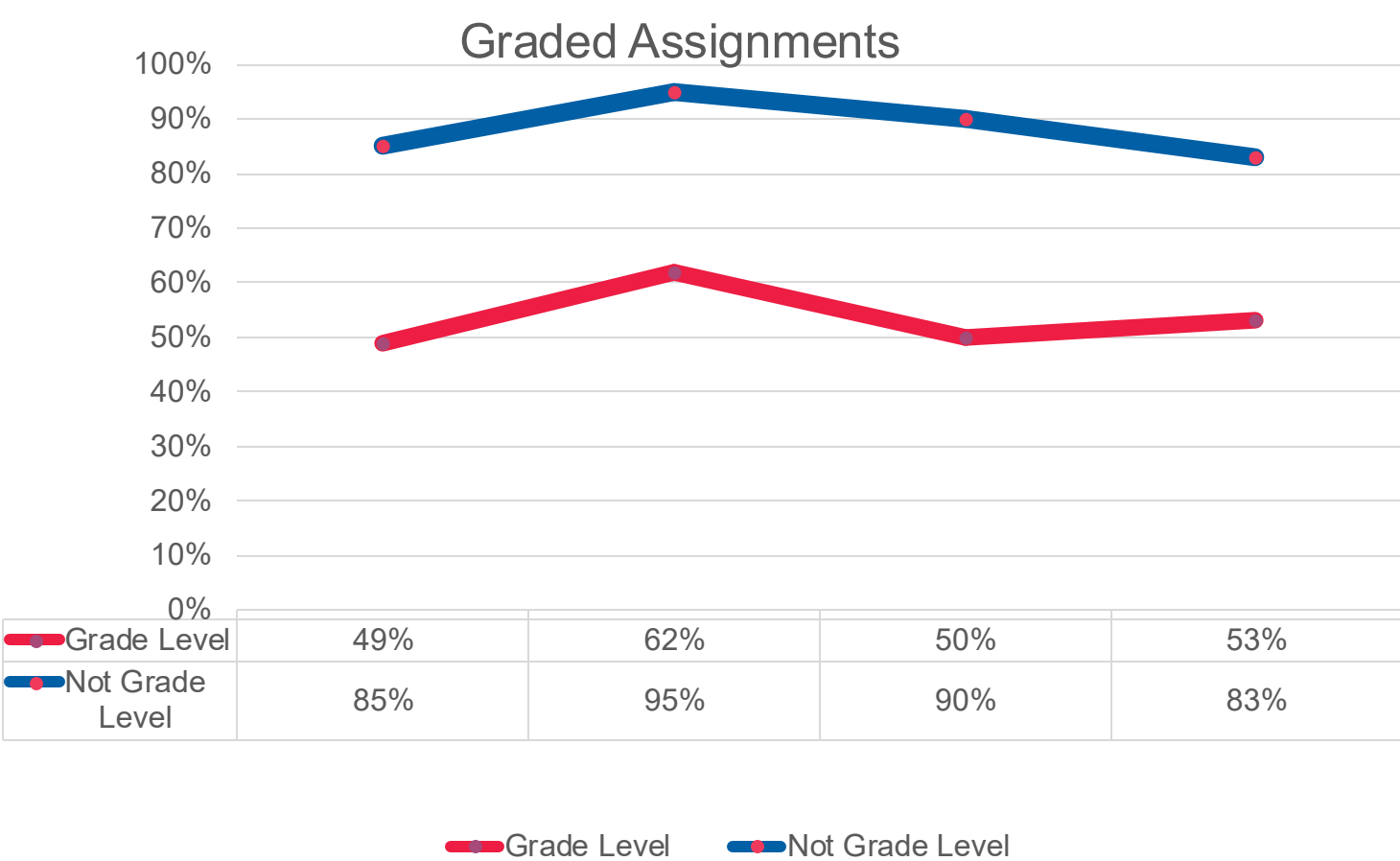
ITEMS – Item selection is determined by item usability statics (performance based on gender, racial bias, point biserial correlation - high performers vs. low performers)

FORM – Psychometric experts equate each form to ensure comparability from year to year

PASSAGES – Represent a variety of text complexities determined by quantitative measures; receive input from educators through qualitative rubrics and considerations of the reader and task

MEASURES – The educational environment (teachers, curricula, education systems, programs, etc.)

ADMINISTERED – Annually



Grade Level	Not Grade Level
49	85
62	94
50	98
53	88





Explicit



Engaging



Scaffolded



Assessed



Remediated



What can happen if teachers do not remediate grade-level content when there are misconceptions?

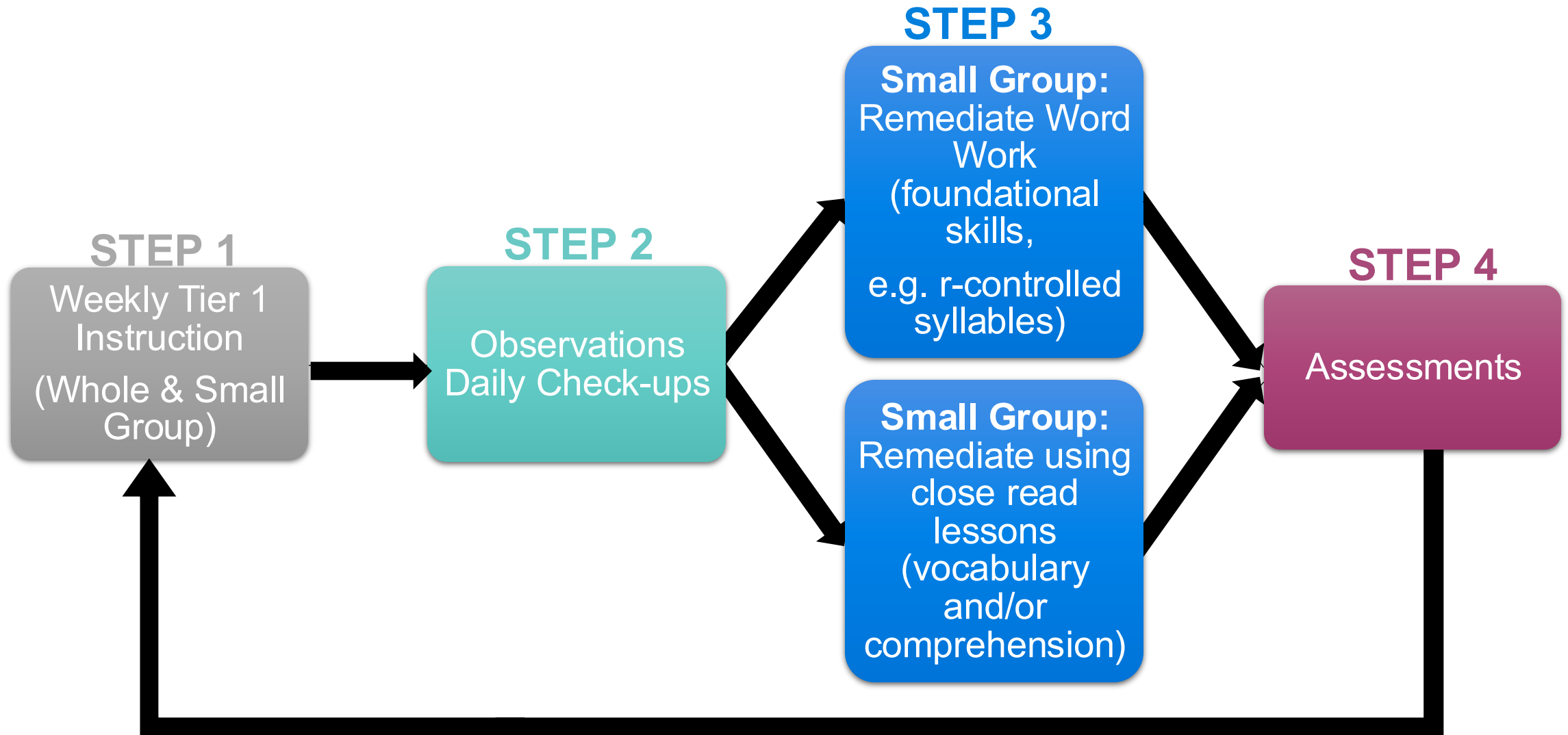
- Misconceptions become cemented.
- Academic gaps widen.
- More time may be needed later.
- Decreased confidence can occur.

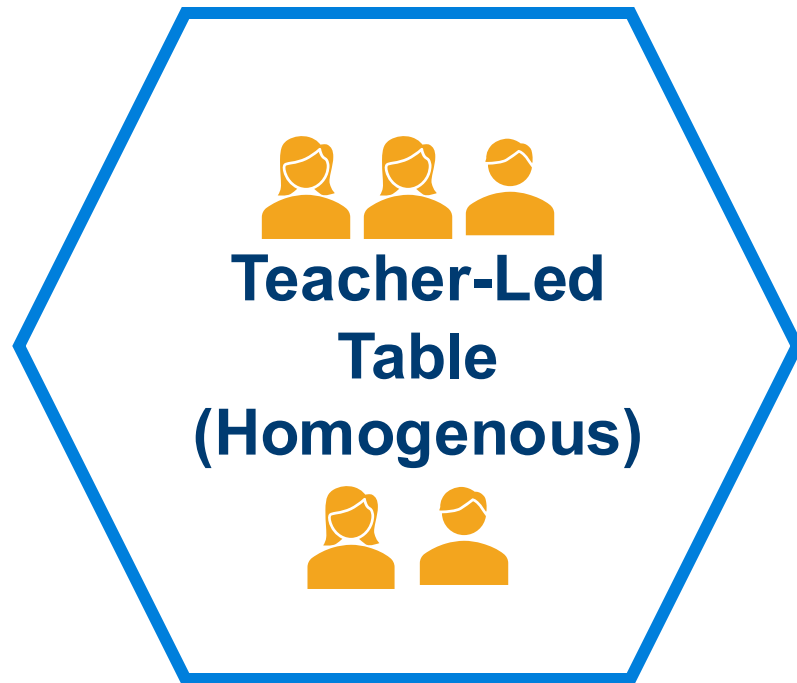
Focus on Current Grade Content: The primary goal is to ensure students master the **essential knowledge and skills** for their current grade-level.

Timely: Remediation happens **soon** after a learning need is identified, often through formative assessment.

Targeted Support: Instruction is tailored to address the **specific areas** where students are struggling within the **current grade's content**.

Integration with Curriculum: Ideally, grade-level remediation is **integrated** with ongoing instruction, rather than being a separate, isolated activity.





**Heterogenous
Groups**



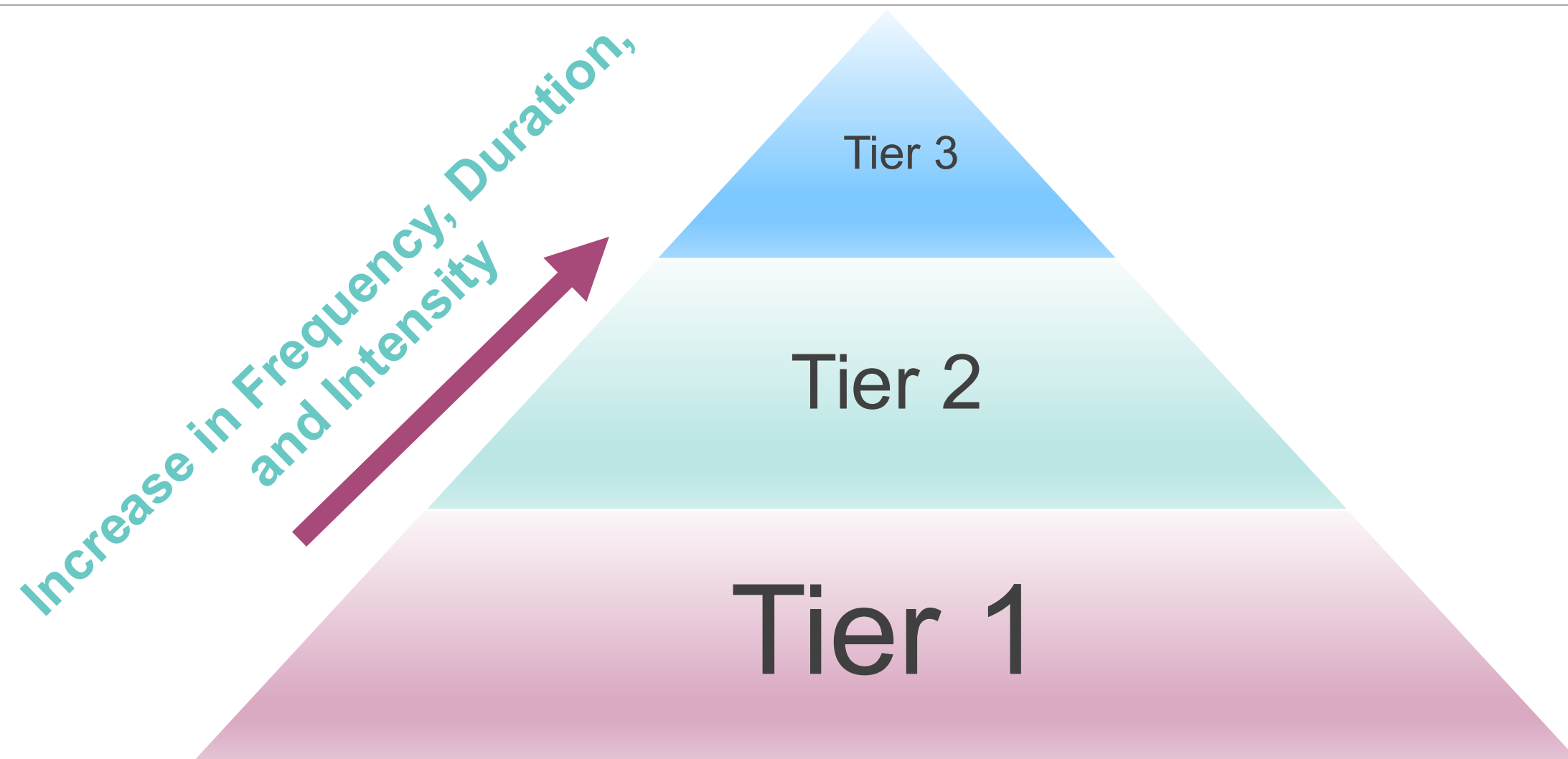
Tier 1



In Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

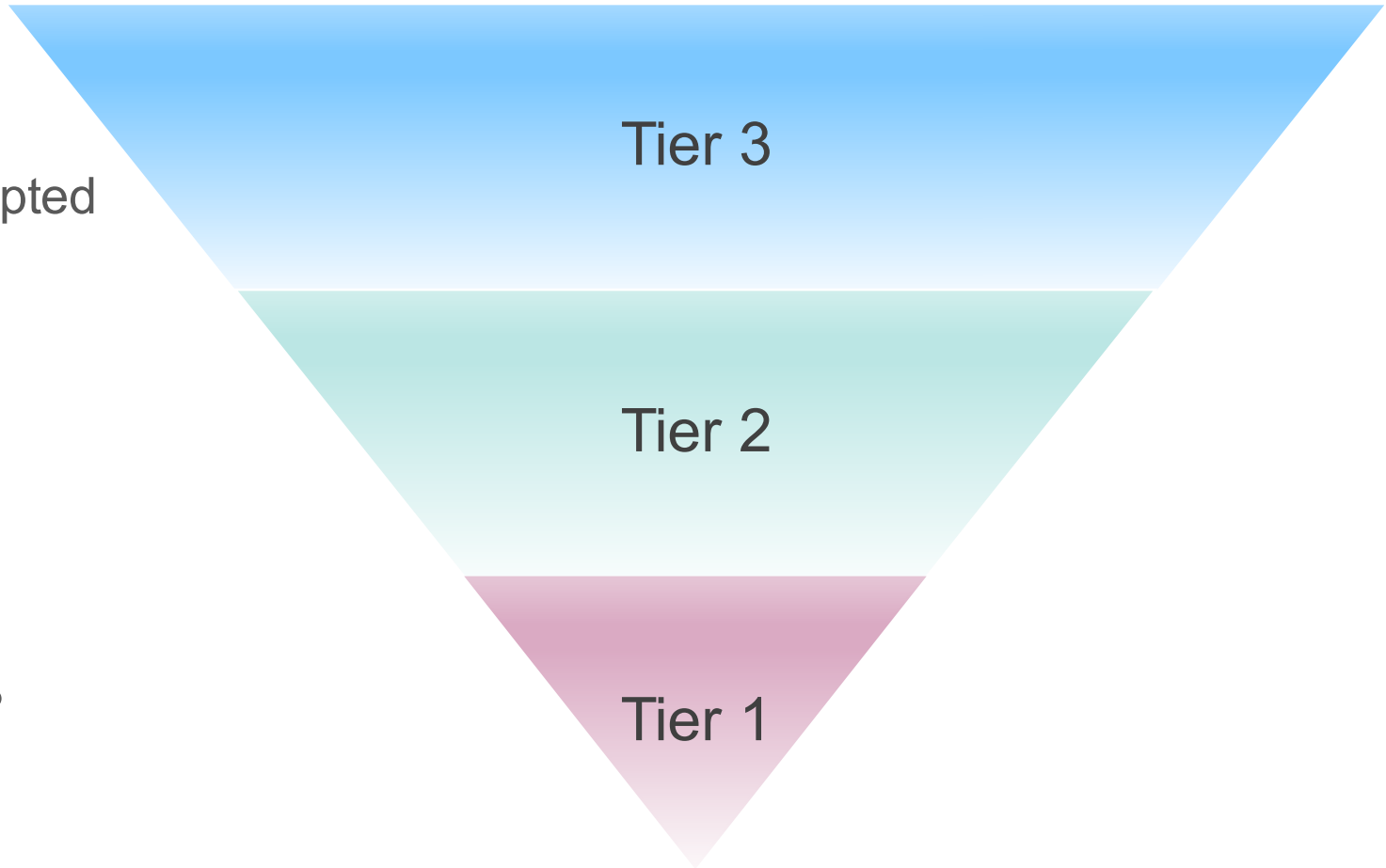
120 minutes (90 minutes minimum)
Uninterrupted
Cohesion with other Tiers
Grade-Level Content

Tier 1



If you currently have more students populating in Tier 3 and Tier 2 than in Tier 1, ask the following:

- Is the reading block conducive to a minimum of 90 minutes of uninterrupted instruction?
- Are the routines of the curriculum implemented with fidelity?
- Does the teacher use a variety of multisensory techniques?
- Are external factors addressed (attendance, vision, behavior, etc.)?
- Is there coherence among tiers?

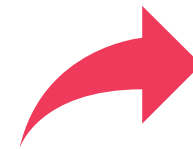


Imagine the following scenarios as a struggling student:

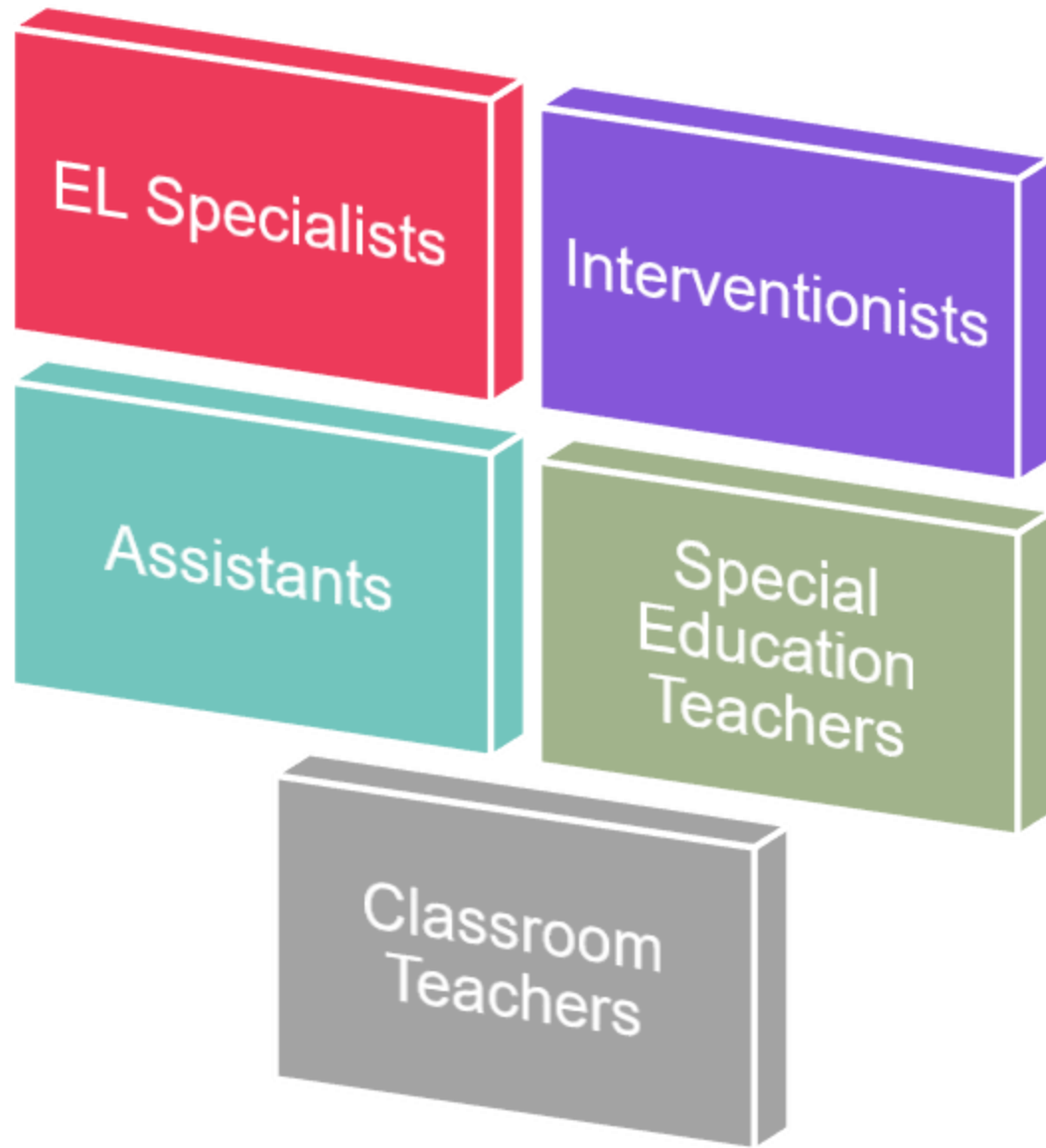
1. In your Tier 1 classroom, your teacher refers to “oa” as a vowel team. In your pull-out, the interventionist refers to it as a vowel variant.
2. Your interventionist uses dated materials and teaches /cl/ as a single sound, whereas the Tier 1 curriculum teaches cl as a blend of two separate sounds. 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 HFW, but in Tier 1 the teacher uses arm spelling for isolating sounds and finger spelling for HFW.

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



- Consistent Academic Language
- Reliable Routines
- Effective Instruction with Explicit Instructional Dialogue
- Data Alignment



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)



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.

Tier 1 - Primary prevention of reading deficits

- All students receive Tier 1 instruction.
- Tier 1 is high-quality instruction tailored to grade-level needs.
- It is designed to help the majority (about 80%) of students meet grade-level reading expectations.
- Instructional time, grouping, routines, and materials are aligned to student needs.
- Effective Tier 1 instruction reduces the need for additional interventions.

- Ofgang, E. (2023, November 27). *Strengthening Tier 1 With High-Impact Instructional Practices*. Tech & Learning. <https://www.techlearning.com/how-to/strengthening-tier-1-with-high-impact-instructional-practices>
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