



## Dyslexia Community of Practice Session 3: Structured Literacy

Sharon Vaughn & Elizabeth Stevens

November 4, 2025

mimtsstac.org



### Presenters:

The content for this training day was developed based on the work of:



Sharon Vaughn, PhD  
Professor, The University of Texas at Austin  
Executive Director, Meadows Center for Preventing  
Educational Risk



Elizabeth Stevens, PhD  
Associate Professor, University of Kansas



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### A Note about Recording



- We are recording this session so the content may be available to:
  - Others in our Dyslexia Community of Practice who were unable to attend today
  - You! If you want to refer to this session later, it's available to you.
- Rest assured the recordings will not be made publicly available, so we hope you'll share your ideas freely within this safe space.

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## Training Effectiveness

- At the end of the session, you will be asked to provide feedback on today's training
- Results will be used to make improvements to professional learning and for reporting to TA Center stakeholders
- One of the feedback questions you will see is related to promoting and positively portraying diversity among educators and learners (e.g., focus on asset-based language, positive representation of multiple identities)

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## Group Agreements

### We are Responsible

- Return on time from breaks
- Take care of our needs

### We are Engaged

- Share what you know and ask questions
- Plan to participate in multiple ways
  - Chat, breakout rooms, polls, reactions, unmute
  - Ask questions

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## We want to hear from you!

We are committed to making this time engaging and meaningful to support your learning as a teacher and coach. When you see these icons, please join in the conversation via the chat or in your breakout sessions.



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## MiMTSS Dyslexia CoP Session Schedule

Date	Time	Topic
September 9, 2025	2:00-3:30pm ET	The Neurobiological Underpinnings of Dyslexia
October 7, 2025	10:00-11:30am ET	Misunderstandings of the Science of Reading
→ November 4, 2025	3:00-4:30pm ET	Structured Literacy
December 3, 2025	11:00am-12:30pm ET	Multisyllabic Word Instruction
January 23, 2026	2:00-3:30pm ET	Supporting Reading Comprehension for Students with Dyslexia
February 24, 2026	10:00-11:30am ET	Differentiating Tier 1 Instruction for Students with Dyslexia
March 26, 2026	3:00-4:30pm ET	Using Data to Inform Instruction
April 20, 2026	11:00am-12:30pm ET	Deliberate Practice and Feedback: The Secret Sauce

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## Agenda

- 3:00-3:10 Welcome and check-in on Session 2 
- 3:10-3:50 Content presentation
- 3:50-4:05 Application activity
- 4:05-4:15 Debrief application activity as a whole group
- 4:15-4:30 Wrap up (i.e., answer follow-up questions, review resources, set goals for applying lessons learned, preview next session)


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In the chat: Share one takeaway you learned from session 2 (i.e., misconceptions about the SoR).



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## Objectives

- 1**  
**Define** structured literacy.
- 2**  
**Explain** the content and features of Structured Literacy.
- 3**  
**Identify** examples of Structured Literacy content and features.
- 4**  
**Explain** the findings of the OG meta-analysis.
- 5**  
**Sort and explain** whether instructional practices are compatible with Structured Literacy.

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# What is Structured Literacy?

## Structured Literacy

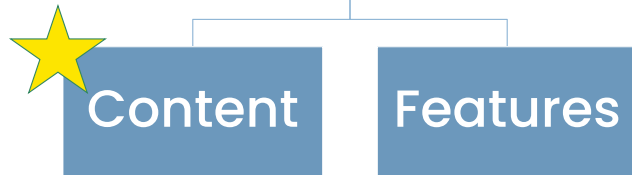
- Umbrella term
- An approach to intervention
- Adopted by IDA (2019, 2020)
- Interventions that have a set of common
  - Features
  - Content

(Spear-Swerling, 2019, 2022)

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# Structured Literacy



(Spear-Swerling, 2019, 2022)



## Structured Literacy Content

### Phonemic awareness and Phonics

- Awareness that spoken words are made up of phonemes; how sounds map to print

### Orthography

- Knowledge of common spelling patterns in English

### Morphology

- Knowledge of word parts and their meanings

### Syntax

- "Rules" of language; sentence structure or how words are put in order

### Semantics

- Understanding the meaning of words, sentences, paragraphs

### Comprehension-supportive practices

- Join us on January 23 to learn more...

(Fletcher et al., 2019; NRP, 2000; Seidenberg, 2017; Spear-Swerling, 2019, 2022; Vaughn et al., 2022)



# Structured Literacy



(Spear-Swerling, 2019, 2022)



## Features of Structured Literacy

Explicit teaching

Targeted, specific feedback

Systematic teaching

Planned, purposeful examples, tasks, and text

Consistent application of skills

Data-based decision making (diagnostic)


(Fletcher et al., 2019; NRP, 2000; Seidenberg, 2017; Spear-Swerling, 2019, 2022; Vaughn et al., 2022)



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When poll is active respond at [PollEv.com/elizabethste773](https://PollEv.com/elizabethste773)

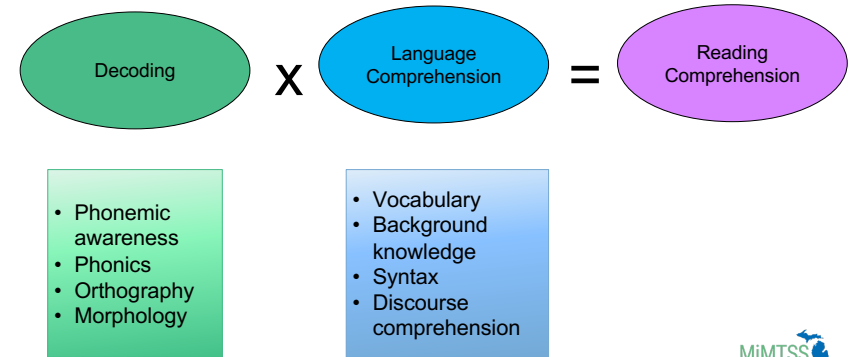


**3. Structured Literacy is specifically for students with dyslexia.**

True  
False

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## Simple View of Reading



Structured literacy is effective for a student experiencing reading difficulties

These profiles help you plan SL intervention based on students' specific needs

Specific word reading difficulty (dyslexia)

Specific reading comprehension difficulty


Mixed reading difficulties

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**4. Orton Gillingham is the core Structured Literacy approach that should be used with dyslexic students.**

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## What is Orton Gillingham (OG)?



“A direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, and prescriptive way to teach reading and spelling” (OG Academy, 2020 October 14)



When first developed in the 1930's, OG was unique in:

- Providing explicit instruction in how letters and letter combinations map to sounds.
- Systematically teaching students how to use this information to read and spell words.

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5. Have you heard about the OG meta-analysis? 0

Yes

No

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## What is a meta-analysis?

Examining data from a body of research (vs. one study)

- We do not want to base educational decisions off the findings from a single study.

Systematic vs. “cherry picking” studies

Combine the effects of multiple studies providing a mean effect size (average impact across studies)

More confidence in findings that converge across a body of research versus in one or two studies

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## The OG meta-analysis

Systematically searched for an identified all studies on:

- Branded OG programs
- Unbranded OG interventions

Included studies that provided OG-based intervention to K-12 students with or at risk for a word-level reading disability

Review

Current State of the Evidence:  
Examining the Effects of Orton-  
Gillingham Reading Interventions  
for Students With or at Risk for  
Word-Level Reading Disabilities

Elizabeth A. Stevens<sup>1</sup>, Christy Austin<sup>1</sup>, Clint Moore<sup>1</sup>,  
Nancy Scammacca<sup>2</sup>, Alexis N. Boucher<sup>2</sup>,  
and Sharon Vaughn<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract**  
Over the past decade, parent advocacy groups led a grassroots movement resulting in most states adopting dyslexia-specific legislation, with many states mandating the use of the Orton-Gillingham approach to reading instruction. Orton-Gillingham is a direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, and prescriptive approach to reading for students with or at risk for word-level reading disabilities (WLRD). Evidence from a prior synthesis and What Works Clearinghouse reports provided findings lacking support for the effectiveness of Orton-Gillingham interventions. We conducted a meta-analysis to examine the effects of Orton-Gillingham reading interventions on the reading outcomes of students with or at risk for WLRD. Findings suggested Orton-Gillingham reading interventions do not statistically significantly improve foundational skill outcomes (i.e., phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, spelling) effect size (ES) = 0.02,  $p = .40$ , although the mean ES was positive in favor of Orton-Gillingham-based approaches. Similarly, there were not significant differences for vocabulary and comprehension outcomes (ES = 0.14,  $p = .59$ ) for students with or at risk for WLRD. More high-quality, rigorous research with larger samples of students with WLRD is needed to fully understand the effects of Orton-Gillingham interventions on the reading outcomes for this population.

(Stevens et al., 2021)

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## What were the findings?

### Foundational skills (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, spelling)

- $ES = 0.22$  ( $p = .40$ )
- Students who received OG interventions did not perform significantly better than those who received comparison condition reading instruction on foundational reading measures

### Vocab and comp skills

- $ES = 0.14$  ( $p = .59$ )
- Students who received OG interventions did not perform significantly better than those who received comparison condition reading instruction on vocab and comp measures

(Stevens et al., 2021)

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## What about study quality?

Study	Design	Comparison group	Implementation fidelity	M rating
Bjillinghoff (2015)	⊙	⊙	•	1.00
Christodoulou et al. (2017)	⊙	•	•	0.67
Dooley (1994) <sup>a</sup>	⊙	⊙	•	1.00
Fritz (2016)	⊙	⊙	⊙	1.33
Gress (2005) <sup>b</sup>	•	•	⊙	0.33
Gunn (1996)	•	⊙	•	1.00
Hoek et al. (2001) <sup>a</sup>	•	⊙	•	1.00
Kuzumbros (1993)	⊙	⊙	•	1.00
Kuvelke (1996) <sup>b</sup>	•	•	•	0.00
Laub (1997)	⊙	•	•	0.33
Lichter and Roberge (1979) <sup>a</sup>	⊙	•	•	0.33
Oakland et al. (1998) <sup>a</sup>	⊙	•	•	0.33
Rauch (2017)	⊙	⊙	•	1.00
Reed (2013)	⊙	•	•	0.33
Reuter (2006)	⊙	⊙	•	1.00
Simpson et al. (1992) <sup>a</sup>	⊙	•	•	0.33
Stewart (2011)	⊙	⊙	•	1.00
Torgesen et al. (1999)	⊙	•	•	0.67
OG vs. no intervention	⊙	•	•	1.33
OG vs. regular classroom support	⊙	⊙	•	2.00
Torgesen et al. (2007)	⊙	⊙	⊙	2.00
Wade (1993) <sup>b</sup>	•	•	•	0.00
Wanzak and Roberts (2012)	⊙	•	⊙	1.00
Wanzak-Bead (1993) <sup>b</sup>	⊙	•	•	1.00
Wille (1993) <sup>b</sup>	•	•	•	0.00
Young (2001) <sup>b</sup>	⊙	⊙	•	1.00
Average score by indicator	0.95	1.00	0.17	0.76

Note. M rating for each study provided on a scale of 0 to 2. ⊙ = exemplary (2); ⊙ = acceptable (1); • = unacceptable (0); ⊙ = Chron-Gillingham; BAU = business as usual.  
<sup>a</sup> Study included in Ritchey and Goeke (2006).  
<sup>b</sup> Study not included in the meta-analysis.

(Stevens et al., 2021)

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- We have greater confidence in the findings of high-quality studies

- We examined study quality based on 3 indicators

Study Design  
Comparison Group  
Implementation Fidelity

## What about study quality?

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Gress (2005) <sup>b</sup>	•	•	⊙	0.33
Gunn (1996)	•	⊙	•	1.00
Hoek et al. (2001) <sup>a</sup>	•	⊙	•	0.33
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<sup>a</sup> Study included in Ritchey and Goeke (2006).  
<sup>b</sup> Study not included in the meta-analysis.

Additional high-quality research is needed to inform our understanding of the effects of OG.

## So, what does this mean?

Ritchey & Goeke (2006) found the research to be insufficient (number and quality of studies)

This meta-analysis does not suggest OG interventions significantly improve foundational skills or vocabulary/reading comprehension over and above comparison condition instruction

0.22 ES on foundational reading skills suggests promise but not confidence

Additional, high-quality research is needed

We DO know there are aspects of the OG approach aligned with evidence (e.g., systematic, explicit phonics instruction)

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Visual settings Edit






Join by Web [PollEv.com/elizabethste773](https://poll.ev.com/elizabethste773)

6. Multisensory instruction is the "secret sauce" in a Structured Literacy approach that helps dyslexic students learn to read.

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### Multisensory Instruction

- Multisensory instruction simultaneously activates visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile senses.

Visual 	Auditory 	Kinesthetic/Tactile 
	/m/ <u>m</u> ap <u>m</u> an <u>m</u> et	



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## A structured literacy approach to reading and spelling

What would this look like for students with dyslexia?

### A Structured Literacy approach to word reading

**Structured Literacy**

- Explicit and systematic 
- Elkonin boxes
- Controlled words for practice
  - flat
  - flop
  - flip
- Phoneme level
  - /f/ /l/ /o/ /p/ 

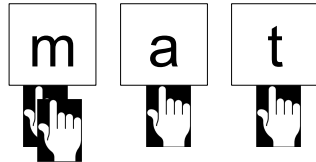
**Typical literacy**

- Focus on larger units of words
  - Onset-rime
  - word families
- Fewer opportunities to practice with the teacher
- Instruction is not explicit or systematic

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## Sample "I do" for reading CVC words

**Teacher:** We're going to blend 3 sounds to read words. I'll show you how to do it first.



[Teacher points to each sound.] /m/ /a/ /t/. Mat.

## A Structured Literacy approach to spelling

### Structured Literacy

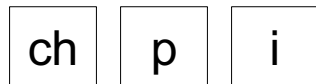
- Elkonin boxes to practice writing (or building) words
- Reinforce word reading (e.g., I blends)
- Integrate phonemic awareness (segmenting phonemes)
- Controlled practice with phonemes that have been explicitly taught

### Typical literacy


- Whole word level
- Sorting words
- Fewer opportunities to practice with the teacher
- Instruction is not explicit or systematic

## Sample "I do" for spelling (word building)

**Teacher:** I'm going to show you how to spell *chip*.



## Agenda

- 3:00-3:10 Welcome and check-in on Session 1
- 3:10-3:50 Content presentation
- 3:50-4:05 Application activity 
- 4:05-4:15 Debrief application activity as a whole group
- 4:15-4:30 Wrap up (i.e., answer follow-up questions, review resources, set goals for applying lessons learned, preview next session)

## Reminder: Our Breakout Room Norms

- Identify the **facilitator** who will lead discussion and keep the group moving forward
- Identify a **notetaker** who will document key ideas and share those with the larger group (in the chart or aloud)
- Identify a **timekeeper** who will keep track of time and support with making sure the group answers all questions



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## In your breakout rooms...




Part 1: Consider each of the following and decide if it would be compatible or incompatible with a SL approach and explain why:

- Three cueing
- Independent reading or center work
- Decodable text
- Predictable text
- Word sorts for spelling
- Teaching students how to blend CVC words before teaching them how to read CCVC or CVCC words
- As students read, letting errors go if they don't impact the meaning of the text
- Teaching students to spell words by focusing on the shape of the word

Part 2 (if time allows): Identify 1-2 takeaways that resonated with you from today's session

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## Let's debrief!

What questions do you have for us related to today's content and/or the application activity?

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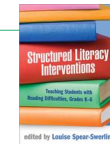
4:15-4:30 Wrap up



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## More Resources to Explore

1. Structured Literacy Interventions



2. PaTTAN Book Study Presentation by Dr. Spear-Swerling (Youtube)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCf5hSuav18>

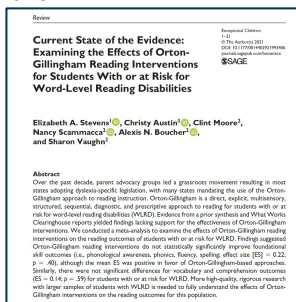
3. Structured Literacy and Typical Literacy Practices (Spear-Swerling, 2018)  
*Teaching Exceptional Children*



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## More Resources to Explore

4. Meta-analysis on Orton Gillingham interventions in *Exceptional Children*



## More Resources to Explore

5. Paper in *The Reading League Journal* explaining the findings from the OG meta-analysis

Hot Topics in Reading Science Commentary

**What Does Science Say About Orton-Gillingham Interventions? An Explanation and Commentary on the Stevens et al. (2021) Meta-Analysis**

by Emily Solari, Yaacov Petscher, and Colby Hall

A recent meta-analysis published in *Exceptional Children* (Stevens et al., 2021) looked at the effects of Orton-Gillingham (OG) reading interventions on reading outcomes for students who have word reading difficulties. The results of the study, which showed no statistically significant effect but a practically important effect size (discussed further below), have led to questions and lively conversation among practitioners and reading researchers. One of the things that is important about science is that it is constantly evolving. This is true in education science as much as it is in the health sciences. Because this journal is committed to translating empirical findings from reading research in order to make education science accessible to practitioners, the intent of this commentary is to provide a clear description of the findings reported in this recent meta-analysis, addressing the degree to which they align with those reported in similar reviews of OG interventions. We discuss the degree to which the findings represent an evolution of reading science and their implications for instructional practice, policy, and future research.

**What is a Meta-Analysis?**  
The purpose of a meta-analysis is to systematically combine and analyze data from a meta-analysis, research teams must make decisions about which studies to include and which to exclude based on a predetermined



## More Resources to Explore

### 6. Which aspects of OG are supported by research, and which require additional research? *The Reading League Journal*

#### Orton-Gillingham: Which Aspects are Supported by Research and Which Require Additional Research?

by Christy Austin, Liz Stevens, Alisha Demchack, and Emily Solari

**41** The Orton-Gillingham Approach (OG) is a direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, and prescriptive way to teach literacy when reading, writing, and spelling do not come easily to individuals, such as those with dyslexia (Orton-Gillingham Academy, 2025, May 8, "What is the Orton-Gillingham Approach?"). For a detailed description of each of these aspects of the OG approach, refer to Table 1.

Despite OG's growing popularity and use for students with dyslexia (Riv & Clark, 2005) and inclusion in state-level literacy policy (e.g., Davis Dyslexia Association International, 2023), the effectiveness of the OG approach remains unclear with studies demonstrating mixed results. For example, Ritchey and Cooke (2006) reviewed literature examining the effects of OG and OG-based reading instructional programs, and mixed findings were noted across 12 studies. In a more recent study, Stevens and colleagues (2023) meta-analyzed studies investigating the effects of OG reading interventions for K-12 students with or at risk for

world-level reading disabilities. Findings from 24 studies indicated some positive effects of OG overall, which might be indicative of educationally meaningful growth for students with and at risk for dyslexia. However, there were no significant differences between Orton-Gillingham interventions and comparison conditions in foundational skill outcomes (phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, spelling) or vocabulary and comprehension outcomes, meaning that we cannot rule out the possibility that differences in outcomes might be due to chance. See *The Reading League Journal* article by Solari et al. (2021)



## Upcoming Professional Learning Opportunities

<p><b>9 February 2026</b></p> <p><b>From Data to Impact: Designing Effective Tier 1 Instruction</b></p> <p>9:00 AM - 3:30 PM</p> <p>Signaw ISD Central Campus</p> <p>Join us for an engaging professional learning series focused on strengthening Tier 1 instruction through the strategic use of assessment data and evidence-based practices. Participants will learn how to interpret and apply student data to inform instructional planning, explore high-impact instructional routines that drive student achievement, and design lessons rooted in research-based strategies. This series will empower educators to deliver effective, equitable Tier 1 instruction that meets the diverse needs of all learners. 2/9/2026, 3/23/2026, 5/4/2026</p> <p>...show less</p> <p><a href="#">Learn More and Register</a></p>	<p><b>11 February 2026</b></p> <p><b>Transforming Tier 1 Literacy Instruction Series</b></p> <p>9:00 AM - 11:00 AM</p> <p>Virtual (Zoom)</p> <p>Transforming Tier 1 Literacy Instruction professional learning series invites participants to explore effective strategies for refining and enhancing the development, design, delivery, and differentiation of high-quality initial instruction. This series will provide educators with the tools to refine their instructional practices and take their instruction to the next level. 2/11/2026, 2/11/2026, 3/11/2026, 4/15/2026 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM</p> <p>...show less</p> <p><a href="#">Learn More and Register</a></p>	<p><b>8 December 2025</b></p> <p><b>What's Getting in the Way? Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Educator Practice</b></p> <p>9:00 AM - 11:00 AM</p> <p>Virtual (Zoom)</p> <p>Even the most effective programs and practices can fall short if educators aren't supported in using them as intended. This session equips school and district leaders, coaches, and support staff with practical strategies and tools to identify and address the barriers that impact implementation fidelity. Using a behavioral lens, participants will learn to diagnose whether issues stem from gaps in learning, environmental supports, or insufficient motivation and reinforcement. Together, we'll explore methods to ensure educators not only can implement practices, but also do so consistently and effectively over time.</p> <p>...show less</p> <p><a href="#">Learn More and Register</a></p>
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## Structured Literacy Series

**3 March 2026**

**Structured Literacy**

8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

Geneese Intermediate School District

This series provides an introductory overview of Structured Literacy, including details about who receives instruction, what instruction entails, how it is delivered, and why it is essential for developing lifelong readers. Participants will gain knowledge for instruction in each language domain and apply skills for effective Structured Literacy teaching in grades K through 2nd grade. 3/9/2026 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

...show less

[Learn More and Register](#)

**Structured Literacy Series Playlist**

by MiMTSS Technical Assistance Center

Playlist - 2 Videos - 41 Views

This playlist is of the Structured Literacy Series, Sessions 1-5.

[Play all](#)

**Structured Literacy Series**

Has this page an introduction to the Structured Literacy Series, including details about who receives instruction, what instruction entails, how it is delivered, and why it is essential for developing lifelong readers. Participants will gain knowledge for instruction in each language domain and apply skills for effective Structured Literacy teaching.

Series Information:

Agenda:

- Session 1: Who, What, How, and Why of Structured Literacy
- Session 2: Research Evidence and Foundations of Structured Literacy
- Session 3: Instructional Writing Skills: Vocabulary and Spelling
- Session 4: Reading Comprehension and Oral Language
- Session 5: Fluency and Language Structure for Complex Text

Outcomes:

- Explain how Structured Literacy instruction supports the achievement of all
- Assess the development of appropriate professional practices and standards
- Support the development of appropriate professional practices and standards
- Apply the knowledge and skills gained from this course to their own practice



## What's coming up?

Date	Time	Topic
September 9, 2025	2:00-3:30pm ET	The Neurobiological Underpinnings of Dyslexia
October 7, 2025	10:00-11:30am ET	Misunderstandings of the Science of Reading
November 4, 2025	3:00-4:30pm ET	Structured Literacy
December 3, 2025	11:00am-12:30pm ET	Multisyllabic Word Instruction
January 23, 2026	2:00-3:30pm ET	Supporting Reading Comprehension for Students with Dyslexia
February 24, 2026	10:00-11:30am ET	Differentiating Tier 1 Instruction for Students with Dyslexia
March 26, 2026	3:00-4:30pm ET	Using Data to Inform Instruction
April 20, 2026	11:00am-12:30pm ET	Deliberate Practice and Feedback: The Secret Sauce

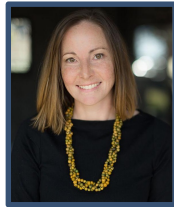


Join us for office hours!

Questions for us? Want to chat further? Send us an email!



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