A Coaching Guide to Support Teachers of Students With Dyslexia Characteristics

The Meadows Center
FOR PREVENTING EDUCATIONAL RISK

MiMTSS
Michigan's Multi-Tiered System of Supports

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Session 1: Neurobiological Underpinnings of Dyslexia

Key Learning From the Session

- Reading is not a natural process. Unlike language, reading must be explicitly taught. Learning to read changes the brain's structure and function.
- Dyslexia is a word-level reading disorder. Dyslexia primarily affects the decoding and spelling of individual words and is strongly linked to phonological processing difficulties. Though students with dyslexia may have difficulties in other areas (e.g., comprehension), those difficulties are largely a function of word reading difficulties and inadequate opportunities to benefit from reading text.
- The alphabetic principle is foundational. Written words represent spoken sounds. Understanding sound-symbol relationships is essential for reading development. For these reasons, phonemic awareness and phonics instruction are fundamental elements to the acquisition of reading.
- Dyslexia is common and often underidentified. Many students experience word-level reading difficulties, including those not formally identified. Many students with dyslexia are not identified until they demonstrate reading failure. Early identification is essential to their success.
- Identification should be based on reading performance and response to instruction. Dyslexia is best identified through assessment of reading and spelling skills and how students respond to instruction—not IQ tests. Response to instruction can be verified only when the treatments are based on the science of reading.
- Early intervention is critical. Dyslexia can be prevented for some learners with early, effective instruction. Intervention becomes less effective after grade 2.

- Remediation requires intensity. Students need more time, explicit instruction, and repeated practice. Fluency gaps are particularly difficult to close.
- The brain is malleable (plasticity). Brain function can change with intensive, high-quality instruction, though response varies across students.
- There is a dual-route model of reading:
  - » Dorsal route: sounding out words (phonological decoding)
  - » Ventral route: automatic word recognition
- Dyslexia involves risk, not destiny. Reading ability is partly heritable, but instruction and environment play a critical role.
- Dyslexia characteristics include difficulty with word reading, spelling, and/or reading fluency. Though the primary characteristic is word reading difficulty, students may also exhibit difficulties with reading comprehension and/or vocabulary.
- Key takeaway: Students with dyslexia are hard to teach, not unable to learn.

Application to Coaching

- In professional learning, explain that reading is not a natural process and must be explicitly taught.
- Ensure that educators know that language is a natural process but that developing the reading brain requires time reading print.
- Help teachers understand that dyslexia is a word-level issue and requires focused instruction in phonological awareness, decoding (phonics), and encoding (spelling).
- Emphasize early screening as a means to identify students so that a prevention model can be put in place through strong Tier 1 instruction within a multitiered system of supports (MTSS) framework.
- Support teachers to (a) deliver explicit, systematic phonics instruction; (b) provide frequent cumulative review and repetition; (c) increase instructional time for students who struggle; and (d) use response to instruction as the most important indicator of dyslexia.
- Strengthen intervention practices by (a) increasing intensity (time, frequency, group size), (b) monitoring progress regularly, and (c) adjusting instruction based on data.
- Build understanding of brain plasticity, helping teachers understand that improvement is possible with effective instruction and that earlier intervention leads to stronger outcomes.
- Coach teachers to develop both phonological decoding skills and automatic word recognition.
- Address common misconceptions, including explaining that (a) dyslexia is not due to lack of effort, (b) dyslexia is not primarily a visual problem, and (c) these students can learn to read, though some require more persistent teaching.
- Promote asset-based messaging, including the promise that students with dyslexia can learn to read and that success requires intensity, expertise, and persistence.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is dyslexia? Dyslexia is a word-level reading disorder that affects accurate and fluent decoding and spelling. It is closely tied to phonological processing difficulties.

Is dyslexia related to intelligence (IQ)? No. Students with dyslexia may have average or above-average intelligence.

Can dyslexia be prevented? Early, explicit instruction in phonological awareness and phonics can ameliorate or significantly reduce the severity of dyslexia.

Why is early intervention important? Intervention is most effective in early grades. Delays make it harder to close reading gaps later. Students spend less time with the negative impact of challenges learning to read.

How is dyslexia identified? Identification is through assessment of reading and spelling skills and evaluation of response to instruction—not IQ-discrepancy models.

Do students with dyslexia just need more practice? No. They need targeted, explicit, and intensive instruction—not just more of the same practice.

Can the brain change with intervention? Yes. Effective instruction can change brain activation patterns, demonstrating neuroplasticity. That is why early and ongoing reading intervention is so valuable.

Is dyslexia a visual problem? No. Dyslexia is primarily a language-based (phonological) disorder.

Why do some students not respond to intervention? Some require greater intensity, longer duration, or more specialized instruction. Only a small percentage of students provided evidence-based intervention continue to struggle significantly with reading.

Are students born with dyslexia? There is a genetic component and early risk, but outcomes depend heavily on instruction and environment.

Additional Resources to Explore

- Fletcher, J. M. (n.d.). *Identifying students at risk for reading difficulty*. California Dyslexia Initiative. https://share.google/GFS6nMjWmAUfdTxPH
- Fletcher, J. M., Francis, D. J., Foorman, B. R., & Schatschneider, C. (2021). Early detection of dyslexia risk: Development of brief, teacher-administered screens. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 44*(3), 145–157. https://doi.org/10.1177/0731948720931870
- Fletcher, J. M., & Miciak, J. (2019). *The identification of specific learning disabilities: A summary of research on best practices*. Texas Center for Learning Disabilities. https://www.uh.edu/research/tcld/_files/identification-specific-learning-disabilities.pdf
- Vaughn, S., & Fletcher, J. M. (2021). Identifying and teaching students with significant reading problems. *American Educator, 44*(4), 4. https://www.aft.org/ae/winter2020-2021/vaughn_fletcher

Session 2: Misunderstandings of the Science of Reading

Key Learning From the Session

- The science of reading is a large body of interdisciplinary research about how students learn to read and which instructional practices are most effective.
- The science of reading is not a curriculum, program, or single instructional approach.
- Unlike learning language, learning to read is not a natural process (i.e., learning to read does not occur simply by watching someone read).
- Effective reading instruction includes both foundational skills and linguistic comprehension. Phonics instruction is often considered the foundation of the science of reading because it has been inadequately taught in the past. However, phonics is not the only component of reading instruction.
- Balanced literacy and the science of reading are not always mutually exclusive; some practices may overlap, and others do not align.
- Pictures should not be used to assist with word reading (i.e., students should learn the alphabetic code to read words); however, pictures may be helpful in promoting comprehension and engagement with text.
- Decodable texts may support beginning word reading, but students should also practice reading authentic texts.
- Leveled texts are not inherently bad (Don't throw them out!); what matters is how they are used. Students benefit from extensive practice opportunities with and access to "stretch" texts.

- Explicit and systematic instruction is especially important for students with dyslexia and other reading difficulties.
- Triple-cueing and guessing approaches are not an evidence-based substitute for decoding.
- Phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when combined with letters. Phonemic awareness instruction that combines practice in blending and segmenting is most important for beginning readers. No evidence suggests that advanced training in phonemic awareness skills for students who are reading improves their reading outcomes.
- Reading nonsense words is important for assessing students' word reading skills; however, no studies suggest that extensive practice reading nonsense words is beneficial.
- Knowledge building, vocabulary, oral language, spelling, writing, and comprehension remain essential components of literacy instruction.
- Instructional decisions should be guided by evidence, student data, and professional expertise.
- Implementation of evidence-based practices requires ongoing professional learning and coaching support.

Application to Coaching

- Support educators in developing a clear understanding of what the science of reading is and is not. As part of this, focus on practices and not one particular program.
- Address common misconceptions about reading instruction during professional learning sessions.
- Help teachers evaluate instructional practices for alignment with research evidence.
- Provide coaching on explicit and systematic foundational skills instruction.
- Encourage teachers not to teach cueing systems and guessing strategies.
- Encourage teachers to teach phonemic awareness with print; use real words for decoding practice; and give students opportunities to read decodable, authentic, and stretch texts.
- Support integration of language comprehension, vocabulary, and knowledge-building practices.
- Encourage teachers to differentiate instruction; there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach that will work for all students.
- Use student data to guide instructional decision making and intervention planning.
- Encourage teachers to use flexible grouping (e.g., one on one, small group, whole group) based on instructional objectives and students' needs.
- Facilitate collaborative conversations around instructional shifts and implementation challenges.

FAQs

What is the science of reading? The science of reading is a large body of research from multiple disciplines that explains how students learn to read and which instructional practices are effective.

Is the science of reading a curriculum? No. It is a body of research, not a specific program or curriculum.

Does the science of reading focus only on phonics? No. It includes foundational skills, language comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and knowledge building.

Are comprehension and vocabulary still important? Yes. Strong comprehension instruction and vocabulary development are essential parts of effective literacy instruction.

Why are cueing systems discouraged? Cueing systems encourage guessing rather than accurate decoding and word recognition. This is consistent with how struggling readers read words; proficient readers have the phonics skills to decode words efficiently and automatically.

Can teachers still use read-alouds and rich literature? Yes. Read-alouds, discussion, and knowledge-building activities are important components of literacy instruction.

Why is explicit instruction important? Explicit instruction helps students learn skills directly and systematically, particularly students with reading difficulties.

Does the science of reading apply to all students? Yes. Evidence-based literacy instruction benefits all students and is especially important for students with dyslexia and other reading challenges.

Additional Resources to Explore

- Clemens, N. H., & Vaughn, S. (2023). Understandings and misunderstandings about dyslexia: Introduction to the special issue. *Reading Research Quarterly, 58*(2), 181–187. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.499
- The Reading League. (n.d.). *What is the science of reading?* https://www.thereadingleague.org/what-is-the-science-of-reading
- White, J., Mather, N., & Kirkpatrick, J. (2020). Preservice educators' and noneducators' knowledge and perceptions of responsibility about dyslexia. *Dyslexia, 26*(2), 220–242. https://doi.org/10.1002/dys.1653

Session 3: Structured Literacy

Key Learning From the Session

- "Structured literacy" is an umbrella term describing an approach to intervention that includes common features and content areas (i.e., it does not refer to one program).
- Structured literacy includes phonemic awareness, phonics, orthography, morphology, syntax, semantics, and comprehension-supportive practices.
- Core features of structured literacy include explicit teaching, systematic instruction, targeted feedback, planned practice opportunities, and data-based decision making.
- The simple view of reading highlights the importance of both decoding and linguistic comprehension; this can be useful for understanding profiles of students with reading difficulty (i.e., primary difficulty in word reading [dyslexia], language comprehension, or both).
- Structured literacy is effective for students with dyslexia, reading comprehension difficulties, and mixed reading difficulties.
- Orton-Gillingham (OG) is one example of a structured approach to reading and spelling instruction. Current research suggests OG-aligned practices show promise, but additional high-quality research is needed regarding the effectiveness of branded OG programs.
- Explicit and systematic instruction is aligned with the evidence base for reading instruction.
- Multisensory instruction activates visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile pathways simultaneously. Although this instruction is sometimes considered the "secret sauce" to help dyslexic students learn to read, no scientific research suggests that it significantly affects reading outcomes.
- Structured literacy includes explicit modeling, controlled practice, and cumulative review.

Application to Coaching

- Support teachers in implementing explicit and systematic literacy instruction.
- Help educators distinguish between structured literacy practices (content and features) and practices that do not align with the evidence (e.g., three-cueing system, independent work).
- Encourage the use of controlled text and cumulative review during decoding and spelling instruction.
- Model explicit instructional routines using "I do," "We do," "You do" structures.
- Support data-based instructional decision making.
- Provide coaching on integrating phonemic awareness, phonics, morphology, and comprehension-supportive practices.
- Discuss how structured literacy can support a range of reading profiles.
- Help teachers understand the current evidence related to OG and structured literacy approaches.
- Encourage teachers to provide immediate, corrective feedback during literacy instruction.

FAQs

What is structured literacy? Structured literacy is an explicit, systematic approach to literacy instruction that includes specific instructional features and content areas.

Is structured literacy only for students with dyslexia? No. Structured literacy benefits many students, including those with dyslexia, language comprehension difficulties, and mixed reading difficulties.

What is the difference between structured literacy and typical literacy instruction? Structured literacy emphasizes explicit, systematic, cumulative instruction with planned practice and feedback. Typical literacy practices may focus on larger units of words (or the whole word), include fewer opportunities to practice, and include instruction that may not be explicit or systematic.

Is OG supported by research? Some components of OG align with evidence-based practices, but additional high-quality research is needed regarding overall effectiveness.

What makes instruction explicit? Teachers directly model skills, provide guided practice, and give clear corrective feedback.

Why is systematic instruction important? Systematic instruction carefully sequences skills from simple to complex and supports cumulative learning.

Additional Resources to Explore

- Austin, C., Stevens, L., Demchack, A., & Solari, E. (2023). Orton-Gillingham: Which aspects are supported by research and which require additional research? *The Reading League Journal*. https://www.thereadingleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/TRLJ-Feature-October-2023.pdf
- Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Center. (2022, April 14). *Structured literacy intervention: Chapter 1 with Louise Spear-Swerling* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCf5hSuav18
- Solari, E., Petscher, Y., & Hall, C. (2021). What does science say about Orton-Gillingham interventions? An explanation and commentary on the Stevens et al. (2021) meta-analysis. *The Reading League Journal*. https://www.thereadingleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/trl-journal-sneakpeek-orton-gillingham-interventions-solari.pdf
- Spear-Swerling, L. (2019). Structured literacy and typical literacy practices: Understanding differences to create instructional opportunities. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 51*(3), 201–211. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059917750160
- Spear-Swerling, L. (Ed.) (2022). *Structured literacy interventions: Teaching students with reading difficulties, Grades K–6*. Guilford Press. https://www.guilford.com/books/Structured-Literacy-Interventions/Louise-Spear-Swerling/9781462548781
- Stevens, E. A., Austin, C., Moore, C., Scammacca, N., Boucher, A. N., & Vaughn, S. (2021). Current state of the evidence: Examining the effects of Orton-Gillingham reading interventions for students with or at risk for word-level reading disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 87*(4), 397–417. https://doi.org/10.35542/osf.io/37b9p

Session 4: Multisyllabic Word Reading

Key Learning From the Session

- Students begin learning to read multisyllabic words as early as first grade after learning basic phonics skills and sight words.
- Teaching multisyllabic word reading aligns with the science of reading.
- There is strong evidence supporting explicit instruction in multisyllabic word reading.
- Reading by analogy is one way to support students with reading multisyllabic words. Students benefit from learning syllable patterns, prefixes, suffixes, and inflectional endings to expand the new words they can read and spell (e.g., *rain*, *rains*, *raining*, *rainbow*).
- Morphological awareness helps students expand vocabulary and word reading skills. Teaching students morphemes (units of meaning within words) supports decoding and spelling. Morphemes include roots or bases, prefixes, and suffixes.
- Teach students common vowel sounds and vowel combinations (e.g., open syllables, short vowels, vowel-consonant-*e*, vowel combinations, vowel diphthongs, *r*-controlled vowels).
- Instruction should occur with words in isolation and within connected text.
- There are multiple effective routines for teaching multisyllabic word reading, such as syllable types, a flexible approach, morphology, compound words, and vowel teams.
- Students may benefit from explicit instruction in syllable types and syllable division patterns (e.g., divide the word into syllables, identify the syllable types in the word, read the syllables, read the word).

- Structural analysis (i.e., break the words into parts, read the parts, read the word) supports students in decoding unfamiliar words and understanding meaning.
- Phonics knowledge is necessary but not sufficient for multisyllabic word reading success. Students need practice reading multisyllabic words.
- Spelling instruction should be integrated with multisyllabic word reading instruction.

Application to Coaching

- Support teachers in introducing multisyllabic word reading early in reading development.
- Model instructional routines for decoding multisyllabic words.
- Encourage explicit teaching of prefixes, suffixes, roots, and vowel patterns.
- Coach teachers to provide opportunities for practice both in isolation and in connected text.
- Help educators teach the six syllable types systematically.
- Support teachers with structural analysis instruction.
- Encourage integration of spelling instruction into decoding lessons.
- Use student error patterns to guide instructional planning.
- Provide teachers with routines that promote flexible decoding and self-correction.

FAQs

When should students begin learning multisyllabic words? Students can begin learning multisyllabic words once they have basic phonics skills and foundational sight words.

Should multisyllabic words be taught only in the upper grades? No. Students can successfully begin multisyllabic word reading in first grade and beyond.

Should students practice multisyllabic words only in isolation? No. Students benefit from practicing words both in isolation and in connected text.

What is structural analysis? Structural analysis involves breaking words into prefixes, suffixes, roots, and base words to support decoding and meaning.

Why is morphology important? Morphology helps students read, spell, and understand unfamiliar words and learn to use important meaning-carrying units such as prefixes and suffixes.

Is it more important to teach syllable types than structural analysis? No studies directly compare these two approaches to multisyllabic word reading to suggest that one is more beneficial than the other. Students may need to learn both and may use both as they develop multisyllabic reading skills.

Do students with dyslexia need explicit multisyllabic instruction? Yes. Students with dyslexia often require explicit and systematic instruction in multisyllabic decoding and spelling.

What are the six syllable types? Closed syllables (e.g., *nap* and *kin* in *napkin*), open (e.g., *mu* in *music*), vowel combination, *r*-controlled, vowel-consonant-*e*, and consonant-*le*.

Why embed spelling instruction when teaching multisyllable words? Spelling reinforces decoding, orthographic knowledge, and word recognition and helps establish the understanding of morphological patterns.

Additional Resources to Explore

- The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2020). *Helping your kid with ... Reading multisyllable words*. https://meadowscenter.org/resource/helping-your-kid-with-reading-multisyllable-words
- The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2024). *Multisyllable word reading routine for science and social studies classes*. https://meadowscenter.org/resource/multisyllable-word-reading-routine-for-science-and-social-studies-classes

Sessions 5 and 6: Revised International Dyslexia Association Definition of Dyslexia

Key Learning From the Session

- The revised International Dyslexia Association definition of dyslexia emphasizes difficulties in word reading and/or spelling involving accuracy, speed, or both.
- Dyslexia is a specific learning disability in word reading and/or spelling.
- Dyslexia exists along a continuum of severity and may present differently across individuals.
- Dyslexia is a condition that occurs across orthographies but may present differently based on the orthography (i.e., affecting speed, accuracy, or both).
- Students with dyslexia demonstrate reading challenges that persist even when receiving instruction that is typically effective for their peers.
- Dyslexia is considered a lifelong condition, although significant positive outcomes often occur with early identification and intervention.
- Constructs that may be included in screening assessments include phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, sound-symbol correspondence, alphabet knowledge, decoding, encoding/spelling, and rapid automatized naming.
- Genes have been associated with dyslexia, but no clear brain-based markers have been found. Risk factors may increase the probability of dyslexia (e.g., phonological deficits, language impairments, attention difficulties), but the expression of these symptoms may be reduced or mitigated by several resilience factors (e.g., instruction, family and peer support, coping strategies).

- Early identification and prevention remain critical components of effective support.
- Response to intervention is an important part of screening and identification practices.
- Students with dyslexia may have comorbidity with math difficulty or writing difficulty.
- Students with dyslexia may also experience co-occurring emotional, behavioral, or attention difficulties.
- Persistent reading difficulties can negatively affect self-concept, emotional well-being, behavior, and long-term educational and occupational outcomes.
- Effective instruction for students with dyslexia is systematic, structured, sequential, integrated, and code based.
- The primary issue with dyslexia manifests in word reading and/or spelling; however, students with dyslexia may also experience secondary consequences in reading comprehension due to limited vocabulary and background knowledge.
- Students with dyslexia may qualify for protections and services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), depending on educational impact and eligibility criteria.

Application to Coaching

- Support educators in understanding the revised definition of dyslexia and its implications for practice.
- Help teachers recognize that dyslexia can present with challenges in accuracy, fluency, or both.
- Emphasize the importance of early screening, prevention, and ongoing intervention.
- Support teams in using response to intervention data during screening and identification discussions.
- Facilitate conversations about how dyslexia may co-occur with other learning or emotional challenges.
- Promote evidence-based literacy instruction that is systematic, explicit, and structured.
- Encourage educators to continue building vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension alongside decoding instruction.
- Support staff in understanding IDEA protections, accommodations, and eligibility considerations.
- Help educators communicate asset-based messages to students and families about dyslexia and intervention.

FAQs

Is dyslexia a protected disability under IDEA? Yes. Students with dyslexia may qualify for protections, accommodations, and specialized instruction under IDEA if eligibility criteria are met.

Does a dyslexia diagnosis automatically qualify a student for special education services? No. Eligibility depends on educational impact and whether the student meets criteria under IDEA.

Can dyslexia be identified after second grade? Yes. Screening and identification can occur after second grade, although early identification is preferred and is associated with better long-term outcomes.

Is dyslexia lifelong? Yes. Dyslexia is considered a lifelong condition, though intervention can significantly improve outcomes.

Are there dyslexia-specific instructional methods? Effective instruction for students with dyslexia includes systematic, structured, sequential, integrated, and code-based practices.

Why is fluency important if accuracy is high? Slow reading rate often negatively affects comprehension, stamina, and overall reading efficiency.

Can students with dyslexia have other learning or emotional challenges? Yes. Dyslexia frequently co-occurs with other academic, language, emotional, or behavioral difficulties.

How should schools support multilingual learners when screening for dyslexia? Schools should consider language development, first-language skills, instructional history, and multiple sources of data when making decisions.

What if a student has strong decoding skills but weak comprehension? Students may need additional support with language comprehension, vocabulary, background knowledge, or oral language skills.

Additional Resources to Explore

- Catts, H. W., Terry, N. P., Lonigan, C. J., Compton, D. L., Wagner, R. K., Steacy, L. M., Farquharson, K., & Petscher, Y. (2024). Revisiting the definition of dyslexia. *Annals of Dyslexia, 74*(3), 282–302. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11881-023-00295-3
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- International Dyslexia Association. (2017). *Dyslexia in the classroom: What every teacher needs to know*. https://dyslexiaida.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/DITC-Handbook.pdf
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- Tennessee Center for the Study and Treatment of Dyslexia. (n.d.). *Characteristics of dyslexia*. https://dyslexia.mtsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2024/08/Characteristics_of_Dyslexia.pdf
- Vaughn, S., & Fuchs, L. S. (2003). Redefining learning disabilities as inadequate response to instruction: The promise and potential problems. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, *18*(3), 137–146. https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-5826.00070
- Vaughn, S., Miciak, J., Clemens, N., & Fletcher, J. M. (2024). The critical role of instructional response in defining and identifying students with dyslexia: A case for updating existing definitions. *Annals of Dyslexia, 74*(3), 325–336. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11881-024-00303-0

Session 7: Reading-Comprehension-Supportive Practices

Key Learning From the Session

- According to the simple view of reading, reading comprehension is the product of decoding and linguistic comprehension (Decoding x Linguistic Comprehension = Reading Comprehension).
- Students with dyslexia may struggle with comprehension due to decoding effort and limited reading exposure.
- There are three reading profiles: dyslexia, developmental language disorder (DLD), and comorbid dyslexia + DLD.
- Students with dyslexia have difficulty with decoding but strong oral language and vocabulary.
- Students with DLD have weak oral language (e.g., grammar, vocabulary) but can often decode accurately.
- Students with comorbid dyslexia and DLD have difficulty with word reading and language.
- Knowing these profiles helps teachers align intervention with a student's particular needs (i.e., word reading, language, or both).
- Vocabulary and background knowledge are critical for comprehension.
- Students with dyslexia often read fewer words, limiting incidental vocabulary learning.
- Effective vocabulary instruction requires explicit teaching, multiple exposures, and application opportunities.

- Using practices before, during, and after reading supports reading comprehension.
- Key practices include explicit vocabulary instruction (before reading), background knowledge building (before reading), question generation (during reading), main idea generation (during reading), and summarization (after reading).
- Explicit vocabulary instruction involves preteaching important content area terms using a graphic organizer and routine (e.g., student-friendly definition, synonyms, examples of the term used in context, turn-and-talk opportunities). This graphic organizer and routine can be used to teach vocabulary across content areas.
- Get the gist is a three-step paraphrasing process that supports students with determining the most important information in a section of text. Get the gist helps students recall important information, monitor for meaning, and integrate key information across sections of text.
- Students with dyslexia may benefit from a model of fluent reading and repeated reading to access grade-level text.

Application to Coaching

- Provide professional learning on the simple view of reading and its implications.
- Help teachers understand the different reading profiles (i.e., dyslexia, DLD, dyslexia + DLD) and tailor instruction accordingly.
- Provide professional learning in explicit vocabulary instruction routines, including the following:
  - » Prioritizing which terms to teach
  - » Using a consistent routine across content areas and grade levels
  - » Providing students with many opportunities to practice using and applying new academic vocabulary
- Support teachers with understanding the importance of background knowledge for reading comprehension, the relation between vocabulary and background knowledge, and how to use brief routines to build background knowledge before reading.
- Model before-, during-, and after-reading practices to support reading comprehension:
  - » Before reading: Provide explicit vocabulary instruction and build background knowledge.
  - » During reading: Support students in using get the gist and question generation practices.
  - » After reading: Establish the gist-to-summary routine.
- Ensure that students have sufficient opportunities to practice reading comprehension strategies across text reading experiences.
- Support students with dyslexia with accessing grade-level text and content through a model of fluent reading and repeated reading.

FAQs

What is reading comprehension? It is the ability to understand text, based on decoding and linguistic comprehension.

Do students with dyslexia always struggle with comprehension? Not always—many have strong oral language but struggle due to decoding challenges.

Why is vocabulary important? It supports understanding and frees cognitive resources for comprehension.

Should we teach comprehension strategies? Yes, we should teach these strategies, especially structured approaches like main idea and summarization. It is important to choose a few strategies and give students many opportunities to practice. However, strategies are not sufficient in and of themselves; it is necessary to build students' knowledge and vocabulary, too.

How can students with dyslexia access grade-level text? It is important for students to access grade-level text to learn content and build knowledge and vocabulary. Teachers (or fluent peers) may provide a model of fluent reading prior to repeated reading practice. This supports students who may have decoding challenges with accessing the text and content.

What is get the gist? Get the gist is a three-step process to help students identify the main idea of a text section. The steps are (1) Who or what is this about? (2) What's the most important information about the "who" or "what"? and (3) Combine answers to Steps 1 and 2 to write the gist.

Additional Resources to Explore

- Snowling, M. J., Hayiou-Thomas, M. E., Nash, H. M., & Hulme, C. (2020). Dyslexia and developmental language disorder: Comorbid disorders with distinct effects on reading comprehension. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 61*(6), 672–680. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13140
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Notes