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K-12 Literacy Dyslexia Research Network: Cohort 2

Session 3: Structured Literacy Foundational Skills

Sharon Vaughn & Elizabeth Stevens

November 17, 2026

MICHIGAN Department of Education

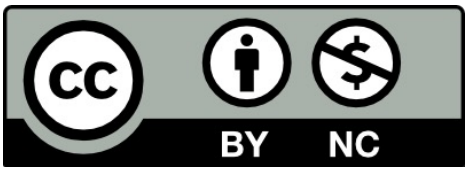
mimtsstac.org

Note About Recording

Today's session is being recorded and will be available via the MiMTSS TA Center's YouTube page to those with the link

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PA 146, Section 7(a) – (f) Requirements

This professional learning series meets the requirements outlined in the following section(s) of Public Act 146:

- Section 7(a)
- Section 7(c)
- Section 7(f)

For more information, please review the PA 146 Professional Learning Resources on the MDE Literacy Professional Learning webpage (https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/academic-standards/literacy/professional-learning).

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Disclaimer

Any mention of specific literacy curricula or intervention programs in this presentation is for instructional purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement by the MiMTSS TA Center or the Michigan Department of Education.

To view a list of approved literacy curricula and intervention programs by the Section 35m Committee for Literacy Achievement, please visit the following page:

The Committee for Literacy Achievement/HQ Literacy Materials Grant (https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/academic-standards/literacy/literacy-grants/section-35m)

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Group Agreements

Use the chat feature for:

- Sharing comments and reactions
- Engaging with the discussion
- Responding to prompts and activities
- Clarifications during the session

Optional networking time:

- Individual questions/scenarios
- Topic-specific concerns
- Problem-solving discussions
- Peer connection and collaboration



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Training Evaluation

- 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

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Purpose

To support educators in understanding K-12 reading development, characteristics of dyslexia, and significant learning needs related to dyslexia. This includes making meaningful connections to Michigan's Public Act 146 of 2024.

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Agenda

1.0 Connections to Previous Learning and Public Act 146

2.0 Structured Literacy Foundational Skills

3.0 Application to Practice

4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

5.0 Optional: Networking Sessions

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1.0 Connections to Previous Learning and PA 146

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Connecting to Sessions 1 and 2

- The Science of Reading provides the research foundation for understanding how students learn to read, why reading difficulties may occur, and which instructional practices support reading development.
- Structured literacy helps translate that knowledge into explicit, systematic, cumulative, and responsive instruction across essential literacy skills.
- Evidence-based instruction supports students with characteristics of dyslexia while strengthening literacy outcomes for all students.

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Michigan's Definition of Structured Literacy

Structured literacy means systematic, direct, explicit, cumulative, and diagnostic instruction that integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing and emphasizes the structure of language across the:

- Speech sound system (phonology);
- Writing system (orthography);
- Structure of sentences (syntax);
- Meaningful parts of words (morphology);
- Meaning of words, phrases, sentences, and text (semantics);
- Processing of oral and written discourse

Michigan's Public Act 146 of 2024

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Connections to PA146 of 2024

Section 23(c)(iii)(A - E) requires the use of a code-emphasis instructional approach for decoding and word recognition that prioritizes letter-sound relationships.

- Instructional methods/resources must not include prompting to:
  - Guess words using pictures
  - Skip over unknown words
  - Use only the first sound to guess
  - Memorize a word in its written form
- Predictable/leveled text must not be used to provide initial word recognition instruction and practice in reading new learned letter-sound correspondences.

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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

TEXAS
The University of Texas at Austin

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FOR PREVENTING EDUCATIONAL RISK



Elizabeth Stevens, PhD
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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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Cohort 2 Training Schedule

Date	Time	Topic
September 15, 2026	10:00-11:30am ET	Defining dyslexia
October 22, 2026	1:00-2:30pm ET	Misunderstandings of the Science of Reading
November 17, 2026	10:00-11:30am ET	Structured literacy: Foundational skills
December no session		
January 22, 2027	1:00-2:30pm ET	Structured literacy: Reading for understanding
February 25, 2027	10:00-11:30am ET	Using data to inform instruction
March no session (MI Dyslexia Summit)		
April 5, 2027	10:00-11:30am ET	Differentiating instruction in Tier 1
May 11, 2027	1:00-2:30pm ET	Deliberate practice and feedback: The “secret sauce”

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2.0 Structured Literacy Foundational Skills

3.0 Application to Practice

4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

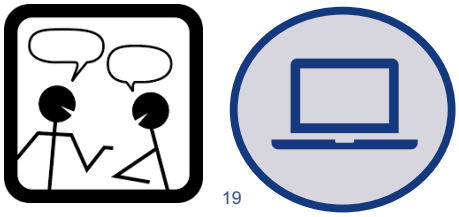
5.0 Optional: Networking Sessions

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2.0 Structured Literacy Foundational Skills

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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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Structured literacy is a recent term used to describe instruction for students with dyslexia.

- True
- False

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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

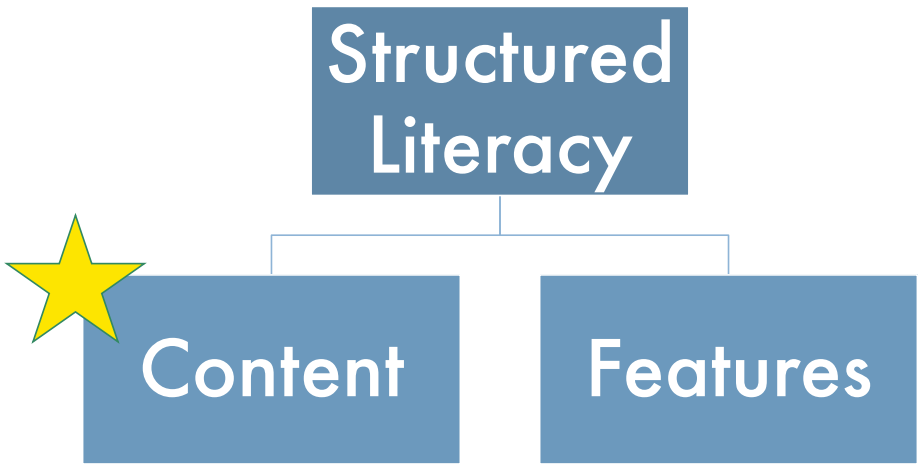
(Spear-Swerling, 2019, 2022)

Structured literacy refers to explicit and systematic phonics instruction.

True

False

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(Spear-Swerling, 2019, 2022)

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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

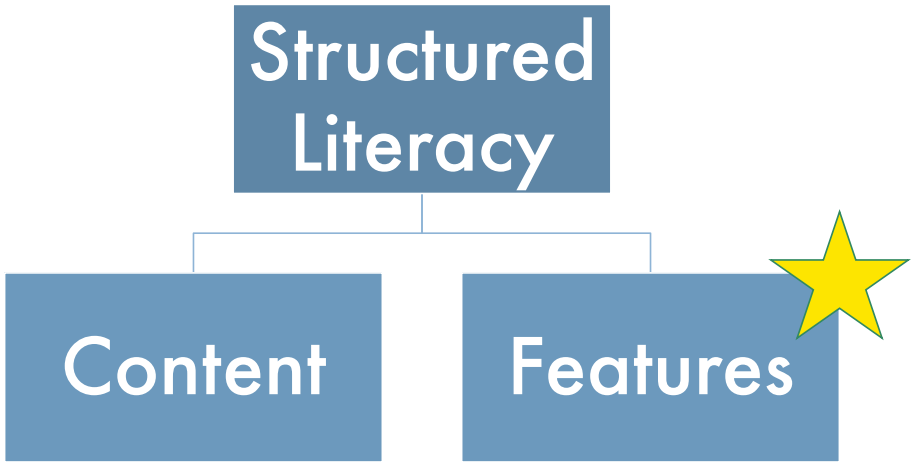
Syntax
- "Rules" of language; sentence structure or how words are put in order

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)

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(Spear-Swerling, 2019, 2022)

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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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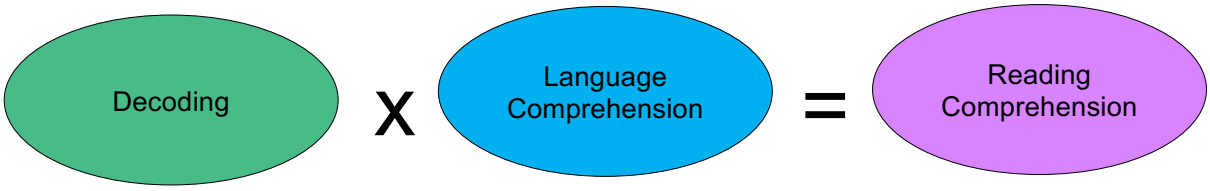


Structured literacy is specifically for students experiencing reading difficulty.

- True
- False

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Simple View of Reading



- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Orthography
- Morphology

- Vocabulary
- Background knowledge
- Syntax
- Discourse comprehension

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Structured literacy is effective for a r
experiencing reading diffi

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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Orton Gillingham is the core structured literacy approach that should be used with dyslexic students.

True

False

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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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Have you heard about the OG meta-analysis?

True

False

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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



Review

Exceptional Children
1–21
© The Author(s) 2021
DOI: 10.1177/00144029211993406
journals.sagepub.com/home/ecx
SAGE

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[1], Christy Austin[3], Clint Moore[2], Nancy Scammacca[2], Alexis N. Boucher[2], and Sharon Vaughn[2]

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 yielded 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] = 0.22; 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)

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

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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?

Table 3. Study Quality.

Study	Design	Comparison group	Implementation fidelity	*M* rating
Bisplinghoff (2015)	⦿	❍	•	1.00
Christodoulou et al. (2017)	❍	•	•	0.67
Dooley (1994)[a]	⦿	❍	•	1.00
Fritts (2016)	⦿	❍	⦿	1.33
Giess (2005)[b]	•	•	⦿	0.33
Gunn (1996)	⦿	❍	•	1.00
Hook et al. (2001)[a,b]	•	❍	•	0.33
Kutrumbros (1993)	⦿	❍	•	1.00
Kuveke (1996)[b]	•	•	•	0.00
Laub (1997)	⦿	•	•	0.33
Litcher and Roberge (1979)[a]	⦿	•	•	0.33
Oakland et al. (1998)[a,b]	⦿	•	•	0.33
Rauch (2017)	⦿	❍	•	1.00
Reed (2013)	⦿	•	•	0.33
Reuter (2006)	❍	⦿	•	1.00
Simpson et al. (1992)[a,b]	⦿	•	•	0.33
Stewart (2011)	⦿	❍	•	1.00
Torgesen et al. (1999)				
OG vs. no intervention	❍	•	•	0.67
OG vs. regular classroom support	❍	❍	•	1.33
Torgesen et al. (2007)	❍	❍	❍	2.00
Wade (1993)[b]	•	•	•	0.00
Wanzek and Roberts (2012)	❍	•	⦿	1.00
Westrich-Bond (1993)[a]	⦿	❍	•	1.00
Wille (1993)[b]	•	•	•	0.00
Young (2001)[b]	⦿	❍	•	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); OG = Orton-Gillingham; BAU = business as usual.
a. Study included in Ritchey and Goeke (2006).
b. Study not included in the meta-analysis.

(Stevens et al., 2021)

- 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

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Giess (2005)[b]	•	•	⦿	0.33
Gunn (1996)	⦿	❍	•	1.00
Hook et al. (2001)[a,b]	•	❍	•	0.33
Kutrumbros (1993)	⦿	❍	•	1.00
Kuveke (1996)[b]	•	•	•	0.00
Laub (1997)	⦿	•	•	0.33
Litcher and Roberge (1979)[a]	⦿	•	•	0.33
Oakland et al. (1998)[a,b]	⦿	•	•	0.33
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a. Study included in Ritchey and Goeke (2006).
b. Study not included in the meta-analysis.

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

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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)

Multisensory instruction is the "secret sauce" in a structured literacy approach that helps dyslexic students learn to read.

True

False

Multisensory Instruction

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

Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic/ Tactile
Mm 	/m/ map man met	

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A structured literacy approach to reading and spelling

What would this look like for students with dyslexia?

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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/ /a/ /t/



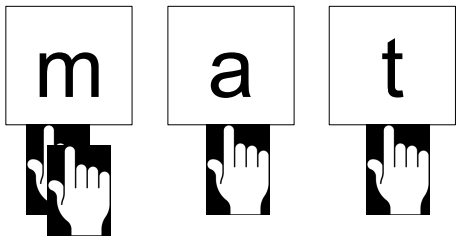
Typical literacy

- 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.

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A Structured Literacy approach to spelling

Structured Literacy

- Elkonin boxes to practice writing (or building) words
- Reinforce word reading (e.g., l 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

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Sample “I do” for spelling (word building)

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

ch	p	i



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1.0 Connections to Previous Learning and Public Act 146

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5.0 Optional: Networking Sessions

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3.0 Application to Practice

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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): Identify1-2 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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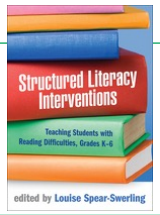
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4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

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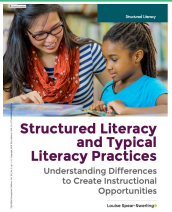
More Resources to Explore

1. Structured Literacy Interventions



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

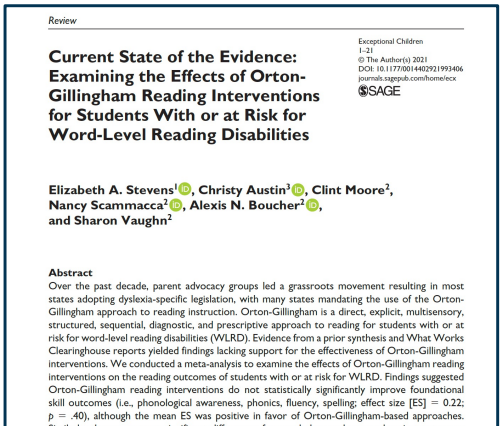
3. Structured Literacy and Typical Literacy Practices (Spear-Swerling, 2018)
Teaching Exceptional Children



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More Resources to Explore

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



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

Exceptional Children
1–21
© The Author(s) 2021
DOI: 10.1177/00144029211993406
journals.sagepub.com/home/ecx
SAGE

Elizabeth A. Stevens[1], Christy Austin[3], Clint Moore[2], Nancy Scammacca[2], Alexis N. Boucher[2], and Sharon Vaughn[2]

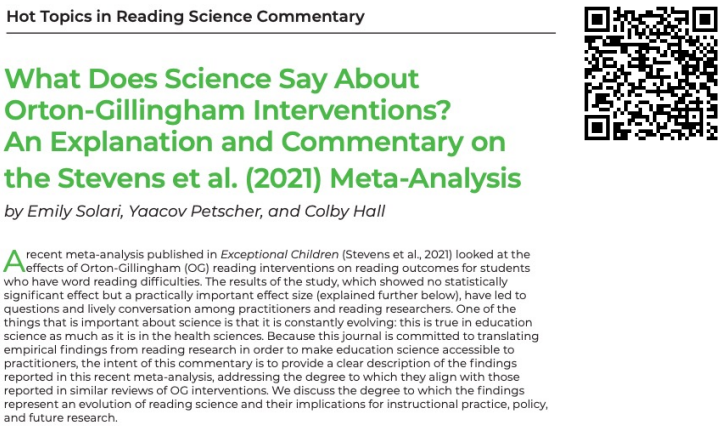
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Over the past decade, parent advocacy groups led a grassroots movement resulting in most states adopting dyslexia-specific legislation, with many states mandating the use of the Orton-Gillingham approach to reading instruction. Orton-Gillingham is 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 yielded 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] = 0.22; $p = .40$), although the mean ES was positive in favor of Orton-Gillingham-based approaches.

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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 (explained 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.

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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

"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, 2023, May 9, "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 (Uhry & 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 Goeke (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 (2021) meta-analyzed studies investigating the effects of OG reading interword-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 condition instruction 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 Read-*

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Cohort 2 Training Schedule

Date	Time	Topic
September 15, 2026	10:00-11:30am ET	Defining dyslexia
October 22, 2026	1:00-2:30pm ET	Misunderstandings of the Science of Reading
November 17, 2026	10:00-11:30am ET	Structured literacy: Foundational skills
December no session		
January 22, 2027	1:00-2:30pm ET	Structured literacy: Reading for understanding
February 25, 2027	10:00-11:30am ET	Using data to inform instruction
March no session (MI Dyslexia Summit)		
April 5, 2027	10:00-11:30am ET	Differentiating instruction in Tier 1
May 11, 2027	1:00-2:30pm ET	Deliberate practice and feedback: The "secret sauce"

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5.0 Networking Session

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Resources from Today's Session

- Slide deck and Session 3 Learning Guide are available on the K-12 Literacy Dyslexia Research Network page of the MiMTSS TA Center's website
- After today's session, we will the recording to our LDRN Cohort 2 Playlist
- Do not forget to access the FAQ for any questions you might have

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Optional Session Prompts

- **Explore:** Dig deeper into a resource or idea from today's session
- **Connect:** Discuss how today's content connects to literacy priorities and practices in your context
- **Apply:** Identify one idea, resource, or strategy you could apply in your practice
- **Share:** Develop a plan for sharing key takeaways or resources with colleagues, staff, or other stakeholders. Outline talking points to increase staff or colleague understanding

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