



Using Explicit Instruction to Transform Tier 1 Literacy

Session 1

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Date

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Acknowledgments

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- Anita Archer & Charles Hughes
- Kimberly Gibbons, Sarah Brown & Bradley C. Niebling
- Zach Groshell
- Institute of Education Sciences (IES)
- Louisa Moats & Carol A. Tolman
- Nathaniel Swain

Purpose

- To support the successful implementation of explicit instruction within tier 1 literacy by:
 - Equipping educators with the knowledge, strategies, and tools to develop instructional plans
 - Elevate daily lessons through explicit instruction design and delivery
 - Empower educators to make informed decisions
 - Ensure a classroom environment to support learning for all

Intended Outcomes

At the end of this session, I will...

1. Identify essential components of a literacy block
2. Evaluate literacy resources to prioritize those aligned with the science of reading and explicit instruction
3. Craft a classroom environment to support learning
4. Review instructional content to prioritize what is critical
5. Describe the structure and attributes of explicit lesson design

Active Participation Strategies

- Short Choral Response
- Choral Reading
- Cloze Reading
- Partner Sharing (1 and 2)
- Hold-up
 - Fingers
 - Response Card
- Written Responses
 - Best Practices in Session
 - Preparation for Sharing
 - Brain Drains
 - Waterfall

Guiding our Work

- Everyone does everything
- How well I teach = How well they learn
- Teach the stuff and cut the fluff
- If you expect it, pre-correct it
- Good instruction is good instruction

Agenda

1.0 Welcome and Introduction

2.0 Essential Components

3.0 Evaluate Resources

4.0 Classroom Environment

5.0 Critical Content

6.0 Explicit Lesson Design

7.0 Closing

1.0 Welcome and Introduction

Everyone does Everything

Key Term: Science of Reading

Science of Reading

- A cumulative and evolving body of evidence whose research studies follow a scientific process of inquiry and utilize scientific methods to help answer questions related to reading development and issues related to reading and writing derived from research from multiple fields of Cognitive Psychology, Communication Sciences, Developmental Psychology, Education, Special Education, Implementation Science, Linguistics, and Neuroscience.

Key Term: Universal Tier

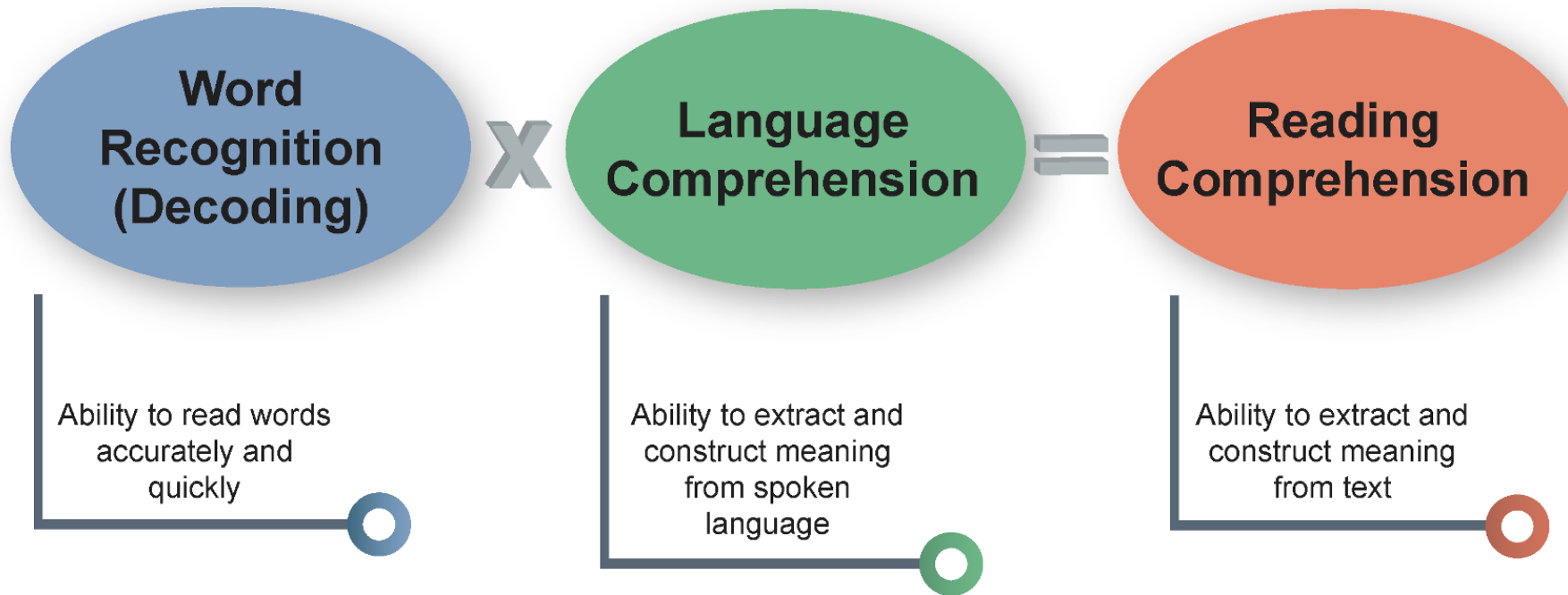
- Universal instruction is what “**all**” students receive in the form of **academic** and **social-emotional** instruction and **supports**
- The universal tier is **more** than a single **textbook**. It is all the **materials** and **instruction** used to provide the **main** classroom instruction in a particular **content** area
- Whatever it takes to get most **students** meeting **grade-level** standards

Gibbons, Brown, Niebling, 2019

2.0 Essential Components

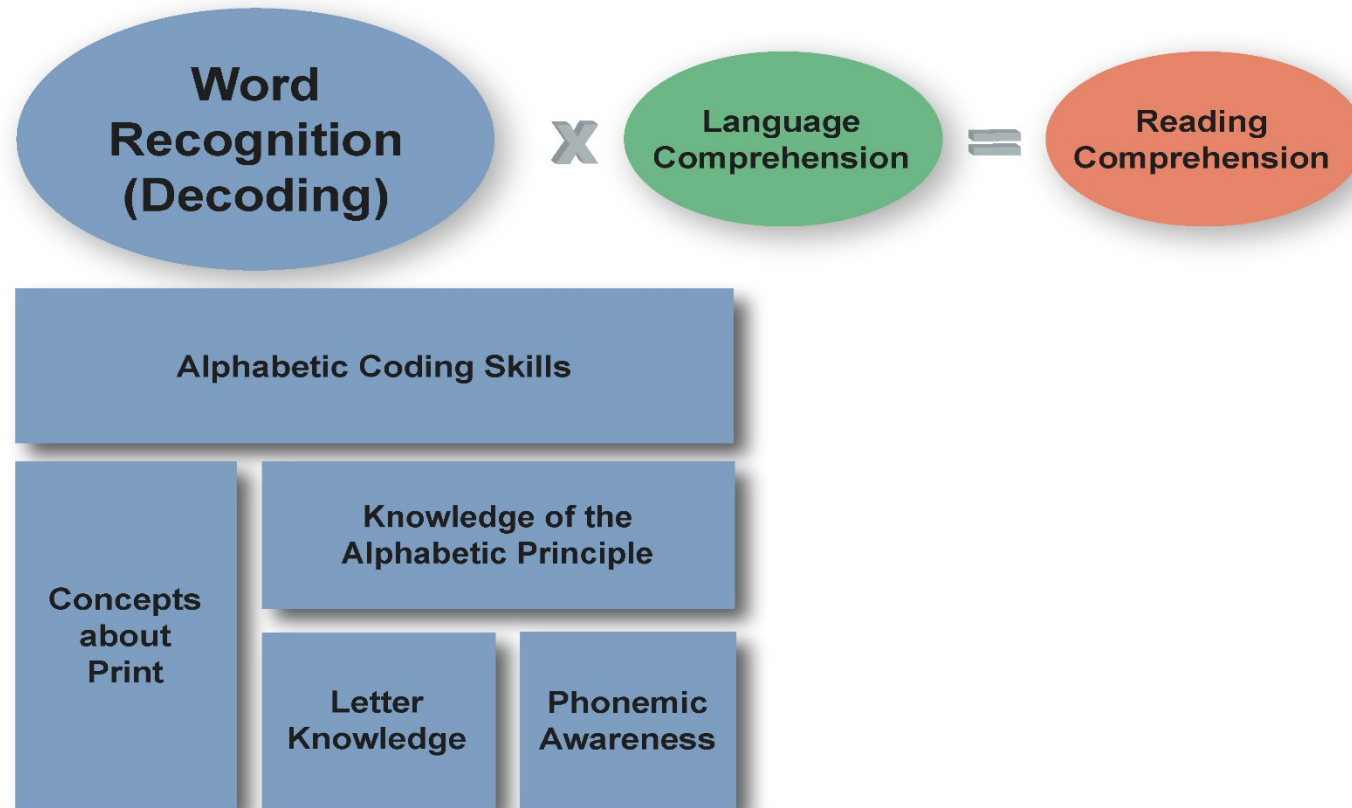
How well I teach = How well they learn

Simple View of Reading



Gough & Tunmer, 1986

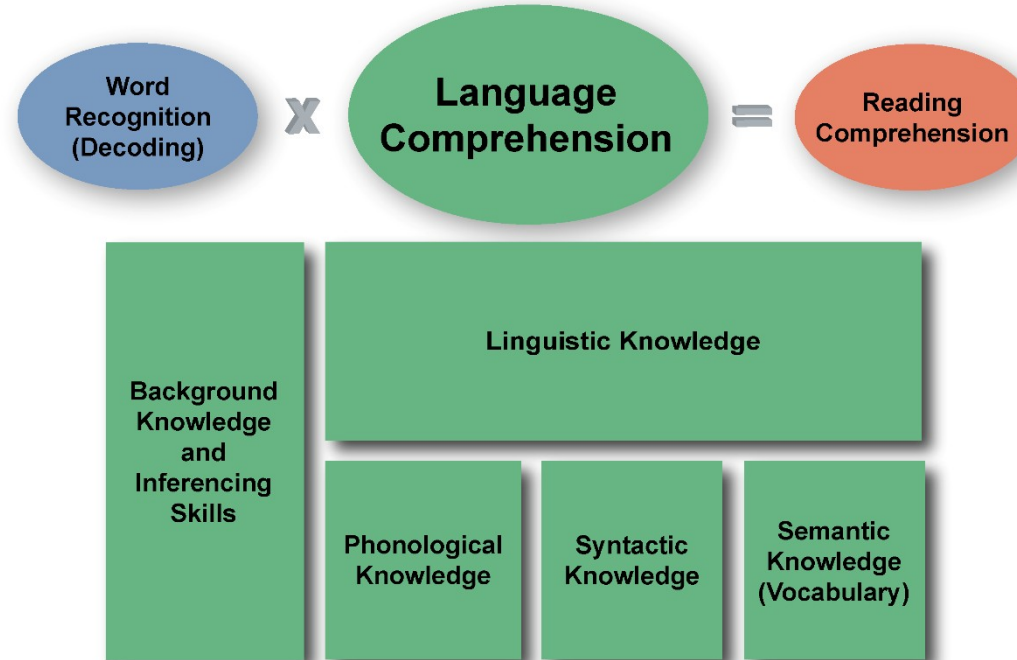
Word Recognition (Decoding) Unpacked



Adapted from Cognitive Foundations Framework (Tunmer & Hoover, 2019)

Adapted from Cognitive Foundations Framework (Tunmer & Hoover, 2019)

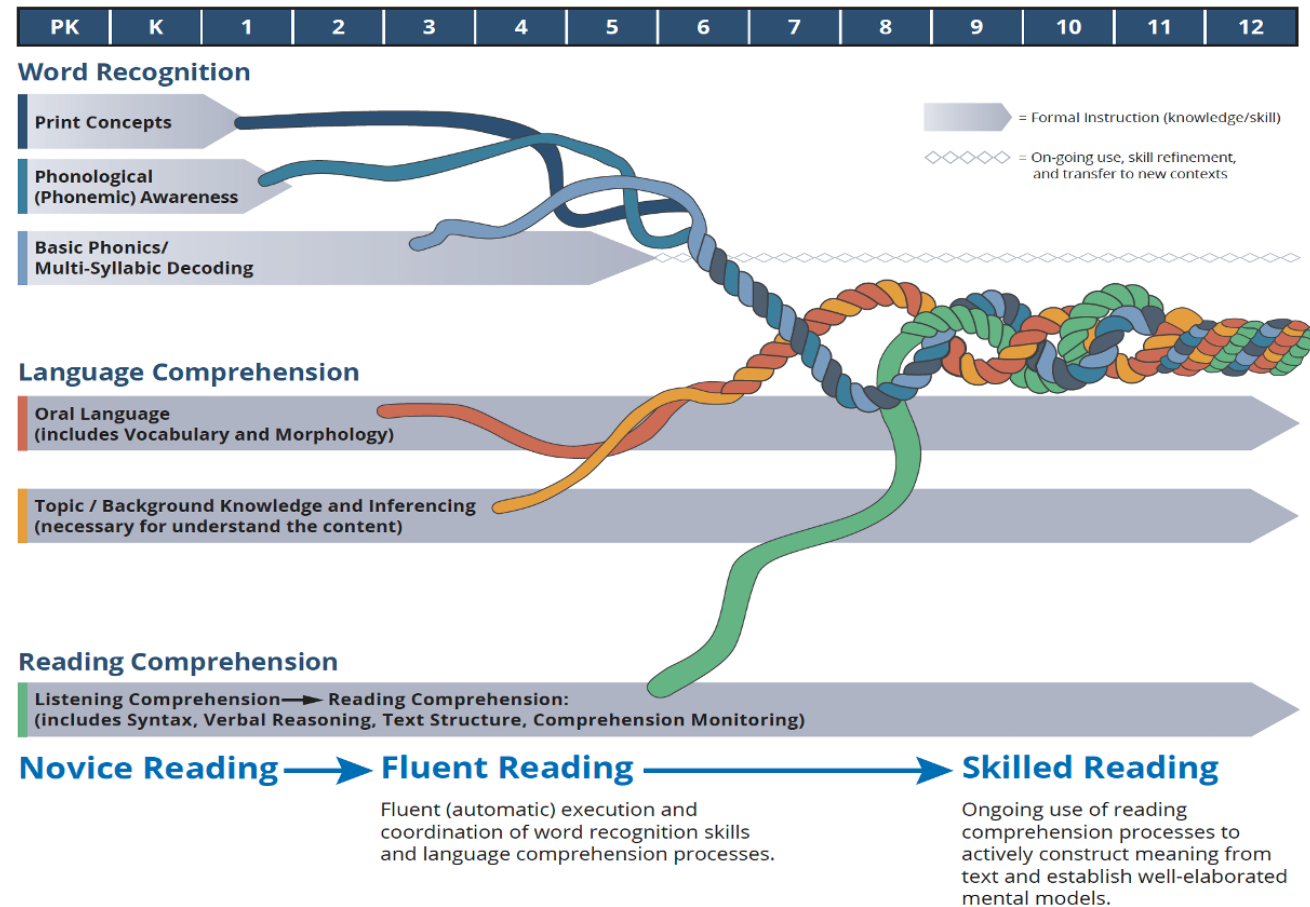
Language Comprehension Unpacked



Adapted from Cognitive Foundations Framework (Tunmer & Hoover, 2019)

Adapted from Cognitive Foundations Framework (Tunmer & Hoover, 2019)

Reading Rope Model



From “Intensifying Literacy Instruction” (St. Martin, Vaughn, Troia, Fien, & Coyne, 2020)

Evidence-Based Practices

- IES Practice Guides
 - Published by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)
 - Translate research into practice
 - Support instructional decision making
 - Recommendations based on multiple high-quality studies

IES Practice Guides: Organization and Structure

- Recommendations and How-to steps for implementing evidence-based teaching practices
- Provides teachers with deep knowing and shared understanding of critical components
- Each recommendation includes:
 - Description
 - Summary of evidence
 - How-to steps for classroom implementation
 - Potential obstacles and advice to overcome

Explanation of Evidence

- Indicates the quality and quantity of evidence
- Level of evidence assigned to each recommendation indicates the strength of the evidence for the effect of the practices on student achievement
 - A minimal evidence rating does not indicate that the recommendation is any less important, it means that:
 - Additional studies are needed
 - The recommended practice may be difficult to study in a rigorous experimental fashion

Foundational Skills to Support Reading

1. Teach students academic language skills, including the use of inferential and narrative language, and vocabulary knowledge.
2. Develop awareness of the segments of sounds in speech and how they link to letters.
3. Teach students to decode words, analyze word parts, and write and recognize words.
4. Ensure that each student reads connected text every day to support reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.

Foorman et al., 2016

Improving Reading Comprehension

1. Teach students how to use reading comprehension strategies.
2. Teach students to identify and use the text's organizational structure to comprehend, learn, and remember content.
3. Guide students through focused, high-quality discussion on the meaning of text.
4. Select texts purposefully to support comprehension development.
5. Establish an engaging and motivating context in which to teach comprehension.

Shanahan et al., 2010

Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers

1. Provide daily time for students to write
2. Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes
3. Teach students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing
4. Create an engaged community of writers

Graham et al., 2018

Teacher-Delivered Behavioral Interventions in Grades K-5

1. Co-establish, model, and teach clear expectations for student behavior consistent with schoolwide expectations
2. Remind students to engage in expected behaviors
3. Acknowledge students for demonstrated expected behaviors through positive attention, praise, and rewards
4. Offer instructional choices to students to increase engagement and agency
5. Provide students frequent and varying opportunities to respond and engage in activities

Lane et al., 2024

Time Allocated

- National Reading Panel Report: 90 minutes of uninterrupted explicit, systematic, and differentiated instruction
- 2 hours or more K-1
 - Foundational skills cover at least half the time
- At least 90 minutes in 2-3
 - Foundational skills will take somewhat less for “on track” students

National Reading Panel, 2000; Moats & Tolman, 2019

Don't Let the Rope Unravel

- An overemphasis on foundational skills can leave students bereft of the background knowledge, vocabulary, and language comprehension associated with content-rich text
- An overemphasis on literature and language comprehension leaves only the top students to access the text in K-2 and the rest will flounder

Moats & Tolman, 2019

Not One But Both

- Clarify the goals of each component for yourself and your students
- Differentiate varied purposes for various activities
- Plan blocks of time for each component
- Choose high-quality read aloud text

Moats & Tolman, 2019

Essential Components of Literacy Instruction

- Word reading and spelling instruction
 - Phonemic awareness
 - Word reading/spelling
 - Morphological awareness
 - Advanced spelling instruction
 - Sentence fluency
 - Reading fluency
- Knowledge building and vocabulary
 - Explicit, systematic and incidental vocabulary instruction
 - Knowledge rich units

Swain, 2025

Essential Components of Literacy Instruction, cont.

- Foundational writing instruction
 - Explicit handwriting instruction
 - Sentence and paragraph teaching
- Text level comprehension and writing
 - Shared and independent reading, including high-quality literature
 - Comprehension strategies
 - Modeled, shared, and independent writing
 - Genre-level instruction

Optimize Instructional Time

- Increase allocated time and **time spent teaching** in critical content areas
- Ensure an **appropriate match** between what is **being taught** and the instructional **needs of students**
- Start lessons **on time** and stick to the **schedule**
- Teach in **groups** as much as possible
- Be **prepared**
- Avoid **digressions**
- Decrease **transition time**
- Use **routines**

Archer & Hughes, 2011

3.0 Evaluate Resources

Teach the stuff and cut the fluff

The Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation Tool

- Alignment to findings from the **science of reading**
 - Including “red-flags” practices within a curriculum that are not aligned with the scientific evidence base
- Practices used to **review curricula** are those featured in Scarborough's **reading rope model**
 - Word recognition
 - Language comprehension
- Additional practices related to **fluency, writing, reading comprehension, and assessment**

The Reading League, 2022

Sample Red Flags vs. Green Flags

Instructional Area	Red Flags	Green Flags
Phonemic Awareness	Instruction only attends to larger units of phonological awareness	Instruction includes conversations about the way sounds are made in the mouth
Phonics & Decoding	Blending is not explicitly taught or practiced.	Letter-sound correspondences are taught to automaticity in an explicit manner
Fluency	Rate is emphasized over accuracy	Word level fluency practice is provided

Importance of Quality Resources

- "When you have a good curriculum, and you have the knowledge that you need about language and everything that you bring to the table and back of it, so that you can make better choices of what you're doing and evaluate it. But **if you have a curriculum that's really well-designed, then your cognitive energy can go to the students, to their corrections, or to their errors.**"

- Archer

Voyager Sopris Podcast, 2023

Connection to Legislation: MCL.380.1280f

- The law outlines the features of Tier 1, class-wide reading instruction
- Language that outlines instructional methods to teach decoding and word recognition using a “code-emphasis instructional approach”
- Requires a published list of evidence-based Tier 1, class-wide elementary reading curricula/materials that are aligned with science of reading methods that research has shown to improve literacy outcomes

4.0 Craft a Classroom Environment to Support Learning

If you expect it, pre-correct it

Organize Space to Support Instruction

- Design areas for specific activities
 - Whole class instruction
 - Small group instruction
 - Gathering on the rug

Archer & Hughes, 2011; Groshell, 2024

Set the Conditions for Focused Learning

1. Students **face the teacher** without **turning around**
2. Teacher has **close proximity** to students
3. Students can **interact** with partner/group with **ease**
4. Teacher can **see all areas** of the room
5. Teacher can **easily monitor** all areas
6. Teacher and students can **move easily around the room**
7. Teacher can **access instructional materials**
8. Students can **access materials**

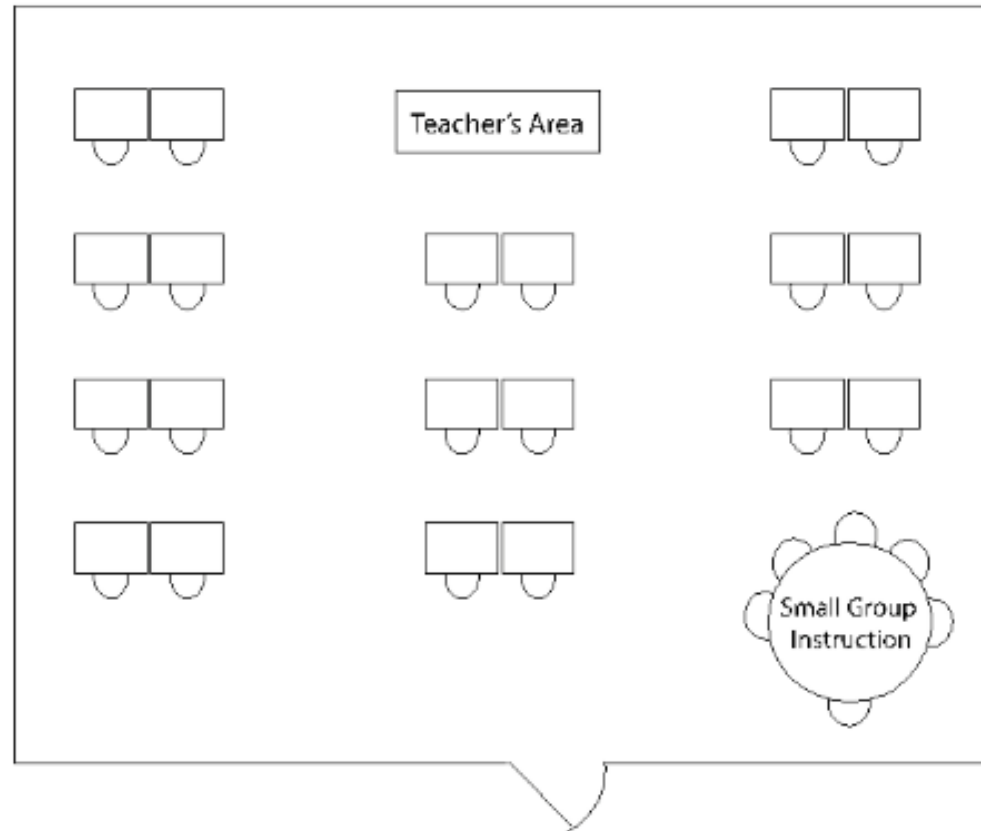
Archer & Hughes, 2011

Assign Seats

“It is showing empathy not cruelty to assign students to the seat that maximizes their attention, not least because it relieves them from the immense social pressure of having to choose between friends and learning.”

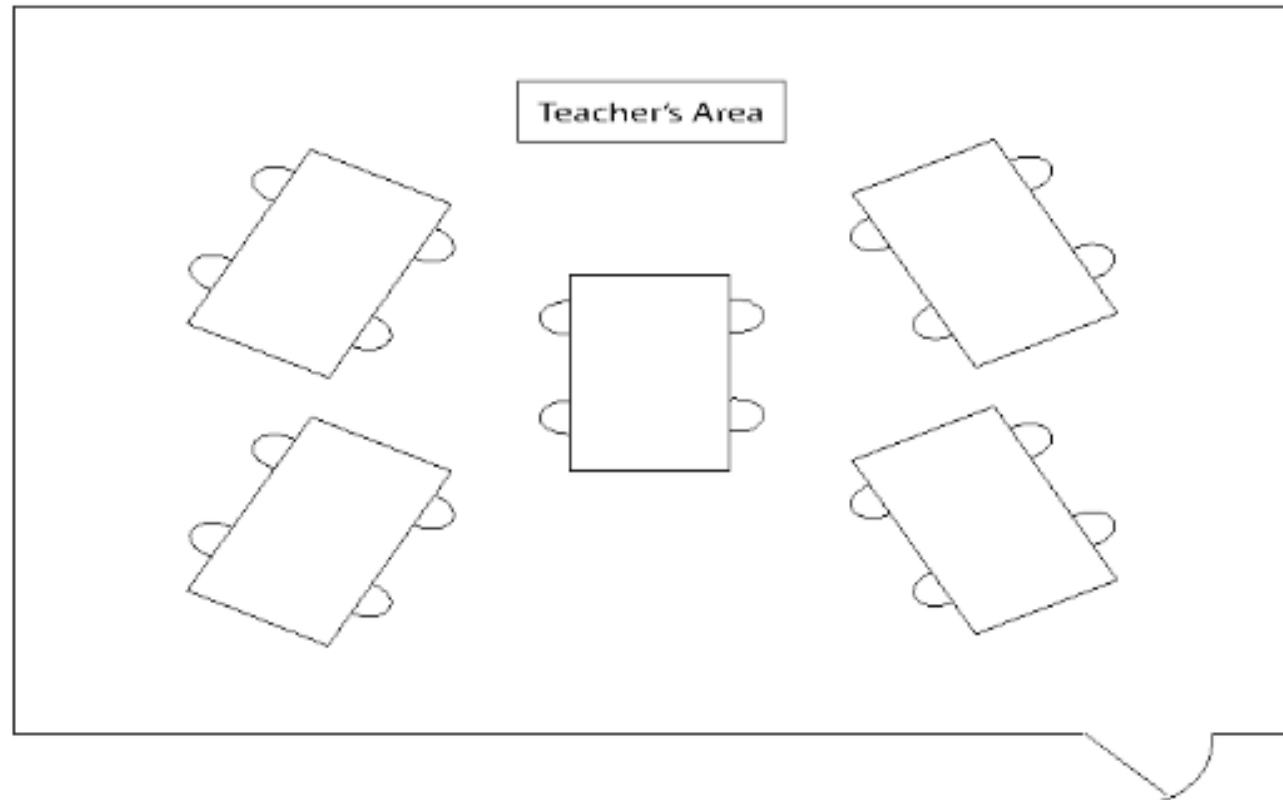
Groshell, 2024

Classroom Arrangement – Paired Rows



Archer & Hughes, 2011

Classroom Arrangement – Slanted Tables



Archer & Hughes, 2011

Reduce Visual Distractions

- Reduce **visual clutter** in the classroom environment
- Place classroom displays **away** from where you're **explaining**
- Post **materials** that remind students of the **critical content and strategies** to apply
 - Word wall/ Sound wall
 - Strategy posters
 - Content/reference information

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Clear Expectations

- Consider your rules, they should be:
 - Few in number
 - State the desired behavior
 - Short and simple
 - List observable behavior
 - Begin with a verb
 - Clearly define behaviors (clarify with examples and non-examples)

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Predictability Predicts Ability

- Consider classroom routines carefully
 - Students have no difficulty following consistently
 - Require little, if any, teacher involvement
- Introduce routines as they are needed

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Possible Routines

- Movement into / out of classroom
- Transition to a new activity
- Use of the bathroom
- Use of pencil sharpener
- Turning in completed work
- Cues for attention
- Gaining assistance during independent work time when the teacher is working with a small group

Archer & Hughes, 2011

5.0 Critical Content

Teach the stuff and cut the fluff

Universal Goal

- Teaching - Learning
- The aim of all instruction is to alter long-term memory. If nothing has changed in long-term memory, nothing has been learned.

Archer, 2011; Kirschner, Sweller, Clarke, 2006

Integration of the “Sciences”

Science of Reading

- What students need to learn
- Evidence-based reading instruction
- Structured literacy

Science of Learning

- How students learn best
- Cognitive science and neuroscience
- Cognitive load
- Practice opportunities
- Memory and transfer

Science of Instruction

- How to teach effectively
- Explicit instruction
- Alignment of content, pedagogy, assessment
- Equitable and responsive

Instructional Hierarchy

- Acquisition
 - New understanding
 - Student cannot accurately respond without help
 - Goal: accuracy and discrimination
- Fluency
 - Student performance is accurate but labored
 - Goal: rapid and accurate responding
- Generalization
 - Skill is fluent
 - Goal: increase the conditions under which the student responds correctly, transfer
- Adaptation
 - Skill is fluent
 - Goal: alter the skill to solve new problems, modification

Haring, Lovitt, Eaton, & Hansen, 1978

Instructional Hierarchy & Literacy

1. Acquisition

- Explicit Instruction
- Skill Practice
- Immediate Feedback

2. Fluency/ Proficiency

- Instruction on building proficiency and competency
- Repeated retrieval practice
- Feedback on meeting fluency criteria

Instructional Hierarchy & Literacy, cont.

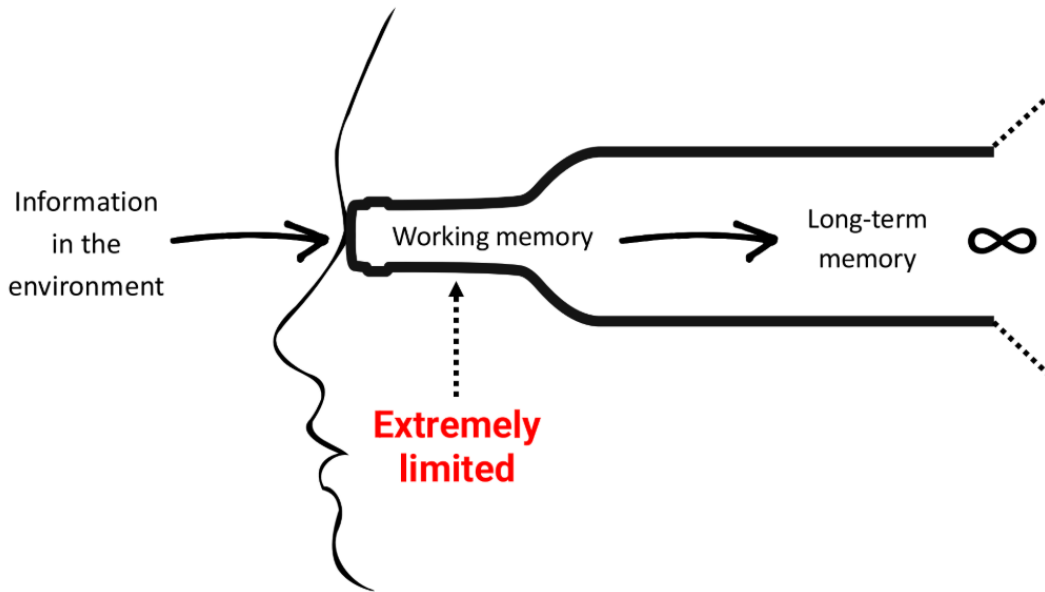
3. Generalization

- Instruction in new/novel settings
- Spaced and Retrieval Practice
- Feedback on using skill proficiently in novel setting

4. Adaptation

- Identify core features of the skill and modifying to fit in new settings
- Provide feedback on trying different variations or adaptations to the skill

Cognitive Load Theory



Sweller, 1988; Groshell, 2024

- Premise:
 - The brain has limited working memory
 - The working memory can only hold a small amount of information at one time
- Goal:
 - Optimize learning by designing instruction that manages the mental effort (load) caused by instructional materials

Cognitive Load

- Highly effective teachers manage students' cognitive load
 - Breaking learning tasks into **bite-sized chunks**
 - Build students' knowledge solidly and in a **sequential manner**
 - Maximize the time spent **explicitly teaching** students
 - Frequent **checks for understanding**

Swain, 2025; Willingham, 2021

Science of Learning and Explicit Instruction

Cognitive Science Principle	Explicit Instruction
Working memory is limited	Explicit instruction reduces overload
Prior knowledge enables new learning	Lessons are sequenced based on what students already know
Retrieval isn't a test of learning; it is learning	Retrieval practice is built into lessons through active participation
Learning and performance aren't the same	Distributed practice is an essential component of explicit instruction
Novices benefit from explicit guidance	Explicit instruction benefits all learners and is critical for novices
Motivation and achievement are reciprocal	High levels of success enhance motivation

What is critical?

- Teach skills, strategies, vocabulary terms, concepts, and rules that will empower students in the future and match the students' instructional needs

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Critical Content: Literacy

- Phonological Awareness
 - Blending
 - Segmenting
- Decoding
 - Blending strategy
 - Decoding multi-syllabic words
 - Spelling rules
- Vocabulary
 - Content and academic terms
 - Context clues to determine meaning
- Comprehension Strategies
 - Summarization
 - Monitoring for meaning
- More

Teach the Stuff and Cut the Fluff

- Can increase content coverage by deciding what is important for your students to learn
 - Examine your curriculum, select critical skills and objectives, and discard or deemphasize those that are less critical
 - Focus on skills, strategies, concepts, or rules that will generalize to many other items or situations
- Can increase content coverage by increasing efficiency of instruction

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Data Informed

- Master teachers rely on their knowledge of their students to alter how they do things
 - What do students already know?
 - What prerequisite skills are they lacking?

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Scope and Sequence

- Clear and logical scope and sequences are critical for this work
 - Ensures components are taught systematically and sequentially
 - Role of daily and monthly review

6.0 Explicit Lesson Design

Good instruction is good instruction

How well I teach = How well they learn

- “No system or district in the world has made significant gains for students without a relentless focus on the learning and teaching process”

Fullan & Quinn, 2016

- “Teachers are our best assurance against reading failure”

Moats, 2019

Definition 1

- “Direct and deliberate instruction through continuous teacher-pupil interaction that includes explanation, teacher modeling or example, and multiple opportunities to practice with feedback for students to develop mastery.”

Definition 2

- “a systematic method of teaching with an emphasis on proceeding with small steps, checking for understanding, and achieving active and successful participation for all students.”

Rosenshine, 1987

Definition 3

- “a way of teaching where the teacher selects an important objective, specifies the learning outcome, designs structured instructional experiences, explains directly, models the skills being taught, and provides scaffolded practice to help a student achieve mastery”

Kearns, 2018

Definition 4

- “Explicit teaching is not just the episode within a lesson when information is presented; it involves chunking content into small components, guiding students’ initial attempts at working with that content and gradually releasing control into more open activities as students gain mastery. It is a teaching model that progresses from ‘I do’ to ‘we do’ to ‘you do’.”

Boxer, 2019

Compared Variables Related to Explicit Instruction

Explicit teaching strategies	.64	Deliberate practice	.79
Direct instruction	.56	Rehearsal and memorization	.65
Mastery learning	.67	Spaced practice	.65
Goals	.60	Retrieval practice	.51
Clarity	.85	Scaffolding	.52
Questioning	.48	RTI	.73
Classroom Discussions	.82	Collective teacher efficacy	1.34
Feedback (corrective, etc.)	.92	Teacher credibility	1.09
Student control over learning	0.02	Discovery-Based teaching	.27

Hattie, 2019

Explicit Instruction and Discovery

Novices

- Little or no background knowledge
- History of difficulty or failure
- Benefit from clear explanations, step-by-step instructions, and worked samples
- Struggle with problem solving in that domain

Explicit Instruction

Archer & Hughes, 2011; Swain, 2025

Experts

- A good deal of background knowledge in the domain
- History of success
- Can work without explicit guidance, relying on stored knowledge for problem-solving
- Knowledge of the domain sets them apart

Discovery Learning

Variables Related to Critical Content

- Phonological Awareness Programs 0.72
- Phonics Instruction 0.60
- Repeated Reading Programs 0.75
- Comprehension Programs 0.60

Hattie, 2019

Elements of Explicit Instruction

- **Content**
- **Design of Instruction**
 - **Skills & Strategies**
 - Vocabulary
 - Knowledge
- **Delivery of Instruction**
- **Practice**

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Design of Instruction

- Organized and focused lessons
 - Opening
 - Body
 - Closing

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Lesson Opening

- Opening
 - Attention
 - Review
 - Preview

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Attention

- Provide a verbal cue
 - “Listening”
 - “Eyes and ears on me”
 - “Class Class”
- Follow the verbal cue with silence
- Regain attention throughout the lesson

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Set the Conditions for Focus

- Research on auditory distractions suggests that noise harms learning
- Respond immediately to disruptive behavior
- Frontload expectations for behavior
- Consider classroom organization

Groshell, 2024

Review

- Review content of **previous** lessons
- Review necessary **prerequisite** skills (pre-skills) for **target** skill or **strategy** being taught
- Review **background** knowledge needed for today's lesson
- Review must be **interactive**
 - Request **responses** during review
- Review should include **retrieval** practice
 - Review is “**Ask don't Tell**”

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Review: Continuous Blending

- Continuous blending– strategy
- Review
 - letter sounds
 - Stretch words – phonemic awareness
 - What else?
- Mm
- Tt
- Pp
- Aa
- Ss
- Hh
- Cc
- li

Preview

- State the **goal** of lesson
 - Learning **intention**
 - What am I **learning**?
 - What students should **know**, understand, or be **able to do** as a result of **teaching** and learning
 - Success **criteria**
 - How am I doing?
 - Relevance of **target skill**
 - Why is this **important**?

Archer, 2011

Learning Intention

- Research based
- Internationally benchmarked
- Rigor
- Measurable
- Minimal jargon

Gibbons, Brown, Niebling, 2019

Remove Vagueness

- Inclusion of vagueness terms make it hard to follow the train of thought of the speaker
 - “This reading lesson might enable you to understand a little more about some things we usually plot structure. Maybe before we get to what is likely the main idea of the lesson, you should review a few prerequisite concepts. Actually, the first concept you need to review is story elements. As you probably know story elements are things like characters and setting.”
- Cognitive load is reduced and learning and satisfaction are improved

Groshell, 2024

Body of Lesson

- Skills and strategies – how to do something

Skills	Strategies
• Smaller and more specific • Automatic procedure that does not require thought, interpretation or choice • Single step • Automatic • Letter- sound associations	• Larger and overarching • A plan, method, or steps for obtaining a result or solving a problem • Multi-step • Intentional • Continuous blending routine

Archer, 2024

Elementary Literacy Skills and Strategies

- Sound out word
- Determine meaning of word using context clues
- Determine meaning of word using root and affixes
- Spell a word
- Formulate who, what, when, where, why, and how questions
- Determine cause and effect
- Make inferences
- Take notes on informational text
- Write a summary of content
- Form manuscript letters
- What else?

Archer, 2024

Selection of Strategies

Select strategies that are:

1. Are critical
2. Are useful in the moment
3. Are useful in the future
4. Are effective and efficient
5. Generalize to other situations

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Gradual Release

- **I do it**
 - Demonstration
 - Teacher performs, students watch
- **We do it**
 - Guided practice
 - Teacher performs, students perform
- **You do it**
 - Check for understanding
 - Teacher watches, students perform

Archer & Hughes, 2011

I Do It: Demonstration

- Show
 - Proceed step-by-step
 - Exaggerate the steps
- Tell
 - Tell students what you are doing
 - Tell students what you are thinking
- Gain responses
 - What they already know
 - What you have told them

Archer & Hughes, 2011

I Do It: Continuous Blending

1. Introduce the word
2. Stretch the sounds – say the sounds
 - Map
3. Blend the sounds - say the sounds quickly
 - Sit
4. Read the word – say the whole word
5. Ask yourself – is this a real word?

We Do It: Guided Practice

- Types of prompts
 - Prompt physically
 - Prompt visually
 - Prompt verbally
- Levels of prompts
 - Tell them what to do
 - Ask them what to do
 - Remind them what to do

We Do It: Continuous Blending

- Mat
- Sat
- Map

- Sip
- Cap
- Hat

You Do It: Check for Understanding

- Verify students' understanding before independent work is given
- Carefully monitor students' responses
- Continue until students are consistently accurate

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Across Tiers

- Tier 1
 - I do, We do, We do, we do, we do, You do
- Tier 2
 - I do, I do, We do, We do, We do, we do, we do, we do, You do
- Tier 3
 - I do, I do, We do, We do, We do, We do, we do, we do, We do,
**I do, We do, we do, You do

Archer & Hughes, 2011

You Do It: Evidence-Based

Have students read decodable words in isolation and in text

- Decodable passage or sentences
- Word list

Provide opportunities for oral reading practice with feedback

- Fluency
 - Accuracy
 - Rate

Foorman et al., 2016

You Do It: Continuous Blending

- Sap
- Hip
- Cat
- Ham
- Pit
- Pat sat at a mat.

Lesson Closing

- Review
 - Review **critical content**
 - Interactive
 - Contain **retrieval practice**
- Preview
 - Preview content of **next lesson**
- Independent Work
 - Assign **independent work**
 - Review assignment, **quizzes**, projects due in the **future**

Archer & Hughes, 2011

Lesson Closing: Continuous Blending

1. Introduce the word
 - Hip
2. Stretch the sounds – say the sounds
3. Blend the sounds – say the sound quickly
 - Pat
4. Read the word – say the whole word
 - Hit
5. Ask yourself – is this a real word?
 - Tap

7.0 Closing

Closing Review

1. Scarborough's rope model provides us with essential components for reading instruction (don't forget writing)
2. Select critical content
3. Evaluate resources for potential red flags and adjust accordingly
4. Organize your space to support instruction
5. Provide students with clear expectations

Closing Review, cont.

1. We should teach skills, strategies, vocabulary terms, concepts, and rules that will empower students in the future and match the students' current instructional
2. Explicit lesson design includes Opening, Body (I do, we do, you do), and closing
3. All parts of the lesson should be interactive

Preview of Session 2

1. How can I support engagement and participation during lessons?
2. What strategies are there for monitoring student performance and providing feedback?
3. How will I know if my students are ready for independent practice?
4. What can differentiation and scaffolding look like in my classroom?
5. How will I know whether to use whole or small-group format for instruction?

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