LET'S TALK EARLY LITERACY

Academics Advocacy is a group started by two MPS parents to advocate for improved early literacy instruction in the Minneapolis Public School District.

More info at:
AcademicsAdvocacy.org

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Literacy Engagement

- WBWF - engaged with educators and district staff

- Community Engagement – 20+ calls and 20+ parent testimonials:
  - Calls with educators and literacy specialists at 8 different schools
    - MPS sites: Jenny Lind and Anishinabe using structured literacy
  - MDE Dyslexia Specialists
  - Groves Academy
  - Jerry von Korff, Attorney, former St. Cloud school board member and Dyslexia advocate
  - MPS Teaching and Learning
  - Decoding Dyslexia
  - Dyslexia Advocates
  - Multiple Parent and Community Advocacy Groups/Orgs/Tutors
  - Parents of struggling students as represented by submitted testimonials.

Common Themes – Engagement

- Current literacy curriculum and the interventions we are using are lacking structured literacy in core instruction and interventions.

- Teachers have expressed concerns over their lack of training and professional development on how to teach children how to read.

- Parents of struggling readers are finding our schools are ill equipped to support their students.

- Parents are extremely worried about their children whose behavior or mental health is being impaired by their inability to fully participate in the classroom.

- Parents of means are finding success when they enroll their struggling readers in schools or hire tutors that use structured evidence-based instruction, typically an Orton Gillingham based program.

The Ladder of Reading

5% Learning to read seems effortless

35% Learning to read is relatively easy with broad instruction
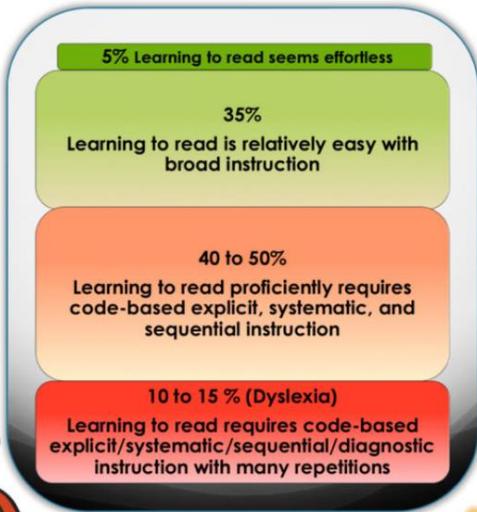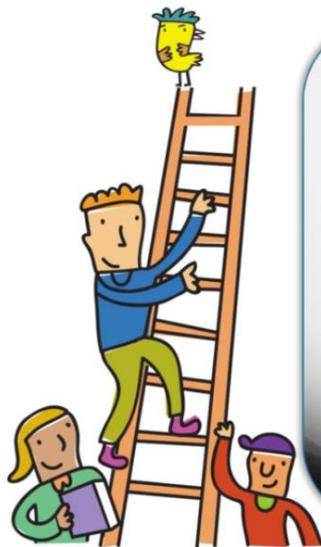
Advantaged by a structured literacy approach

40 to 50% Learning to read proficiently requires code-based explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction

10 to 15 % (Dyslexia) Learning to read requires code-based explicit/systematic/sequential/diagnostic instruction with many repetitions

Structured literacy approach essential

© N. Young, 2012 (updated 2017)
Artwork by Dean Stanton
(Lyon, 1998; NRP, 2000; IDA, 2015; Hempenstall, 2016)

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Reading Spelling Writing

FAST Kindergarten earlyReading: Letter Sounds

Percent of students proficient on the **Letter Sounds** subtest of the FAST earlyReading assessment in Fall SY19, SY20, and SY21
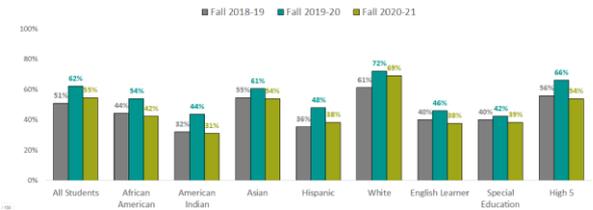
3rd Grade MCA Reading Proficiency by Race/Ethnicity
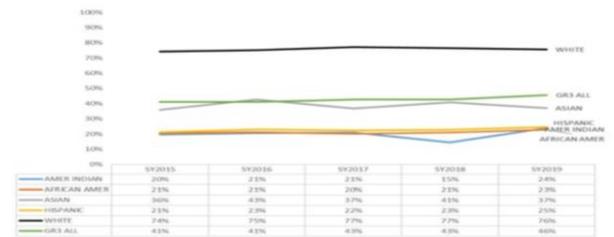
Table 2. Examples of Some Different Instructional Emphases in SL as Compared to TLP

Structured literacy (SL)	Typical literacy practices (TLP)
Phonics skills are taught explicitly and systematically, with prerequisite skills taught first. For beginning readers, these skills receive considerable initial emphasis.	Phonics skills are usually taught but not emphasized, even for beginners. Teaching is often not highly explicit or systematic. Prerequisite skills may not be taught first.
Phonics approach is synthetic (parts to whole). Students learn sounds for common letters and letter patterns (e.g., *sh*, *-ck*) and how to blend them (phoneme blending).	Phonics approach may be synthetic, but is often analytic (whole to parts) or decoding by analogy (e.g., "word families").
Beginning readers usually read decodable texts (texts largely controlled to specific phonics patterns that have been explicitly taught) that facilitate learning to apply phonics skills in reading texts.	Beginning readers usually read leveled and predictable texts (texts in which words are predictable based on sentence structure, repetition, or pictures) that do not easily lend themselves to application of phonics skills.
Oral text reading with a teacher is included in lessons.	Partner reading and independent reading may be emphasized more than oral text reading with a teacher.
When students read text orally, they are encouraged to look carefully at printed words and apply decoding skills to unfamiliar words.	When students read text orally, some errors may be overlooked, especially if they do not greatly alter meaning. Teacher feedback to errors may emphasize sentence context or pictures rather than consistent application of decoding skills.
Spelling skills are taught explicitly and systematically with prerequisite skills taught first and with instruction in common spelling rules (e.g., rules for adding endings). Spelling instruction reinforces and extends what students learn in decoding.	Spelling is often not taught in an explicit or systematic manner. Students may learn word lists in which words exemplify no particular phonics pattern or spelling rule. Spelling program may be completely distinct from decoding program with different words in the two programs.
Higher levels of literacy are explicitly and systematically taught (e.g., sentence structure, paragraphs, discourse), including prerequisite skills.	Some higher levels of literacy may be explicitly taught but usually not systematically and not with strong attention to prerequisite skills.

Source: Structured Literacy and Typical Literacy Practices: Understanding Differences to Create Instructional Opportunities (readingrockets.org)

LETRS Training Overview – Teaching a classroom of children how to read is a highly skilled job.

Unit 1 The Challenge of Learning to Read

- Why reading is difficult
- The connection between language and literacy
- What the brain does when a person is reading
- The skills that support proficient reading
- How children learn to read and spell
- Major types of reading difficulties
- How to use assessment for prevention and early intervention
- Using assessment to differentiate instruction

Unit 3 Teaching Beginning Phonics, Word Recognition, and Spelling

- The role of the strands of the Reading Rope in word recognition
- The role of phonics in reading instruction
- Compare code-emphasis instruction with meaning-emphasis instruction
- Explore phoneme-grapheme correspondence system of English
- Classify phonics elements
- Understand some basic patterns of position-based spelling in English
- Instruction sequence: letter names and letter formation; key word for sound-symbol associations; teach correspondences explicitly; use sound-blending routines
- Word practice and word meaning routines
- How to teach spelling using dictation
- Decodable text and when it is important to use
- Using data to further student success

Unit 2 The Speech Sounds of English

- Phonology related to reading and spelling
- How phonological skills develop
- The importance of phonemic awareness
- The consonant and vowel phonemes of the English language
- Recognize and respond to errors of English learners and dialect speakers
- Recognize how allophonic variation in speech affects students' spelling
- How phonological skills should be taught, and which ones should be assessed

Unit 6 Digging for Meaning: Understanding Reading Comprehension

- The language and cognitive skills that support reading comprehension
- Distinguish comprehension products from comprehension processes
- The goal of comprehension instruction is to create a coherent mental model of the text
- Characteristics of students who struggle with language and reading comprehension
- The connection among vocabulary, background knowledge, and reading comprehension
- Process for teaching texts
- The importance of syntax and how to teach it
- The importance of text coherence and its relationship to mental coherence
- How text structure affects comprehension

Unit 4 Advanced Decoding, Spelling, and Word Recognition

- Advanced word study
- Position-based spelling correspondences and other orthographic conventions
- Phoneme-grapheme mapping
- The six syllable types and how they should be taught
- Distinguish syllables from morphemes
- Suffix rules
- Spelling screeners and how to interpret the results
- Best practices for teaching spelling
- Relationship between reading fluency and reading comprehension
- Building word, sentence, and passage reading fluency
- Interpret phonological, phonics, spelling, and fluency data
- Aligning practices with scientific evidence

Unit 5 The Mighty Word: Oral Language and Vocabulary

- The relationship among vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, oral language proficiency, and reading comprehension
- Mental map of a well-known word
- Words that should be taught directly
- Introducing new words
- Effective practice of new words
- Creating a language-rich classroom

Unit 7 Text-Driven Comprehension Instruction

- The balance of foundational skills with language comprehension
- Which comprehension strategies are supported by research
- Effective strategies during and after reading
- Student-generated questions before, during, and after reading
- The importance of generating questions that deepen understanding of text
- Reread and revisit text for various purposes
- The process for planning an entire reading comprehension lesson for narrative and informational text
- Adapting instruction or special populations

Unit 8 The Reading-Writing Connection

- Writing is important because it benefits reading
- Understand the foundational and language skills necessary for writing
- The phases of the writing process
- Letter formation and handwriting fluency
- Explicit instruction for spelling
- How students gain competence in building sentences
- Narrative writing development
- Informational and opinion writing development
- Methods for assessing student progress in writing

Comments:

- Teaching students to read is a highly skilled job requiring a deep understanding of cognitive science and the ability to apply to young children

- Students in highest poverty schools tend to have the most inexperienced teachers and highest turnover. Students at these school need master teachers who are ready day one to teach students foundational literacy skills.

- There are students in every building that need explicit sequenced structured literacy.

- We need to give teachers the tools to succeed in the classroom. When they succeed our kids succeed.

- Investments in literacy need to be grounded in research and evidence-based practices.

- Assessments need to be aligned to science of reading. Example: MCA test is a comprehension test. How do we know if students have not mastered "learning to read". (Decoding: phonics, phonemic awareness, etc)