THE SCIENCE OF READING IN PRACTICAL TERMS

The Science of Reading represents what we have learned from decades of research on how the brain works to help us more effectively teach children to become readers. By actively reviewing educational materials and maintaining open communication with teachers, parents and guardians can ensure their children receive reading instruction consistent with the Science of Reading principles.

Children Best Learn To Read When They Are Taught	What You Can Do To Support A Child	What To Look For In Classrooms	Signs A Child May Need Different Instruction Or Support
PHONEMIC AWARENESS The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. *Example: Being able to break down the word "cat" into its sounds: /k/, /a/, /t/ and understand how the word changes if "c" is replaced by "h."*	• Talk about how letters have sounds (when reading together, point to letters and say their sounds before blending them into words). • Practice breaking words into individual sounds. • Play sound games like rhyming games, clapping syllables, or identifying the first, middle, and last sounds in words. • Read aloud and emphasize sounds.	• Lessons on identifying individual sounds in words and practicing those sounds. • Sound recognition activities, like rhyming games or sound-matching tasks.	• Lack of lessons on identifying individual sounds in words practice of letter sounds in class. • Sole focus on oral activities, such as chants and songs, without incorporating letters.
PHONICS The relationship between sounds and their spellings. Note: This may involve more than one letter. *Example: Learning that the letter "b" makes the /b/ sound or that /f/ can be: "f," "ff," or "ph."*	• Talk about how letters make words. • Play letter-sound matching games. • Practice decoding words by having children sound out words while reading, rather than guessing.	• New sounds and letters introduced in a logical order, building on what students have already learned. • Reading and writing activities to practice these skills. • Decodable books for students to practice skills.	• Instruction that does not build upon what students have learned, and not enough time to practice skills. • Reliance on the three-cueing system, which involves guessing words based on pictures and context. • Students are encouraged to memorize sight words instead of sounding our the word.

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FLUENCY The ability to read text accurately, quickly, and with proper expression. Fluent readers can focus on understanding the text rather than decoding words.	• Build in breaks to talk about what's happening in a book while you are reading together. • Read a sentence aloud and have your child repeat it. • Use familiar books for practice and to build fluency.	• Students reading aloud with guidance and feedback. • Repeated reading practices in which students read the same passage multiple times to build confidence and proficiency.	• Assessment that relies solely on students summarizing what they read. • Insufficient guided oral reading practice. • Students do not repeat reading stories to build reading speed and confidence.
VOCABULARY Knowing the meaning of words and how to use them correctly. A strong vocabulary helps with comprehension.	• Let kids read many kinds of books. • Introduce new words in daily conversations. • Play word games, like word-of-the-day challenges, crossword puzzles, or picture-word matching games.	• Explicit vocabulary teaching with new words and clear definitions. • Teaching students how to understand unfamiliar words using context clues, prefixes, suffixes, and root words.	• Lack of direct vocabulary Instruction, where new words are not taught with definitions and examples. • Failure to teach strategies to learn new words with context clues, prefixes, suffixes, and root words.
COMPREHENSION The ultimate goal of reading — understanding what is being read. It involves making connections, asking questions, and summarizing information.	• Ask open-ended questions about the story to encourage thinking. • Make connections to real life.	• Summarizing, and clarifying to enhance understanding. • Use of graphic organizers to help organize information and visualize relationships within the text.	• No instruction or modeling of active reading strategies. • Underuse of graphic organizers.
WRITING Goes hand in hand with reading to reinforce reading skills and help students express their thoughts. Writing is a process, and instruction should not just be about the final product.	• Encourage your child to write stories, letters, or keep a journal. • Have your child help you write grocery lists, letters, or stories, contributing their own ideas and words.	• Students guided through stages of writing, including planning, drafting, revising, and editing. • Writing activities connected to reading assignments. • Writing integrated into different subjects.	• Instruction that skips stages like planning, drafting, revising, and editing. • Separating writing tasks from reading assignments.