

What is *Structured Literacy* instruction?

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) has adopted the term *Structured Literacy* to describe explicit reading instruction that goes by many names (Orton-Gillingham, Multi-Sensory, Explicit Phonics and others such as Wilson Language Training Program, Lindamood Bell Instruction). Structured Literacy instruction prepares students to decode words in an explicit and systematic manner. This approach not only helps students with SLD/Dyslexia, but there is substantial evidence that it is more effective for *all* readers.

Structured Literacy instruction is marked by several elements:

- ◆ **Phonology/Phonological Awareness** – Phonology is the study of sound structure of spoken words and is a critical element of *Structured Language* instruction. Phonological awareness includes rhyming, counting words in spoken sentence, and clapping syllables in spoken words. An important aspect of phonological awareness is **phonemic awareness** or the ability to segment words into their component sounds, which are called phonemes.
- ◆ **Sound-Symbol Association/Phonics** – Once students have developed the awareness of phonemes of spoken language, they must learn how to map the phonemes to symbols or printed letters, blend sounds and letters into words and segment words into individual sounds. Sound-symbol association must be taught and mastered in two directions: visual to auditory (reading) and auditory to visual (spelling). The instruction of sound-symbol associations is often referred to as **phonics**.
- ◆ **Syllable Instruction** – A syllable is a unit of oral or written language with one vowel sound. Instruction includes teaching of the six basic syllable types in the English language: closed, vowel-consonant-*e*, open, consonant-*le*, *r*-controlled, and vowel pair. Knowledge of syllable types assists readers to determine the sound of the vowel in the syllable. Syllable division rules heighten the reader’s awareness of where a long, unfamiliar word may be divided for greater accuracy in reading or sounding out a word.
- ◆ **Morphology** – A **morpheme** is the smallest unit of meaning in the language. A structured literacy curriculum includes the study of vocabulary, including base words, roots, prefixes, and suffixes.
- ◆ **Syntax** – Syntax is the set of principles that dictate the sequence and function of words in a sentence in order to convey meaning. This includes grammar, sentence variation, and the mechanics of language.
- ◆ **Semantics** – Semantics is that aspect of language concerned with meaning. The curriculum (from the beginning) must include instruction in the comprehension of written language.

Structured Literacy is distinctive in the principles that guide how critical elements are taught.

Systematic and Cumulative – *Structured Literacy* instruction is systematic and cumulative. **Systematic** means that the organization of material follows the logical order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest and most basic concepts and elements and progress methodically to more difficult concepts and elements. **Cumulative** means each step must be based on concepts previously learned.

Explicit Instruction – *Structured Literacy* instruction requires the deliberate teaching of all concepts with continuous student-teacher interaction. It is not assumed that students will naturally deduce these concepts on their own.

Diagnostic Teaching – The teacher must be adept at individualized instruction. That is instruction that meets a specific student’s needs. The instruction is based on careful and continuous assessment, both informally (e.g., observation) and formally (e.g., using standardized measures through progress monitoring). The content presented must be mastered to the degree of automaticity. Automaticity is critical to freeing all the student’s attention and cognitive resources for comprehension and expression (IDA, 2015).

Additional information regarding Structured Literacy can be found at [What Is Structured Literacy? – International Dyslexia Association](#).

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If you have additional questions regarding SLD/Dyslexia, please contact:

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For additional information and resources, go to the Specific Learning Disabilities/Dyslexia Initiative on the SERC website:

<http://www.ctserc.org/index.php/dyslexia>