

What is STRUCTURED LITERACY? A primer by Nancy Young (www.nancyyoung.ca)

An approach to teaching the structure of written text for reading and writing –
WHAT (content) & HOW (process) based on student need (data-informed instruction, practice & extended learning)



Components taught simultaneously as benefits learning

Phonology

Awareness of the individual speech sounds in spoken words (phonemes), and how they map to letters (graphemes), is linked to reading and spelling mastery. Effective instruction of phonemic awareness uses letters (graphemes) versus teaching phonemic awareness just “listening only”. *Note: Aspects of instruction debated. Further research needed.*

Orthography

Reading (decoding) and spelling (encoding) require knowledge of **the written code**. Written symbols (graphemes) which represent the phonemes in spoken words are taught in a sequence (read-aloud materials aligned for those who need this), addressing features such as allowable grapheme positions, word origin, and the rationale for certain spellings.

Morphology

As well as learning about phonemes and graphemes, learning about **the units of meaning – morphemes – in words** underlies reading/spelling mastery. This includes understanding words can be made up of just one or combined units of meaning (e.g. adding one or more affixes to a free or bound base), possibly resulting in changed grapheme pronunciation.

Syntax

Reading and writing proficiently requires knowing that words can be arranged in various ways. Instruction addresses **parts of speech** (e.g. verb, noun, preposition), how written words are organized into **sentences and paragraphs** in different **forms of text**, and the role of **punctuation**. Writing is a vital part of reading instruction, from kindergarten up.

Semantics

Awareness of the **many different meanings that words can represent** in various forms of text is integral to understanding. As reading and writing skills grow, vocabulary and background knowledge build. Comprehension (both spoken and written language) is strengthened at all times. A **rich language learning environment** (including varied texts) grounds all learning.

PHONICS

Sources: Wolf (2007), International Dyslexia Association (2017); Spear-Swerling (2018), Brady (2020).

Links to these resources and additional resources for educators & parents can be found at www.nancyyoung.ca

Nancy's book *Secret Code Actions™* contains Clues, Alerts and Detective Enrichment relating to the above skills PLUS creative actions and games to enhance any reading/spelling program by weaving in code-based movements during lessons and/or practice. Children need to learn to read and need to move. A win-win! **Information & examples, at www.nancyyoung.ca**

