



Glossary of Common Terms

Science of Reading (SoR): a comprehensive, conclusive, and empirically supported body of research that encompasses how we learn to read, what skills are involved, how those skills work together, and what parts of the brain are responsible for reading development.

Whole language: an approach to teaching reading that is based around the idea that learning to read is a natural process that would occur if children were immersed in a print-rich environment. Whole language proponents believe that phonics lessons might be bad for kids, and may inhibit children from developing a love of reading by making them focus on tedious skills like breaking words into parts (from [APM Reports September 2018](#))

Balanced literacy: after the National Reading Panel report was released in 2000, this approach grew in popularity, often consisting of “whole language” curriculum with some phonics curriculum alongside it. Most schools in Illinois use a “balanced literacy” curriculum, though the term can be used to describe very different approaches. (from [APM Reports September 2018](#))

Three-cueing (also known as MSV for Meaning, Structure, and Visual): a strategy associated with Whole Language/ Balanced Literacy instruction that involves prompting students to draw on context and sentence structure, along with letters, to identify words (from [EdWeek December 2020](#))

Phonics: systematic phonics instruction involves explicitly teaching students a prespecified set of letter-sound relations and having students read text that provides practice using these relations to decode words. [Instruction lacking an emphasis on phonics instruction does not teach letter-sound relations systematically and selects text for children according to other principles. The latter form of instruction includes whole word programs, whole language programs, and some basal reader programs.] (from the [National Reading Panel report, 2000](#))

Systematic instruction: approaches of content delivery that build upon prior learning in a strategic manner, building from simple to complex (i.e. sequential).

Predictive text: within this type of text, the reader learns to memorize patterns to read and use context clues for unknown words. Readers learn to “predict” the text. This instructional tool aligns with a whole language approach.

Decodable text: aligned with a phonics approach to reading where words are broken up into the smallest units of sounds, readers use letter-sound correspondence to read these texts.

Decoding: sounding out words by matching a letter or graphemes (combination of letters) to sounds.

Encoding: the opposite of decoding. Spelling words by identifying the letters or graphemes that represent the sounds in the word.

Five areas of reading: the National Reading Panel (2000) defines the five big areas of reading to be phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Guided reading: an instructional approach that includes reading instruction with a teacher and a small group of students. Students in the group are matched together based on similar reading levels.

Leveled books: a set of books with increasing levels of text difficulty, which are often used in guided reading instruction.

Tier 1 (also known as “core reading instruction”) (MTSS tiered system of support): denotes a multi-tiered system of supports, which is a systemic, focused on continuous-improvement, using data-based problem solving and decision-making at all levels of the educational system.

Evidence-based curriculum: denotes those methodologies that have been shown, through independently verified scientific research, to effect a desired change

Explicit: denotes specific, direct, and highly structured manner of presentation wherein topics are broken down into small parts and taught individually; it involves direct demonstration, guidance, and practice.