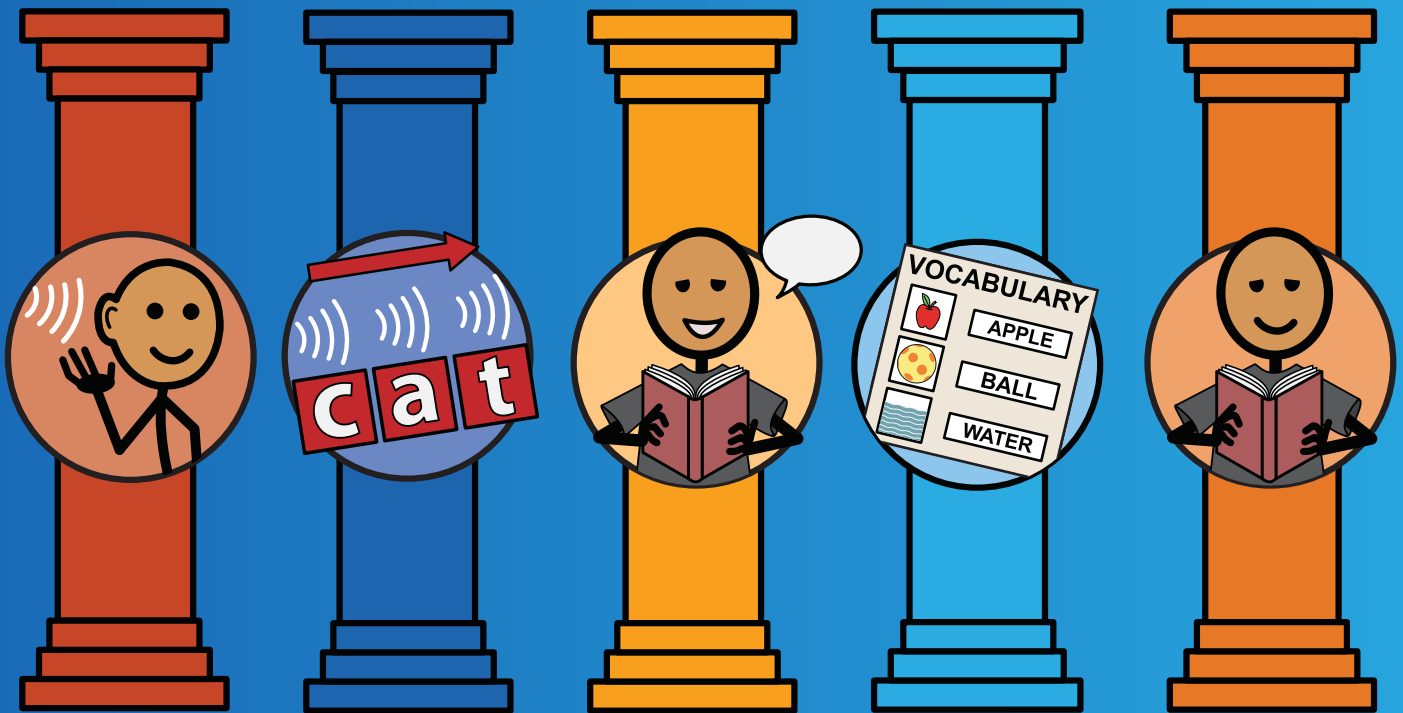


THE SCIENCE OF READING:

The Five Pillars of Reading Instruction



The Science of Reading is based on over 50 years of research associated with how students learn to read. Part of this body of research includes a report from the National Reading Panel (2000) in which five pillars of reading instruction were identified: **phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension**. Some students only have difficulty in one area, while others may struggle in multiple areas or even in all areas. To provide appropriate instruction, teachers must pinpoint specific challenges and how they impact the student's overall success, engagement, and motivation when reading. Reading instruction should be intensive, direct, systematic, and built upon the five pillars.

1. Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness is the ability to hear, think about, and manipulate the sounds in spoken language. In order for students to effectively learn to read, they must understand that words are composed of phonemes (the smallest unit of sound) in spoken language and they must be able to blend, segment, and manipulate those sounds to form words. Phonemic awareness is one of the best predictors of how well a child will learn to read.

Direct instruction in phonemic awareness includes having children listen to spoken language and determine how to blend sounds together to make words, separate sounds to write words, and move sounds around to make new words.



2. Phonics

Phonics is understanding the relationship between the sounds you hear in spoken language and the letters that represent those sounds. Phonics instruction teaches students how this relationship is used to read and spell.

Phonics instruction begins with teaching individual letter sounds and then progresses to teaching complex letter, sound, and spelling patterns. While some children may naturally understand these relationships, research has shown that children who receive systematic instruction of letter-sound relationships and spelling patterns are better equipped to read and spell more accurately and fluently (National Reading Panel, 2000).

3. Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read with accuracy, automaticity, and appropriate expression (prosody). A student who reads fluently reads as though they are speaking.

Fluency instruction is important because the larger sight vocabulary a student has (the ability to read words without hesitation) the more mental energy they can expend on comprehension of text (National Reading Panel, 2000). Fluency can be addressed through engagement with appropriate text, re-reading practices, and modeling of fluent reading.



4. Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to understanding the meaning of words both in oral language and writing. Vocabulary instruction is closely tied to comprehension of text. Vocabulary must be taught both directly and indirectly. In some cases vocabulary should be targeted through exposure with short explanation, while in other cases, teacher should identify specific vocabulary and teach it in depth to deepen student understanding and connection of selected words.

5. Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand and interpret information that is read in text.

Comprehension is the reason for reading. Students must learn strategies to foster the process of making meaning of text and communicating that meaning in a variety of ways. Comprehension strategies require student to engage in their understanding of text before they read, while they are reading, and after they are reading.

By understanding Science of Reading research, including the five pillars of reading instruction, and where students may have difficulty, teachers are better able to address specific areas of need for individual students. They do this with intensive, direct, and systematic instruction that helps learners make greater progress. This empowers students to become more proficient, engaged, and motivated, so they become lifelong readers.



REFERENCE

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, NIH, DHHS. (2000). Report of the National Reading Panel: *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of The Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction: Reports of the Subgroups* (00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

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