

## Vision Statement

In our lives, we are constantly surrounded by literacy and it may be hard to imagine what life was like before you could read, and you probably don't even remember learning how to read. I know I can't remember. However, it probably included memorizing sight words, or maybe even just your general words that appear on pages. With the current research that we have now, we know that simply memorizing words is not sustainable. Students need explicit, purposeful instruction and support that fosters them as they learn and grow. As educators, we have to be willing to put in the work to ensure that our students' needs are being met and that we are giving them the foundational tools for them to succeed in their educational journey and beyond. After reflecting on what I have learned in my schooling and experienced, I have compiled a list of components that I would like to implement in my classroom that would lead to effective literacy learning.

The first thing that I would like to implement in my classroom would be a structured literacy approach. Within a structured literacy program, students are taught using explicit and systematic instruction, students are practicing reading with decodables instead of books that rely on the three-cueing system, they are receiving explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, etc. A structured literacy approach is more beneficial than a balanced literacy approach because students are able to read connected texts to practice skills that have already been taught, versus having books that require memorization, word patterns that are irregular and haven't been taught, and it relies on students guessing rather than trying to apply their skills. In conclusion, the evidence that backs up the structured literacy approach just makes sense! When we are teaching students to read, we want them to be able to read and not just guess or struggle to figure a word out by context clues.

A component of a structured literacy approach would be to teach students using orthographic mapping. Orthographic mapping is when, eventually, students will be able to store written words in order to retrieve the words automatically and read effortlessly. However, in order to get to this point, there are some pieces to the puzzle that need to be in place first: proficient letter to sound knowledge, proficient phonological awareness, a basis of phonological blending, and a solid, working vocabulary and memory. The tricky part is that all of these pieces of the puzzle need to be working together because “a compromise in any of the components usually results in difficulties with reading acquisition” (Kilpatrick, 2015, p. 84). While we have been researching and studying the effects of phonological awareness for some time now, phonological awareness plays a huge role in orthographic mapping because students need to be able to hear the sounds involved and how to manipulate the sounds. Overall, orthographic mapping is a concept that helps students apply their knowledge and allows them to transform that into reading.

Another important component would when considering literacy instruction for my classroom would involve thinking about Richard Allington’s 6 T’s for Effective Literacy Instruction: time, talk, texts, teach, tasks, and test. In the article that I read, I was blown away by the stats that Allington shared and made me reflect on my own classroom practices and think about what I’ve observed in practicum experiences. One of the big, and shocking points from this article is that “in many classrooms, a 90 minute ‘reading block’ produces only 10-15 minutes of actual reading, or less than 20 percent of the allocated reading time” (Allington, 2002) , and even worse is the statistic that even “worse, in many classrooms, 20 minutes of actual reading across the school day...less than 10% of the school day is actually spent reading and 90% or more of the time is spent doing stuff” (Allington, 2002). This was shocking to me because

reflecting on what I've seen, I would say that this is pretty accurate and this is not okay! Students need to be reading and/or writing! Also, this brings me to the next "T" that I would like to implement in my classroom and that is considering tasks. According to Allington, student work needs to be more substantive, longer assignments rather than multiple small assignments, which is what we often see in classes across the country. When the students are completing longer tasks, it is "more substantive, more challenging, and requires more self-regulation," (2002) increasing independence, which is what we want for our students. When we assign small tasks that we most likely have to change out everyday, that just becomes a hassle and really the students that can already do the task, don't need the practice, and those that need the practice, can't do it. Therefore, lengthier tasks that are more thought out and have an authentic purpose and/or application is what I want for my students.

Finally, teaching literacy should be explicit. Students need to see the teacher model and guide them through instruction, from skilled readers to poor readers. In modeling, teachers can model their thinking, model the task, and overall, effective teachers model for their students. Explicit instruction can look like a lot of different things, but I know that in my classroom, literacy will be taught explicitly.

In conclusion, while there is still a lot of research and digging to do, I know that I want my classroom to support structured literacy with a goal of applying orthographic mapping, being conscientious of the time that students are participating in authentic literacy tasks. Students will also always have access to literacy, which will include diverse characters and topics. In the end, my goal is to help students foster a love of literacy and to acquire their literacy knowledge with solid, evidence-based practices.

## References

- Allington, R. (2002). *The six Ts of effective elementary literacy instruction*. The Six Ts of Effective Elementary Literacy Instruction | LD Topics | LD OnLine. <http://www.ldonline.org/article/96/>.
- Kilpatrick, D. A. (2015). *Essentials of assessing, preventing, and overcoming reading difficulties*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.