

BRINGING THE SCIENCE OF READING INTO THE CLASSROOM

Reading research is clear: Students become increasingly skilled readers the better they can identify sounds and letter combinations. Through that enhanced skill in word “**decoding**”—rather than guessing word sounds from pictures or context—students learn how to acquire more and more new, unfamiliar words. Coupled with growing spoken vocabulary (**language comprehension**) and exposure to a range of background knowledge, decoding skills help students better **comprehend text meaning**. Materials that **interest** each student and increased **time** spent reading also increase comprehension. Middle and high school students who are still learning reading basics especially need **explicit teaching** of critical thinking and other comprehension skills, along with decoding and increased spoken vocabularies. Quantitative studies back these approaches.

Decoding: Sounds and Word Parts

- Understand the sounds of spoken language (“phonological awareness”)
- Figure out how to say, read, and spell new sounds and letter combinations (“phonics”)

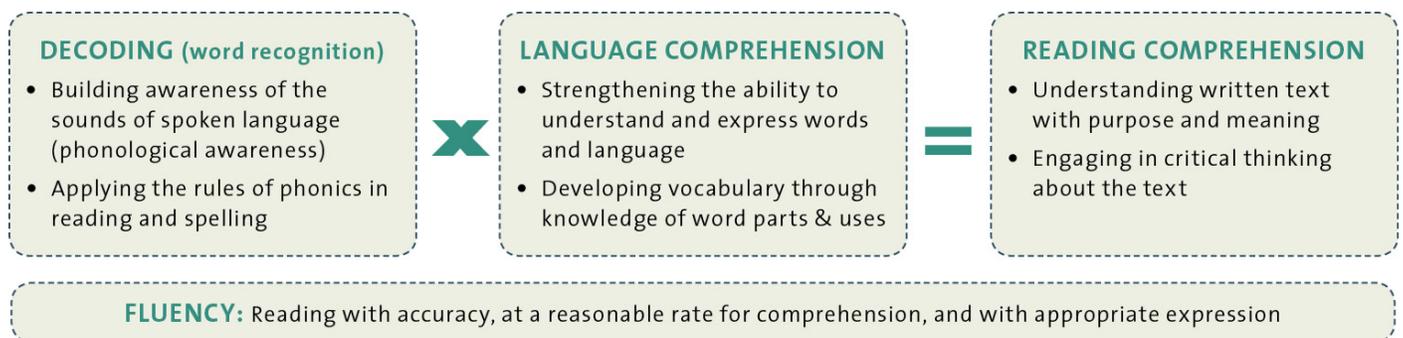
Language Comprehension: Spoken Vocabulary

- Hear, understand, and say more words (“vocabulary”)
- Hear, understand, and say increasingly complex strings of words—sentences and paragraphs (“language”)

Reading Comprehension: Meaning

- Understand the author’s meaning when reading (“comprehension”)
- Articulate what the reader thinks, too (“critical thinking”)

Two researchers created a formula, supported by research, about how students best learn, called the simple view of reading:



Adapted from Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *Remedial and special education*, 7(1), 6-10.

Research shows that more students read best when schools teach *all* of these elements and when teachers monitor each student’s skills and adjust instruction to meet each student’s needs. In addition, use a **structured literacy approach** like those found in our *Recommended High-Quality Curricula*. This ensures that literacy lessons are:

- **Systematic**, following a daily routine (for example, built into a lesson plan aligned to the simple view of reading);
- **Sequential**, with logical and developmental progressions (such as short vowels before vowel blends);
- **Explicit**, by naming and modeling the skill for students (for example, “now we will sort words ending in -tion”); and
- **Cumulative**, building on concepts and skills previously learned.

Summary. To incorporate the “science” of reading—the best research about what works—into your teaching:

- Start with a **high-quality reading curriculum**. Prepare structured literacy lessons that teach the multifaceted skills from the reading formula above, and that meet the needs of students at differing reading levels.
- Use the Science of Reading **Introduction** and **Study & Action Guide** incorporating **Barksdale Reading Institute’s** reading instruction table (password: abc123) to assess your reading instruction and to improve fast.
- Find more **lessons and assessments**, by grade, to supplement your curriculum, from Student Achievement Partners.
- **Increase reading time and provide a variety of reading material** from which students may choose.
- Use the Opportunity Culture **Instructional Excellence Summary** for high-growth general teaching methods.
- See also the **Learner Variability Navigator** for more on addressing learning differences.

The Opportunity Culture Connect Series connects research with educators in practical, short summaries.