

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 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 the basics of reading 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”)

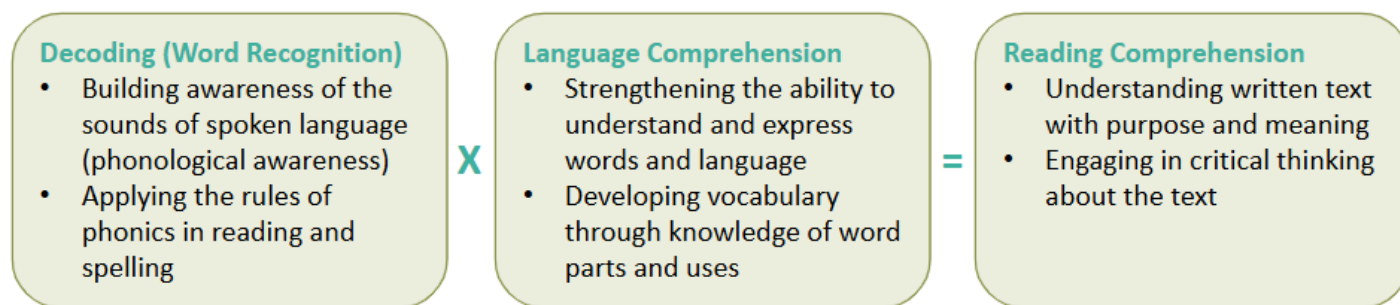
Language Comprehension: Spoken Vocabulary

- 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:



Fluency: Reading with accuracy, at a reasonable rate for comprehension, and with appropriate expression

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 students learn to read best when schools teach *all* the essential components of reading and when teachers monitor each student’s progress, adjusting instruction to meet their needs. The *simple view of reading* gives us a clear framework for what matters most. The [Reading Universe Taxonomy](#) then breaks those components into teachable skills, helping educators see where instruction is strong and where it needs reinforcement.

The Cycle: Evaluate → Plan → Repeat

1. Evaluate

- Use the Reading Universe taxonomy alongside your curriculum to check whether each component of reading instruction is fully addressed, partly addressed, or not addressed.
- Identify instructional gaps in decoding and language comprehension.
- Ask: *Where in our curriculum, assessments, or instructional methods does this skill show up? Where is it missing?*

2. Plan

- Choose 1–3 targeted actions to strengthen instruction.
- Consider adjustments to:
 - Core curriculum and daily lessons
 - Student assessments
 - Small-group or individual instructional methods
 - Teacher preparation and practice
- Assign roles, set timelines, and identify supports needed (PD, coaching, resources).
- Use the action planner and sample agenda to structure this work at the district, school, team, or classroom level.

3. Repeat

- Revisit your plan on the reflection date.
- Ask: *Did our changes strengthen instruction? Do we need to adjust further?*
- Continue cycling through components of the taxonomy until all strands of reading are addressed.

Additional Supports

- **Science of Reading Introduction Action Guide + Agenda:** *(Located in the portal Tools Room)* Adapt these resources to instruction quickly.
- **High-Quality Instructional Materials and Methods Module:** *(Located in the portal Learn Room)* Learn how to evaluate how your curriculum measures up against high-quality standards.
- **Science of Reading Module Series:** *(Located in the portal Learn Room)* Focus on building reading comprehension through explicit instruction, supporting it across all content areas, and guiding teams in next steps for improving literacy instruction together.
- **Reading Universe Taxonomy:** Explore videos, assessments, and lesson plans for each skill.
- **Reading Universe YouTube Channel:** Access 175 classroom-based videos that showcase effective teaching across the U.S.

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