



CHECKLIST - Structured Literacy approach

The Term

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Board of Directors made a landmark decision designed to help market our approach to reading instruction. The board chose a name that would encompass all approaches to reading instruction that conform to IDA's Knowledge and Practice Standards. Its name is "Structured Literacy."

The reason we need to have the single-term Structured Literacy approach is that it provides a common practice, a worldwide GOLD standard that must be adhered to if you wish to create your own Structured Literacy approach to teach others, or, create a Structured Literacy programme to sell. The term gives a clear path to follow and it also gives us that gold standard to adhere to.

It is crucial that anyone looking into Structured Literacy understands this is for TIER 3 children first and foremost. It was designed for them first. Which means any programme and training you do must have dyslexic learners at the heart of it. It MUST also be the same for all tiers. We do not change approaches between tiers. We increase or decrease the review.

There are six elements and three principles of instruction on how to teach the 6 components that MUST be included for anyone to call themselves a Structured Literacy approach or a Structured Literacy programme.

The 6 components that **must** be included in a Structured Literacy Approach:

- ✓ **Phonology:** Phonology is the study of the sound structure of spoken words. Phonology is a key element of Structured Literacy instruction. Phonemic awareness, which is the ability to distinguish, segment, blend, and manipulate sounds relevant to reading and spelling is central to phonology.
- ✓ **Sound-symbol association:** Once students develop phoneme awareness, they must learn the alphabetic principle—how to map phonemes to letters (graphemes) and vice versa meaning we also teach **symbol- sound. (The alphabetic principle is teaching the 44 sounds in reading (decoding) and spelling (encoding)).**
- ✓ **Syllables:** Knowing the six syllable and vowel grapheme types, helps readers to associate vowel spellings with vowel sounds. Syllable division rules help readers

divide/decode unfamiliar words. (Open, Closed, Silent E , Vowel Team , R Controlled Vowels and Consonant LE.) (The SIX SYLLABLE TYPES also called SYLLABLE PATTERNS MUST BE INCLUDED in any programme or training you do TO BE CALLED Structured Literacy.)

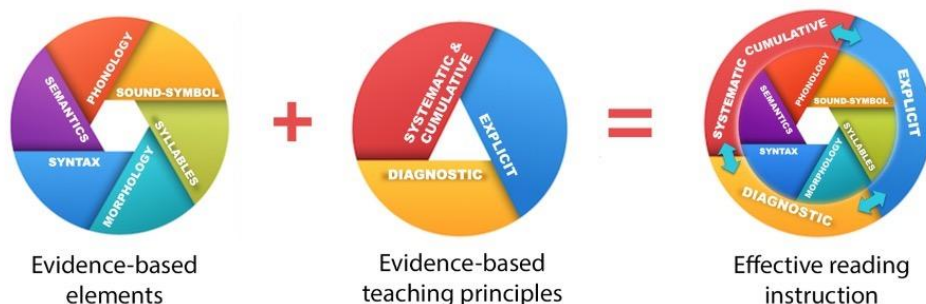
- ✓ **Morphology:** A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in language. Studying base elements and affixes helps readers decode and unlock the meanings of complex words.
- ✓ **Syntax:** The set of principles that dictate the sequence and function of words in a sentence—includes grammar, sentence structure, and the mechanics of language.
- ✓ **Semantics:** Semantics is concerned with meaning (comprehension). The Structured Literacy curriculum (from the start) includes instruction in the comprehension and appreciation of written language.

The three evidence-based teaching principles on how to teach all the six components or elements above are:

- ✓ **Systematic and cumulative:** Structured Literacy teaching is systematic and cumulative. Systematic means that the organisation of material follows the logical order of language. The sequence begins with the easiest and most basic concepts and elements and progresses methodically to the more difficult. Cumulative means each step is based on concepts previously learned.
- ✓ **Explicit:** Structured Literacy instruction requires direct teaching of concepts with continuous student-teacher interaction providing immediate feedback and does not assume students will just pick up the concepts.
- ✓ **Diagnostic:** Teachers must be adept at individualising instruction (even within groups) based on careful and continuous assessment both informal (e.g., observation) and formal (e.g., with standardised measures). Content must be mastered to the degree of automaticity needed to free attention and cognitive resources for comprehension and oral/written expression.

Structured literacy

Explicit teaching of systematic word identification and decoding strategies



Source: © 2016 Cowen for International Dyslexia Association
<https://app.box.com/s/2yqu2ke21mxs0hz9l77owdlorgvtesyq>

All of the above must be included to be called Structured Literacy.

The Science of Reading

The Science of Reading is the body of research that gave us the 5 components of reading and how they must be taught. They are Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension.

Structured Literacy teaches the 5 components of reading plus more by using the 6 components of Structured Literacy and the 3 principles on how to teach it.

To understand Structured Literacy you must understand how the brain learns to read, how the brain processes the information and where it processes the information. It really is crucial to have a good grasp of the research from the Science of Reading to stop any old habits from previous approaches from sneaking in. I am not saying everyone needs to be a cognitive scientist, but if you don't understand the process, how can we help when things come unstuck for a child?

The reason for the document

I have put this list together to help guide decisions and understanding. To help us understand where the terminology comes from and why we should or shouldn't use it. I also believe it is very important that there is a New Zealand reference check list. There are many professionals making false claims about their training, programmes and materials. Just because a provider has been approved for funding does not mean they are qualified. The Ministry does not hold any PLD provider to accountability, and they can say what they like.

Use this document as a platform to learn more and to know what questions to ask.

A Structured Literacy Approach is not:

- X A scope and sequence
- X A combination of different scope and sequences to teach from
- X A phonic or decodable book/s
- X A workbook/s
- X A phonics programme
- X A phonological awareness programme
- X A writing book/programme
- X An app
- X A computer programme
- X Guided Reading in any way
- X A 2-day course
- X A spelling programme
- X Mix approaches, it is one approach.
- X A Balanced Literacy Approach

A Structured Literacy approach does not use

- X Guided Reading
- X Silent Reading
- X Fry's word lists
- X Essential word lists
- X Pm Readers **
- X Ready to Read Colour wheel books **
- X Writing programmes that don't align with the alphabetic code or follow a scope and sequence
- X The teaching of "phonics only"
- X Predictable texts
- X Reading Recovery for T1 , T2 or T3
- X Running Records
- X Assessments that serve no purpose
- X Round Robin Reading
- X Discovery Reading
- X Analytical phonics like in Reading Recovery.
- X Early Words
- X Programmes in isolation
- X "My version" of Structured Literacy for New Zealand classrooms.

**Ready Read books and PM books can be introduced once the child has completed a high level of the alphabetic principle this will take significantly longer for a dyslexic or struggling child.

If a programme or person is promoting more than one approach by saying we must adjust approaches to the child. Or "I believe this works because I have been teaching for 30 years", DO NOT purchase the training or the programme. Research and evidence is clear on What Structured Literacy this. If someone is mixing approaches you must ask yourself why?

Are they covering all their bases in the market to make money or do they not actually understand what structured literacy is. Either way you are being duped into believing their false claims.

The research and evidence is there to back what I have written above and I would also recommend what reading model/theory their programme is based on.

The Simple View of Reading , Ehri's Phrases, The Four Part Processor, The Reading Rope or the Multi Queuing theory(MSV).

RED FLAGS

- X No decodable books
- X We use different approaches to suit the child
- X We use different styles to suit the child
- X There is no one approach for all children
- X I have been teaching for 30 years
- X I have seen in my many years
- X I know it works because I have been using it for 30 years
- X No scope and sequence
- X No research
- X They have created lots of programmes in other areas of education
- X Check out my reviews, teachers and parents love it
- X When asked if you follow Science of Reading and are you Structured Literacy and can you provide what research your programme is based on lookout for responses like this - Of course I am evidence based and yes we are structured literacy. You must see the research they based their programme on.
- X Beware of programmes and providers who offer multiple programmes that are not aligned with each other.
- X Beware of anyone who suddenly does a 360 from not supporting Structured Literacy to now being Structured Literacy without actually changing their programme or training.
- X Beware of qualifications, having a qualification under Phonological Awareness or Writing means that is what the person has trained in. This does not mean they qualified in teaching Structured Literacy.

The Reading League has **Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines** for reviewing curricula for Tier 1 instruction, it is essential to ensure they do not include instructional practices that are not aligned with the scientific evidence base of how children learn to read.

The Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines are designed to highlight any non-aligned practices, or “red flags,” that may be present in the areas of: Word Recognition, Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, Writing and Assessments

<https://www.thereadingleague.org/curriculum-evaluation-guidelines/>

A Structured Literacy Approach combines literacy into one lesson, it does not teach individual lessons or blocks in isolation.

Training/PLD in New Zealand

In New Zealand anyone can provide PLD and charge for it. No qualifications are needed and there is no accountability, not even with Ministry of Education (MoE) approved PLD providers. Being an MoE accredited provider means that you can apply to the Ministry to fund your PLD rather than it coming out of your own pocket/budget.

This does not mean the PLD is evidence-based or based on any research. When I say research, I don't mean the person's own research into their own programme. They won't tell you the flaws; they will only tell you how wonderful it is. Just like with SL programmes you need to do your homework for SL PLD providers, too.

I also want to help clarify a few things around, having an accreditation in Structured Literacy:

Structured Literacy training courses and professional development courses provided by people who have an accreditation in teaching a Structured Literacy Approach

When you personally have accreditation to teach Structured Literacy in New Zealand to date this is through the Australian Dyslexia Association (ADA). This means you have completed the 5 days of face-to-face or Zoom training and you have completed your 12-month practicum. To date, this course is through the Institute of Multisensory Language Education (IMSLE).

The Orton Gillingham Academy also has an accreditation that some members may have completed overseas.

Anyone can apply for an accreditation through ADA as long as they meet the requirements.

Structured Literacy training courses and professional development courses are provided by people who have accreditation in Structured Literacy which means they have completed their 5 days and 12-month practicum in MSL or they have qualifications under another association. We always recommend you ask the provider what their qualifications are in Structured Literacy.

What I can tell you is the knowledge you will have after completing the 5-day course and the 12-month practicum that qualifies you to apply for your accreditation.

- It takes at least 2 years to fully understand all aspects of the journey/approach.
- The knowledge and understanding of the 6 components that must be included in a Structured Literacy Approach; Phonology, Sound to Symbol and Symbol to Sound, Syllable types, Morphology, Syntax and Semantics as well as knowing how to implement them using the 3 principles of a Structured Literacy Approach; Systematic and Cumulative, Explicit, and Diagnostic.

- The knowledge to be able to create a logical scope and sequence that suits your learner/s.
- The knowledge to change your scope and sequence if required.
- The knowledge to create your own materials and resources.
- The knowledge to understand what, why and how to teach your student.
- The ability to be able to spot snake oils.
- An understanding of the steps before and the steps after.
- The ability to assess through observation as well as in assessments (diagnostic)
- The knowledge to pull the right information from other assessments
- The knowledge required to teach handwriting and the importance of it.
- Having the knowledge to teach the alphabetic code and the spelling rules.
- The knowledge to be able to teach the 6 syllable types.
- The knowledge to teach Phonological Awareness (mainly Phonemic Awareness).
- The knowledge to teach basic morphology as part of the alphabetic code.
- The knowledge to teach writing.
- The knowledge to be able to successfully teach dyslexic children.

A Structured Literacy approach is about the training, the knowledge you gain over time and how to use it.

[Structured Literacy Training Accredited by the International Dyslexia Association](#)

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) has an accreditation program that rigorously reviews educator preparation programs based on an accreditation model that is uniquely aligned with IDA's Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading (KPS). Alignment with the KPS provides programs with a comprehensive standards-based reading preparation framework to guide the development of their curriculum. Programs that meet these standards are awarded IDA Accreditation.

Programs awarded AccreditationPlus have received IDA accreditation and also produce educators who have engaged in intensive supervised practicum experiences that were sufficiently designed and staffed to promote applied mastery of the principles and practices of structured literacy in the service of preventing reading failure and remediating off-track readers with profiles characteristic of dyslexia.

This list to date

<https://dyslexiaida.org/accredited-teaching-training-programs/>

Qualifications

What are the person's credentials in teaching/practice of Structured Literacy?

To be clear, there are no education facilities/universities across New Zealand teaching Structured Literacy. This means NO teaching qualification counts as a qualification in Structured Literacy.

- Having a PhD means you are a Doctor of Philosophy and have not necessarily taught what you researched in a school as a teacher or put it into practice outside of a research study. We see this a lot, where academics understand their own research but are unable/unwilling to comment on how this looks in a lesson or school. They share theories, like the Simple View of Reading (SVR) and the 4 part processor. – These would not be considered qualifications in knowing the why, what and how to teach Structured Literacy
- Having an EdD means you are a Doctor of Education, a research practitioner. This means you put your research to the test and put it into practice to see how it stacks up in real life. Research and practice, not philosophy and theory. This qualification does however cover the why, what and how as it is out into practice (HOW).
- The only qualification available in New Zealand to date, that someone can get accreditation for in Structured Literacy (SL), is through the Institute for Multisensory Language Education (IMSLE) which is accredited by the Australian Dyslexia Association (ADA). The Orton-Gillingham Academy in the US can also provide accreditation but this can only be done VIA the US.
- The LETRS training course itself is accredited and well regarded in the SL world, but the person completing it is not.
- Dyslexia Orton-Gillingham Institute (DOGI) course is a 5-day course with a teaching certificate.
- The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) has training courses on Structured Literacy where you are able to gain certificates for completing teaching courses.

You must ask the question of your prospective PLD provider, what are your credentials and qualifications for teaching this course?

Off the Shelf Structured Literacy programmes

A Structured Literacy programme is something that you buy and follow a step-by-step process that is scripted each day. All the material is designed to be followed in order and you can't change the scope and sequence. It should include:

- An off-the-shelf programme
- Many come with intensive training to learn how to use it with fidelity.
- Scripted lessons telling you what and how to teach the 6 components; Phonology, Sound to Symbol and Symbol to Sound, Syllables, Morphology and Syntax.

- ☑ Lesson plans that are Systematic and Cumulative, Explicit and Diagnostic.
- ☑ A logical scope and sequence.
- ☑ All the material that you will need to teach the programme ie. teacher manual with scripted lesson plans, information on the spelling rules and the 6 syllable types, word cards, sound cards, vocabulary cards, worksheets, decodable books, fluency sheets, dictation sentences, a phonological awareness manual or exercises that are built into the lesson depending on the grade.
- ☑ Having been peer reviewed.

Structured Literacy is not a fad, it is something you have to commit to and invest significant time into learning. You can't learn how to teach structured literacy from a manual, book or a one-day course. **Knowledge is the key** to teaching Structured Literacy. Materials and resources are just tools that help you teach the knowledge you have. The teacher and their knowledge is the most important thing in a lesson or classroom.

Glossary

I know there is a huge amount of terminology and jargon out there and I always do my best to reduce it but always stay true to the main terms. There is a glossary on the DEB website if there is a word missing you would like added please send admin a message. We can add it to the list and odds are someone else is thinking the same.

<https://www.deb.co.nz/dyslexia/dyslexia/glossary/>

Take the time to read these links and ask questions.

- **What is Structured Literacy?**
- <https://www.deb.co.nz/dyslexia/dyslexia/structured-literacy/>
- **What does a structured literacy lesson look like?**
- <https://www.deb.co.nz/dyslexia/dyslexia/what-does-a-structured-literacy-lesson-look-like/>
- **Why is a scope and sequence crucial?**
- <https://www.deb.co.nz/dyslexia/getting-started/why-is-a-scope-and-sequence-crucial-when-teaching-the-alphabetic-principle/>
- **Guidance for assessing an approach or programme**
- <https://www.deb.co.nz/education/need-to-know/guidance-assessing-a-programme-or-an-approach/>
- **Structured Literacy (IDA) fact sheet**
- <https://dyslexiaida.org/structured-literacy-effective-instruction-for-students-with-dyslexia-and-related-reading-difficulties/>
- **Structured Literacy introductory guide for educators (IDA)**

- <https://app.box.com/s/mvuvhel6qaj8tghvu1nl75i0ndnlp0yz>

**This document was created by Sharon Scurr, founder of the Dyslexia Evidence Based (DEB),
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Website - www.deb.co.nz

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