Enclosure 8

Shifting the Balance in Literacy Instruction: Structured Literacy

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Background

Literacy is inseparable from opportunity, and opportunity is inseparable from freedom. The freedom promised by literacy is both freedom from - from ignorance, oppression, poverty - and freedom to - to do new things, to make choices, to learn.
Koichiro Matsurra (former UNESCO director)

Reading is a fundamental, lifelong skill that students must have to navigate their school experience and thrive in their future pathways. Developing literacy skills supports equity and inclusion. Our work in literacy is equity work; it is not just about the right to read, but the right to a positive future.

On Nov. 9 2021, the Supreme Court of Canada released a unanimous decision recognizing that learning to read is not a privilege, but a basic and essential human right. This came from the Moore vs British Columbia decision and confirmed that human rights laws in Canada protect the right of all students to an equal opportunity to learn to read. Many hoped it would be a catalyst for change in Ontario's education system.

Almost 10 years after this decision, the Ontario Human Rights Commission released a report on its public inquiry into the right to read. In 2019 the OHRC launched a public inquiry into human rights issues facing students with reading disabilities in Ontario's public education system. The inquiry worked with 2 experts in reading development and used a sample of 8 English language public school boards, the faculties of education and the Ministry of Education. The inquiry also heard from thousands of students, parents, organizations, educators and other professionals. The report was released in February. The Executive Summary is found at the following link:
https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Right%20to%20Read%20Executive%20Summary_OHRC%20English_0.pdf

There are 177 recommendations and 5 key themes identified in the report:

- Curriculum
- Early screening
- Reading intervention
- Accommodations
- Professional assessments

This report identifies structured literacy as the most effective way to teach early reading.

What is the research telling us?

The simple view of reading has emerged from 100 studies and is the widely accepted view that reading comprehension has 2 main components: Word level decoding/word recognition/the ability to read individual words and oral language comprehension/listening/ the ability to understand spoken language. When a child struggles with decoding, accuracy is compromised, errors occur and the energy needed to comprehend is used by the effort to decode the words.

Figure 1 The Simple View of Reading

Gough & Tunmer (1986)

Decoding/Word Recognition (ability to read individual words) **D**

X

Oral Language Comprehension (ability to understand spoken language) **C**

=

Reading Comprehension (ability to understand printed text) **R**
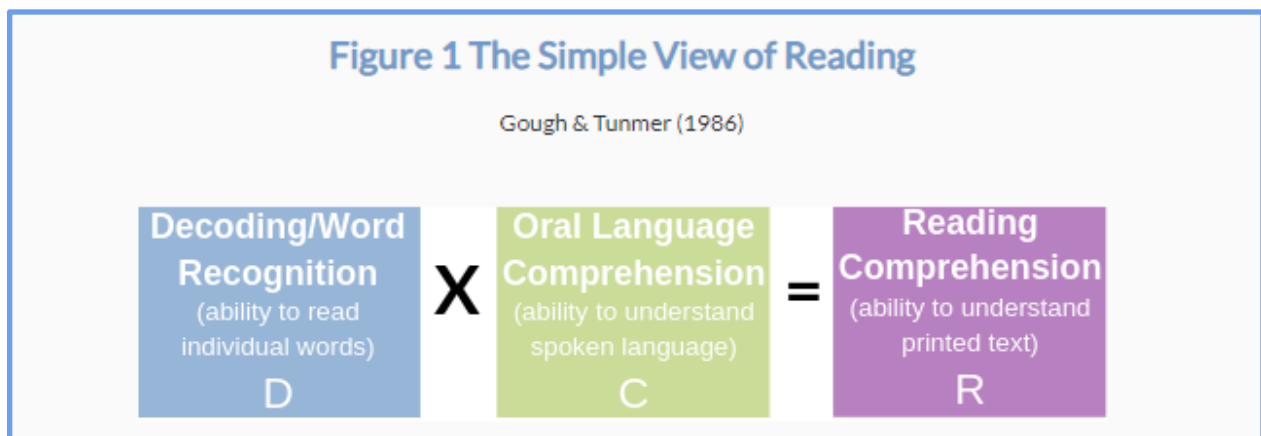
What is structured literacy?

Structured Literacy is a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction and is characterized by the systematic, sequential, explicit instruction and includes the following components:

- Phonological awareness- ability to separate and manipulate sounds of spoken language, including words in a sentence, syllables, individual sounds in a word
- Phonics and word recognition- letter sound associations, decodable texts, spelling rules
- Fluency- ability to read words quickly enough and with phrasing to retain meaning
- Vocabulary- language rich environment, how words work
- Listening and Reading Comprehension- background knowledge, literacy structures,
- Written Expression- mechanics and conventions of writing, hand writing, writing process

How does structured literacy compare with the current Ontario Curriculum?

The Ontario Language Arts curriculum is based on the whole-language/balanced literacy approach, including the 3 cueing system. The "**Three-Cueing System**" primarily promotes guessing words based on semantic (meaning) and syntax (sentence structure) but does include a third approach (graphophonic) as the last choice, where the student is encouraged to 'sound out' the word based on the letter-sounds (however, often the student is told to focus only on the first letter of the word). Revisions to the Ontario Curriculum is one of the recommendations in the Right to Read Report. The present Language Curriculum is from 2006.

How is St. Clair responding to the recommendations?

Implementation Plan
We are developing a 5 year literacy plan to frame this work as we rethink reading instruction from K-8. It is in draft form and will be revised and shared widely in the fall.

Right to Read Team
Considering the scope of the recommendations in the Right to Read Report, it is critical to have a multidisciplinary approach to this work. We have established a team with representatives from elementary and secondary, special education and curriculum and have initiated monthly meetings to monitor our plan and progress.

Building System Capacity
Our literacy team has engaged in specialized training and continues professional learning to support this work with precision and evidence based strategies. PRTs have experienced one session in this area and this will be ongoing professional learning moving forward next year. We are determining how to offer training to EAs, ECEs and teachers as we spread our learning, guided by our literacy plan. Principals received initial training on April 13.

Collaborative Inquiry: Exploring Structured Literacy
We have explored structured literacy in selected schools and classrooms. We will share more information about our work and impact at the May Board Meeting. The chart below identifies the partnerships developed this year through our team support in schools.

Schools	Tier 1 Support Model
St. Angela Merici St. Anne Sarnia St. Matthew St. Michael's Ridgetown	Classroom support from October to January; ongoing support upon request
Holy Family, St. Elizabeth, St. John Fisher, St. Peter Canisius	Ongoing based on request
St. Ursula, St. Anne Blenheim	Classroom support Feb (ish) - April

One on One Tutoring During the Instructional Day Face to Face
- One full time structured literacy teacher starts next week (St. Angela Merici)
- 4 part-time structured literacy teachers will be supporting students in a Tier 2 Model in schools that have been a part of our Tier 1 Work (St. Matthew, St. Ursula, Holy Family and St. Elizabeth)
- Further training will be provided to additional tutors presently engaged in the hiring process (post-secondary tutors) t

One on One Tutoring After School Virtual
- March 21, 2022 - May 19, 2022
- Grades 1 and 2
- 2 sessions per week; 30-minute sessions
- 24 teachers
- 110 students

Summer Learning
- Face to Face Summer Learning Camp will have a literacy focus to continue to build teacher capacity and integrate structured literacy approaches into classroom practice, and will target students presently in grades K-2.

Staff Learning Hub
The Literacy Team has created a page on the Staff Hub to provide resources to our system. This was established in September and is a footprint of our work to date.

Resources
Using various funding sources, we have secured Structured Literacy Resources for all grades 1-2 classrooms. All Kindergarten classrooms have received the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness resource and all K teams engaged in professional learning in the fall.

French Immersion
We have purchased and will implement a French phonemic awareness resource in grade 1 in the

fall. We will engage in an exploratory collaborative inquiry next year to develop our strategy for French Immersion.

This is a very exciting time in elementary classrooms, as we rethink, revise and reinvent our literacy program, responding to research and the Right to Read Report. This is a drastic change to instruction, and requires professional learning and support for all primary teachers - and eventually junior and intermediate teachers as well. Our teachers who have begun this journey are passionate about structured literacy and are very supportive of this change as we support all students to become readers.

Recommendations

That the St. Clair Catholic District School Board receive the report: *Shifting the Balance in Literacy Instruction: Structured Literacy*, **for information.**