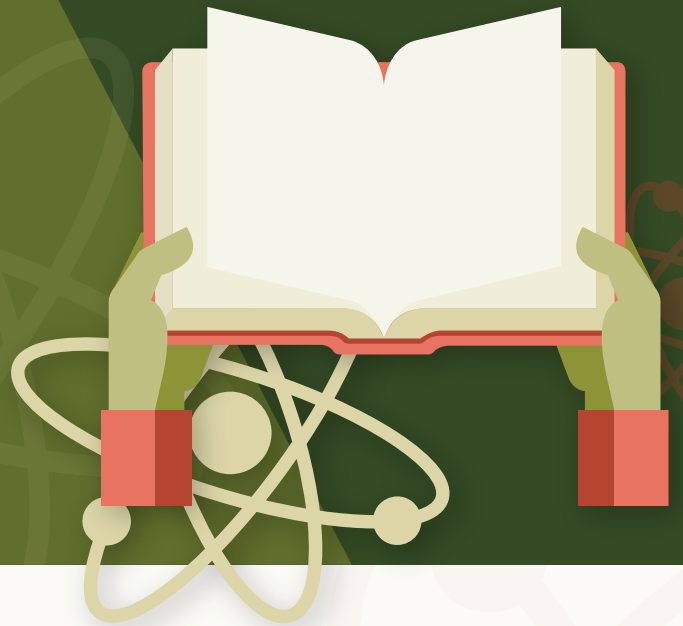




DELAWARECAN

# Science of Reading



## What is the “Science of Reading?”

The “science of reading” refers to the wealth of evidence-based research that demonstrates how children learn to read and the type of instructional practices that can get them there.

Structured Literacy is the instructional practice that children need to become strong readers. Explicit systematic teaching of Structured Literacy means that concepts (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension) are clearly explained and modeled. The actions of the teacher are clear, direct and visible. Systematic teaching means lessons are carefully planned and sequenced. It also means that the lessons build on what students have already learned and move from simple to complex. This approach is helpful for all students and can be beneficial not only for students with reading disabilities, but also for other at-risk students including English learners.

The “science of reading” is not a curriculum. It is the scientific evidence that should inform our teaching practices and instructional materials choices.

Want to learn more about what good instructional practices look like? Watch this [video](#) that breaks down the Structured Literacy concept.

## How have we veered away from the Science of Reading?

In the early 1990’s, Balanced Literacy became popular in classrooms and teacher preparation programs in an attempt to “blend together” aspects of whole language instruction and phonics. Although Balanced Literacy includes phonics, it is often not systematically incorporated nor taught explicitly, leaving students to guess when they come across unfamiliar words. Over 68% of educators reported using balanced literacy in their classrooms in a 2019 survey conducted by EdWeek.

Want to see what poor instructional practices look like in action? Watch these Purple Challenge videos that explain how balanced literacy can show up in your child’s books and reading assignments.

[The Purple Challenge Part 1](#)  
[The Purple Challenge Part 2](#)

## How is Delaware Improving Early Literacy?

In August 2022, House Bill 304 was signed into law. This legislation seeks to improve Delaware's approach to reading instruction, aligning it to the science of reading and building a strong foundation in literacy for students in kindergarten through third grade. This legislation also seeks to ensure that struggling readers are identified early through high-quality reading screeners then provided the instruction they need to get on track. Arguably most critically, teachers will be provided with professional development and coaching opportunities to transform policy into practice (i.e. Structured Literacy).

This legislation will dramatically change the student experience for students in grades kindergarten through three. All students will participate in universal reading screening three times a year to identify potential reading deficiencies. The outcome of this screening process will allow for early intervention and prevention.

Parents of students in grades kindergarten through three will experience these changes when their school notifies them of their child's reading screening results. Notification may be done through existing communications like progress reports. Additionally, schools must report, by grade, the number of students in kindergarten through grade three determined to have potential reading deficiencies and the intervention approaches being utilized.

## How Can I Get Involved?

Parents of early learners will now have more information on the reading progress of their students. Hold your child's teacher accountable to sharing not only the results of the reading screeners, but more importantly to sharing with you how they are changing practice to get your child on track to reading on grade level by the end of third grade. Even before your student participates in the reading screening process, email your child's principal and ask if the school is using materials aligned with structured literacy. Ask your child's teacher if they are using the three-cueing system, and if the answer is "yes," follow up with your teacher and school administrators and ask them to consider transitioning to structured literacy.