



Strengthen Your Core Instruction

Tier 1 instruction is universal instruction designed to meet the needs of all students. All students receive grade-level instruction with scaffolding and differentiation supports using high-quality instructional materials. Differentiated instruction allows students to access the same high-quality classroom curriculum by providing:

- Various entry points
- Challenging learning tasks
- Processes that can be expanded or compacted
- Rich content to build on
- Outcomes that are tailored to student’s needs

Students who are acquiring new skills, and those students who need intervention, benefit from explicit instruction that reduces cognitive load, transfers new knowledge to long-term memory, minimizes errors, and maximizes content learned. Explicit instruction is direct and unambiguous (Archer & Hughes, 2010). Systematic instruction is organized through a planned sequence that follows the logical order of the language.



To download additional tip sheets, visit education.ohio.gov/Literacy-Tipsheets



Characteristics of explicit instruction

- Breaking skills into small steps
- Providing explicit models (I do it)
- Providing immediate affirmative and corrective feedback (We do it)
- Practicing to automaticity (You do it)
- Teaching prerequisite skills prior to expecting advanced skills
- Using clear examples and non-examples
- Reviewing in a cumulative fashion

Characteristics of systematic instruction

- Planning instruction deliberately, before it is delivered
- Building on prior knowledge
- Sequencing from simple to complex
- Progressing toward measurable learning goals
- Ensuring that skills are introduced clearly and intentionally to avoid causing confusion

Requirements Under Law

High-quality instructional materials requirements: [Ohio law](#) requires each school district, community school, and STEM school to use core curriculum and instructional materials in English language arts (preK to grade 5) and evidence-based reading intervention programs (preK to grade 12) only from the [lists](#) established by the Department.

Three-cueing ban: [Ohio law](#) states that districts or schools may not use any core curriculum, intervention program, or instructional materials that use the three-cueing approach in grades prekindergarten to five to teach students to read, unless a waiver is granted on an individual student basis by the Department.

Ohio Phonics Rule: As authorized under [Ohio law](#), the Director of the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce has prescribed [minimum standards](#) requiring the use of phonics as a technique in the teaching of reading in kindergarten through grade 3. Phonics is also recommended to be used as a teaching technique in fourth and fifth grade for students who need continued systematic phonics instruction.

BRAIN BREAK

How the brain learns to read is NOT a mystery! The brain processes multiple sources of information while reading in a network of print, speech sounds, language, and meaning. The brains of proficient readers connect first to the letters, then the sounds, and finally, the meaning of words when reading. The pathway connecting the spelling to sounds to meaning of words must be built through explicit, code-based instruction, with sufficient repetitions, to develop automaticity and ensure permanent word storage and retrieval (Dehaene, 2009).

District Dazzle uses an approved core comprehensive program in kindergarten-grade 5, so new teacher Nancy implements the program as best she can. After reviewing student and adult implementation data, the district notices some gaps in adult program knowledge and student learning. District Dazzle identifies that teachers need support implementing the core program with fidelity and students require additional instructional support in phonics and word study instruction in grades 3 and 4. What should District Dazzle do next?

Scenario

1. District Dazzle plans high-quality, curriculum-based professional learning to support the implementation of its core curriculum, with a specific focus on the differentiation materials and strategies for phonics and word study. The district also considers further diagnostic assessments and implementation of targeted interventions aligned with the core comprehensive program to meet the instructional needs of students in grades 3 and 4, based on the district's decision rules. Student and teacher progress is closely monitored, and instruction is adjusted as needed. Curriculum-based professional learning is adapted accordingly to ensure continued support and effectiveness.
2. District Dazzle encourages teachers to keep exploring the new program when they have time and find activities online to support phonics and word study instruction in grades 3 and 4.

(If you chose option 1, you are on your way to a stronger core!)

DO's & DON'Ts for Core Instruction grounded in the Science of Reading

- 👍 **DO** Use high-quality instructional materials and evidence-based reading intervention programs only from the [lists](#) established by the Department.
- 👍 **DO** Focus on developing foundational literacy skills using decodable texts.
- 👍 **DO** Provide all students with dedicated systematic and explicit phonics instruction.
- 👍 **DO** Use data-driven assessments to inform instructional practices grounded in the science of reading.
- 👍 **DO** Differentiate core instruction to accommodate diverse learning needs within a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support framework.
- 👍 **DO** Allocate ample time for literacy and include a staggered intervention block across grade levels to provide tiered support.
- 👍 **DO** Provide ongoing professional learning experiences for educators grounded in evidence-based structured literacy practices.

- 👎 **DON'T** Use any core curriculum, intervention program, or instructional materials that use the three-cueing approach to teach students to read.
- 👎 **DON'T** Use leveled readers or predictable texts that focus on pattern memorization.
- 👎 **DON'T** Alternate between limited phonics, guided reading, writing and vocabulary practice in a mini-lesson.
- 👎 **DON'T** Ignore the data by using instructional approaches NOT aligned to the science of reading.
- 👎 **DON'T** Adopt a “one size fits all” approach with core instruction and leave differentiation to the intervention specialists.
- 👎 **DON'T** Minimize the core instructional schedule in favor of things like school-wide assemblies, special projects and guest speakers.
- 👎 **DON'T** Adopt a limited one-and-done approach to professional learning.

If core instruction is STRONG, at least 80% of students should be reading at grade level or higher!

DID YOU KNOW? Students in later grades may need additional scaffolds and supports to access core instruction across all content areas. Access to grade-level content, instruction, and text is critical, alongside intervention and remediation for reading development. Support and guidance from the teacher can help students gain meaning and make sense of the texts they encounter.