

**Module 4:**  
**Explore the Science of Reading Assignment**

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## **I. Core Principles of the Science of Reading**

The Science of Reading is not a single program or a transient trend; rather, it is a vast, interdisciplinary body of gold-standard research that explains how humans learn to read and how we can most effectively teach them (The Reading League [TRL], 2022, pp. 6 - 9). As presented by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW), the Science of Reading is grounded in the "simple view of reading," which posits that reading comprehension is the product of word recognition and language comprehension (Turner, 2022, m. 6:00).

Instruction informed by this science must be explicit, systematic, and sequential (m. 4:40). Explicit instruction involves direct, unambiguous teaching where the teacher models a skill and the student practices until mastery (m. 9:20). Systematic and sequential instruction ensures that skills are taught in a logical order of complexity, moving from simple phonemes to complex morphological structures (mm. 9:50 - 10:45). Reading is not an "innate" or natural skill like speaking (m. 11:12); it is a human invention that requires the brain to create new neural pathways through specific, scientifically informed instruction (m. 12:15).

## **II. The Importance of Evidence-Based Instruction**

Incorporating evidence-based reading instruction is a moral and civil rights issue. The Preamble of the Science of Reading: Defining Guide states that literacy is a fundamental human right that empowers individuals (TRL, 2022, p. 2). When we move away from "guessing" strategies and toward structured literacy, we provide all students the keys to the knowledge economy, defined by The Reading League (2022) as the economic landscape of the 21st century where "currency" is built on the foundation of skilled reading (p. 3).

As illustrated in the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (2025) Mr. Feeny scenario, a reliance on "tried and true" techniques—methods often rooted in tradition rather than evidence—can lead to stagnant proficiency rates and professional frustration. This disconnect is analyzed by Shanahan (2019), who emphasizes that a true "science of reading" requires a substantial commitment to all research-proven methods—including fluency, vocabulary, and morphology—rather than a narrow focus on phonics alone.

### **III. Alignment with Current Practice: The Walls Elementary Context**

At Walls Elementary in Kent City Schools and like all public schools in the State of Ohio, the focus on structured literacy is already underway. My experience as a music teacher highlights a key administrative priority: literacy is not "the ELA teacher's job"—it is a school-wide mission. My requirement to complete the state-mandated Science of Reading coursework reflects the belief that tier 1 supports must be ubiquitous.

In my music classroom, I incorporate tier 1 supports by using common language and explicit phonological awareness exercises when students interact with lyrics. However, I believe there is a growing gap in word recognition. As technology and digital entertainment replace traditional reading time, students lack the volume of practice necessary for automaticity. This lack of "eyes on text" limits vocabulary expansion, which ultimately hinders the language comprehension half of the simple view equation (Turner, 2022, m. 5:55). In my professional experience, while the push for mastery is genuine, the "gap" is widening due to these external shifts in student behavior (i.e. less reading), making explicit instruction even more critical.

#### **IV. Implications for Diverse Learners**

The implications for the most vulnerable populations, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with learning disabilities like dyslexia, should be considered. For these students especially, an “immersion” approach—which assumes reading is as natural as speaking—is inadequate. This connects to Turner’s (2022) discussion struggling- and non-readers use the “wrong side of their brain” until explicit instruction builds the correct neural pathways (m. 12:05). Failing to provide this structured support results in what The Reading League (2022) describes as “collateral damage” for our most vulnerable students, who are then denied the fundamental human right of literacy (p. 2).

Diverse learners require a heavy emphasis on oral language development and structured literacy. Some students require significantly more repetition and explicit connections to build those pathways (ODEW, 2025). At Walls Elementary, our full-time ELL teacher works to ensure that literacy and language are developed in tandem. Writing, speaking, reading, and listening are not isolated skills; they are a cohesive unit that provides the "language of opportunity" for every student, regardless of their starting point.

#### **V. Proposed Strategies for Integration and Shared Leadership**

As a future administrator, I endorse a three-part strategy for integrating Science of Reading principles through an MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) lens:

##### **Establish a Distinct Literacy Leadership Team**

I will empower a Building Leadership Team (BLT) specifically focused on literacy. This team will serve as "internal experts" who pilot data-driven initiatives

before school-wide implementation. This team will be distinct from my general advisory group to ensure deep focus on reading outcomes.

### **Ensure Data-Based Transparency and Buy-In**

I believe we cannot "tell" teachers to buy in; we must remind them the "why." BLT and I will consolidate student proficiency data, research summaries, and "outcome stories" of successful student growth and share with the entire faculty. I believe recognizing and celebrating success will sustain positive growth and maintain a common goal.

### **Community Engagement and Caregiver Hubs**

To address the "Word Recognition" gap caused by shifts in technology use, I will implement a parent/caregiver hub. This platform will provide research and data in an accessible format, explaining why the school is using this structured-approach to literacy. By sharing our data and our measurable goals, we hold ourselves accountable to the families we serve. We also encourage collaboration, shared mission, and helpful habits (i.e. screentime limits, reading time at home, etc.).

### **Conclusion**

Our transition to the Science of Reading has reminded us that teaching is not pure "craft" based on intuition. While "craft" is certainly necessary, teaching is also a "science" based on convergent evidence. By modeling vulnerability, utilizing a structured leadership team, and maintaining a school-wide commitment to explicit instruction—from the music room to the principal's office—we ensure that every student has an equitable seat at the "table of opportunity."

## References

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