

## International Dyslexia Association (IDA) – Structured Literacy Overview

### What is Structured Literacy?

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) defines Structured Literacy (2024) as:

*Structured Literacy is a comprehensive, integrated approach to reading and writing instruction that directly and systematically builds on and develops oral language while explicitly teaching the structure of written language. Using this evidence-based approach, educators integrate the teaching of the foundational and higher-order skills and knowledge needed to develop proficient reading comprehension and written expression.*

Here is the “[Structured Literacy Defined: an Explanation and Rationale](#)”

### IDA Structured Literacy Infographic

IDA created an interactive [Structured Literacy Infographic](#) which illustrates the interconnections between foundational skills, higher-level language comprehension, and instructional principles. The Infographic serves as a guide for educators to plan, sequence, and monitor effective Structured Literacy instruction. This is further detailed in the IDA [75th Anniversary Edition perspective](#) on Structured Literacy, which provides an in-depth overview of research-based principles and instructional practices for effective literacy development.

### Why Structured Literacy? – Science of Reading

Structured Literacy is grounded in the [Science of Reading](#), a body of research spanning cognitive science, neuroscience, and educational psychology. This research demonstrates how the brain learns to read and identifies the essential components necessary for skilled reading. The National Reading Panel identified five key concepts at the core of every effective reading instruction program: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Structured Literacy reflects evidence-based practices that integrate these components, ensuring instruction aligns with how reading skills develop in the brain. By following this research-based approach, educators can effectively support decoding, word recognition, and comprehension while addressing the specific needs of struggling readers.

### Who Benefits from Structured Literacy?

Structured Literacy benefits all students, but it is essential for those with dyslexia and other reading difficulties. By providing direct, clear, and scaffolded instruction, it ensures that struggling readers gain access to the building blocks of literacy while supporting advanced learners with deeper language knowledge.

### Structured Literacy within an MTSS Framework

Structured Literacy fits seamlessly within a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS):

- **Tier 1:** High-quality, evidence-based Structured Literacy instruction for all students in general education settings.
  - **Tier 2:** Targeted small-group interventions for students who need additional support.
  - **Tier 3:** Intensive, individualized instruction for students with significant reading challenges, including those with dyslexia.
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## Comparison of NRP Findings, Original Structured Literacy, and Infographic Elements

NRP Findings (2000)	Original Structured Literacy Elements (2014)	Structured Literacy Infographic Elements (2024)
<b>Phonemic Awareness</b> (ability to hear and manipulate sounds in spoken words)	<b>Phonology</b> (speech-sound system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Phonemes–Graphemes</b> (sound-symbol correspondences)</li> </ul>
<b>Phonics</b> (teaching letter–sound correspondences and decoding)	<b>Sound–Symbol Association</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Phonemes–Graphemes</b></li> <li>• <b>Orthography Conventions</b></li> </ul>
<b>Fluency</b> (reading with accuracy, speed, and expression)	<i>(Not an original SL “component” but supported through cumulative practice in phonology + syntax)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Syllable &amp; Stress Patterns</b></li> <li>• <b>Integration of All Domains</b></li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b> (word meaning and usage)	<b>Morphology &amp; Semantics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Morphemes;</b></li> <li>• <b>Vocabulary/Background Knowledge</b></li> </ul>
<b>Comprehension</b> (understanding and making meaning from text)	<b>Syntax</b> (sentence structure); <b>Semantics &amp; Text Discourse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sentence Structure/Grammar</b></li> <li>• <b>Text Structure</b></li> <li>• <b>Critical Thinking</b></li> <li>• <b>Integration of All Domains</b></li> </ul>

### Key Insights

- NRP focused on five essential components from research on effective reading instruction.
- Original Structured Literacy broadened those into linguistic systems (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics) plus sound-symbol integration.
- Structured Literacy Infographic takes these ideas further by:
  - Making phonemes–graphemes the anchor for print-sound work.
  - Adding syllable/stress patterns and orthography conventions to deepen word-level instruction.
  - Expanding comprehension into sentence structure, text structure, and critical thinking.
  - Highlighting integration across oral and written language, underscoring that Structured Literacy is not fragmented but interconnected.

### Conclusion

IDA’s Structured Literacy approach provides a clear, research-based framework for effective literacy instruction. By focusing on explicit, systematic, and responsive teaching practices, it ensures equitable access to literacy for all learners, particularly those most at risk for reading failure. Importantly, Structured Literacy emphasizes identifying risk factors early through universal screening and intervening promptly, which is critical to preventing long-term reading difficulties and supporting lifelong literacy success.