

**A Step-by-Step Guide:
Creating an
Inclusive Structured
Literacy Classroom**

SLANT / SYSTEM™

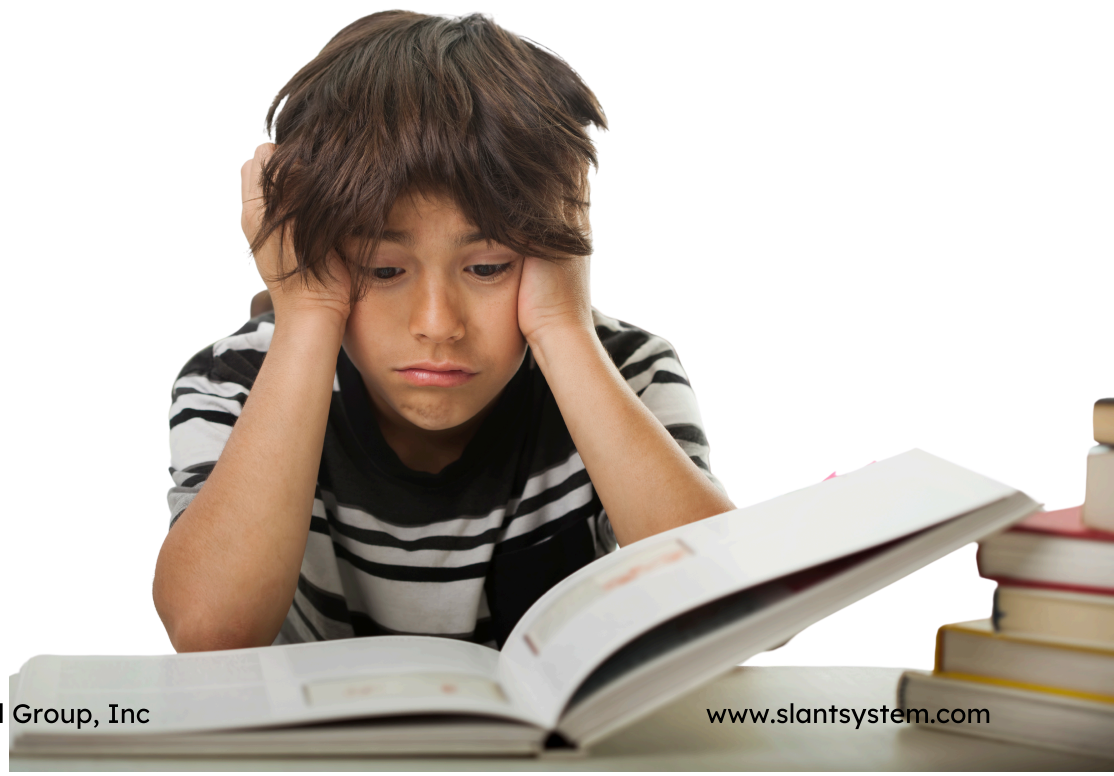
The Challenge

In classrooms everywhere, educators are increasingly encountering students with a wide range of learning needs. In fact, according to the NAEP, more than 66% of students are not reading at grade-level expectations. Adapting literacy instruction to support all learners—particularly those with specific learning difficulties like dyslexia—is crucial for fostering academic success. However, many teachers feel underprepared and unsupported in helping their struggling readers, especially those with dyslexia.

The Solution

Structured Literacy is an evidence-based approach that is effective for all learners, but particularly essential for students who struggle to read and those diagnosed with dyslexia. It focuses on explicit, systematic instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. It is important to utilize a comprehensive system that aligns with these principles and provides educators with the tools they need to deliver high-quality literacy instruction.

Though not present in many classrooms, a structured literacy approach designed to meet the needs of diverse learners will be most effective. This guide provides an overview of essential components that can be used to adapt literacy instruction and includes a practical checklist for identifying reading challenges and supporting students with dyslexia.



Step 1: Understand the learning needs of your students

Each student has unique strengths and challenges. Effective literacy instruction begins with understanding these individual differences through screening and assessment.

Early screening and ongoing assessments help identify students who may be struggling with specific aspects of literacy. Determining exactly what your student knows and what poses a challenge serves as a starting point to plan the focus of instruction. It is also essential to use this baseline data to monitor progress, showing growth over time and to determine whether your approach is working or if instruction needs to be adjusted.

✓ Start with an assessment

- Determine your students' overall reading comprehension score, obtained through assessments such as standardized tests, state tests, DIBELS, Acadience, AIMSweb, FASTBridge, MAP, etc.
- Obtain a decoding score through a phonics survey, such as the Slant System™ Phonics Survey, CORE Phonics Survey, Really Great Reading, and others.
- Apply the Simple View of Reading (SVR) to determine the focus for instruction. For example, if a student has a low reading comprehension score and a low decoding score, we can estimate that decoding deficits are negatively impacting their ability to comprehend the text. Thus, the focus of instruction should be on decoding.

The Simple View of Reading by Gough & Tunmer

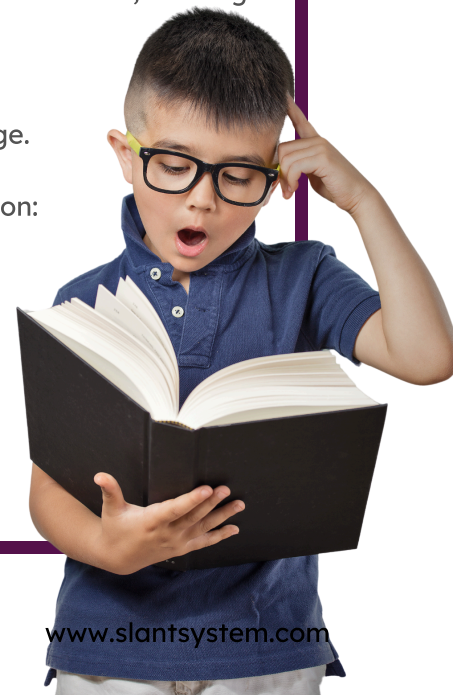
The Simple View of Reading is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the importance of both decoding and language comprehension in reading proficiency. According to this model, reading comprehension is the product of:

1. Decoding (D): The ability to translate printed text into spoken words.
2. Language Comprehension (LC): The ability to understand spoken language.

In this model, reading comprehension (RC) can be represented by the equation:

$$RC = D \times LC$$

This means that both decoding and language comprehension are essential for effective reading. Weaknesses in either area can hinder overall reading ability. Understanding a student's strengths and weaknesses is the first step in designing instruction that will meet their needs with an instructional focus that will be most effective.



Step 2: Devise and implement a plan for instruction

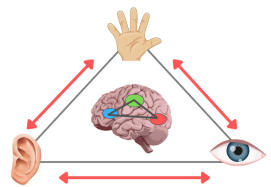
Once you have obtained scores from assessments and have determined your focus of instruction, it's time to put a plan in place.

Reflect on your practices:

- Does my current approach explicitly teach letter-sound correspondences in a logical sequence, moving from simple and common sounds first?
- Am I utilizing controlled text that supports targeted practice in the skills just taught?
- Am I incorporating phonemic awareness activities connecting speech to print?
- Am I intentionally having my students engage multiple modalities by seeing, hearing, saying, and doing simultaneously?
- Am I regularly checking growth to determine if what I am doing is working?
- Am I adjusting my instruction if growth is slow or non-existent?
- Am I grouping my students based on similar instructional needs?
- Is the focus of small group instruction skills-based?

✓ Implement a Structured Literacy Approach

- **Explicit Instruction:** Teach literacy skills directly and systematically. Utilize a scope and sequence that begins with the most common sounds and simple concepts. Provide students with ample opportunities to practice these new skills in both reading and spelling, in isolation and within the context of controlled, decodable sentences and passages.
- **Multimodal Techniques:** Have students simultaneously listen as they form and sound out letter sounds while both reading and writing, engaging multiple modalities to reinforce learning.
- **Progress Monitoring:** Regularly track student progress to adjust instruction as needed. Make error corrections in the moment and include practice and reinforcement in any weak skill in subsequent lessons. Track accuracy daily while reading and spelling during each lesson. Utilize oral reading fluency (ORF) assessments at least every other week to check generalization of learned skills.
- **Flexible Grouping:** Create skills-based groups to allow for direct support and differentiation based on what students know, what they need to learn, and their areas of need. Readjust groups as necessary.



Step 3: Create a successful learning environment for all

Learning to read begins with speech. We are not born with the ability to read; rather, we must intentionally build pathways in our brains by utilizing the existing networks for language. Emergent readers require explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, which is the ability to hear and manipulate individual speech sounds. This is especially critical for those with dyslexia, as instruction in phonemic awareness may be needed beyond what is required for non-impaired readers.

Creating a learning environment rich in oral language and opportunities to grow vocabulary and background knowledge will enable those with word-reading difficulties, as well as limited access to text, to strengthen their language comprehension. Utilize higher-level vocabulary in classroom directions, provide engaging read-aloud opportunities, and allow time for oral discussions about the text. In addition, explicitly teach content-area words that will be necessary for understanding.

✓ Create an Inclusive Classroom

- Differentiated Instruction: Tailor lessons to meet the varying needs of students.
- Collaborative Learning: Encourage peer support and collaboration.
- Positive Learning Environment: Foster a classroom atmosphere where all students feel safe and valued.

Notice the Warning Signs of Dyslexia:

- Difficulty with phonological awareness (e.g., rhyming, segmenting sounds)
- Challenges in decoding words and reading fluently and accurately
- Slow or inaccurate reading
- Omitting or substituting small words when reading aloud
- Difficulty remembering the sequence of things
- Problems with reading comprehension despite good listening comprehension
- Difficulty with rapid naming of letters, numbers, and colors
- Family history of reading difficulties
- Avoidance of reading tasks
- Poor spelling that is inconsistent with other language skills
- Trouble with written expression



Step 4: Give strategies for an accessible education

A student who struggles to read will face difficulties in all aspects of their learning, potentially leading to low self-esteem, social isolation, depression, anxiety, behavioral problems, and an overall negative attitude toward learning and school. They may not be able to perform to their full potential, even in areas where they are known to excel. For example, a student who is strong in math may struggle with word problems. Completing assignments accurately can be challenging if directions are misread. Difficulties with reading can limit a student's ability to engage in higher-level critical thinking tasks, such as analyzing texts or synthesizing information. The list goes on...

In addition to direct, explicit, and systematic instruction in the structure of the English language and its written code, it is essential to teach and provide opportunities for accessibility to all learning across subject areas.

Things to consider when supporting struggling readers:

- Teach utilization of tools for text-to-speech and speech-to-text.
- Give access to audio books across subject areas.
- Offer extended time to complete assignments and tests.
- Provide oral testing options and a quiet testing environment.
- Encourage parental involvement in the learning process to help create a positive partnership for students to thrive and overcome their challenges.

✓ Make learning accessible to all

- Adapting literacy instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners is essential for their academic success.
- By implementing the strategies and tools outlined in this guide, educators can create an inclusive and supportive learning environment where every student has the opportunity to thrive.



An approach that utilizes research and evidence-based practices offers a structured, effective method for literacy instruction that benefits all students, particularly those with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia.

Teacher knowledge & expertise is essential!

To feel confident in creating successful readers who can interact with the world and access all aspects of their education, teachers must feel fully prepared and supported.

If you are interested in gaining certification as a Structured Literacy and Dyslexia Specialist, visit www.slantsystem.com.

Visit www.slantsystem.com

to download additional free tools and resources, join our educator community, and learn about training opportunities to start implementing multimodal structured literacy in your classroom today!

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