

Approaches to Reading Instruction Supported by LDA

LDA position Statement released 12 May 2015 and updated 7 June 2015.

Given appropriate instruction, most children learn to read quickly and efficiently in the first year of school. Some children find it more difficult to learn to read, and require more focused instruction over a longer period of time. A few children, estimated to be about 3 to 5 per cent of the total school population, have persistent and ongoing problems in learning to read, and require ongoing help and support with their reading. Decades of research have established that the most effective way of teaching children to read is through explicit, systematic instruction in the basic skills required for reading.

Education Departments, teachers and parents are faced with a bewildering number of programs, interventions and treatments which claim to help students who struggle with reading and related skills.

The following Position Statement on Reading Instruction has been developed by LDA to provide a guide to schools, teachers and parents to identify programs that adopt an explicit structured approach to the teaching of reading and are therefore likely to be effective both in the teaching of initial reading and in assisting students with reading difficulties.

LDA supports approaches to reading instruction that adopt an explicit structured approach to the teaching of reading and are consistent with the scientific evidence as to how children learn to read and how best to teach them. This approach is important for all children, but is particularly important for children who have difficulty in learning to read. Programs that follow an explicit structured approach to the teaching of reading include as an integral part of the teaching program specific instruction in phonology (phonological and phonemic awareness), sound-symbol associations (letter-sound correspondences), as well as syllable structures, morphology, syntax and semantics (the structure, use and meaning of words) as a basis for developing accurate and fluent word reading and reading comprehension.

Such programs conform to the definition of 'structured literacy programs' as adopted by the International Dyslexia Association in July 2014, and place emphasis on the importance of learning the alphabetic code and the twin processes of blending and segmenting as the basis of learning to read. They do not include programs that follow a whole language or 'balanced literacy' approach, which place emphasis on the three cueing system and guessing from context as acceptable strategies for identifying words, or on programs which include the practice of asking children to memorise lists of words before they have received instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondences and blending and segmenting.

Examples of programs that follow an explicit structured approach to the teaching of reading include but are not limited to programs such as Jolly Phonics, Read

Write Inc., Sounds-Write, Get Reading Right, International Phonics, the MultiLit suite of programs, the DI Reading Mastery and Corrective Reading programs, and the various programs based on the Orton-Gillingham approach. Examples of programs that follow a whole language or 'balanced literacy' approach include but are not limited to programs such as Reading Recovery and the literacy approaches developed by Fountas and Pinnell, including Levelled Literacy Intervention and Guided Reading. LDA does not support or endorse programs that place emphasis on the exercise or training of underlying brain processes including working memory as the basis for improving reading or other academic skills. Such programs include Brain Gym, Fast ForWord, CogMed and the Arrowsmith program.

For further information on the IDA definition of structured literacy and recommendations for effective reading instruction see <http://dyslexia-ncbida.org/2014/09/09/ida-introduces-structured-literacy/> and <http://eida.org/effective-reading-instruction/>. For an Australian guide to recommended reading strategies used in Australia see the AUSPELD publication, *Understanding Learning Difficulties: A practical guide*. For a more detailed overview of the knowledge required by teachers for effective teaching of reading see Louisa C. Moats, *Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers* (second edition). For a discussion of the use of the term 'balanced literacy' in relation to programs that do not provide an explicit structured approach to the teaching of reading, see Louisa Moats' paper, *Whole Language Lives On: The Illusion of Balanced Reading Instruction*.