



Learning Difficulties Australia

Position Statement: Approaches to Reading Instruction Supported by LDA

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 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.

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, MultiLit 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*.

For information about “explicit” and Direct Instruction see Exploring the Foundations of Explicit Instruction at: <http://www.explicitinstruction.org/download/sample-chapter.pdf> and, <http://www.evidencebasedteaching.org.au/direct-instruction-facts-myths/>

For information about the synthetic phonics approach to teaching reading see Dr Louisa Moats seminal paper **Teaching Reading is Rocket Science** – What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able To Do (at: <https://www.ldaustralia.org/client/documents/Teaching%20Reading%20is%20Rocket%20Science%20-%20Moats.pdf>) To see other Dr Louisa Moats resources in relation to teaching decoding, how spelling supports reading, How Whole Language Lives On, The Illusion of Balanced Reading Instruction and more, go to: <https://www.ldaustralia.org/moats.html>

In 2014, the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) adopted the term “Structured Literacy”, see: <http://eida.org/effective-reading-instruction/>

The *IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading* defines what all teachers of reading need to know and be able to do to teach all students to read proficiently. The IDA Standards were written for two main audiences: classroom educators and dyslexia specialists, with separate narratives for each audience, see: <http://eida.org/knowledge-and-practices/>

The Orton-Gillingham instructional approach is intended primarily for use with persons who have difficulty with reading, spelling, and writing of the sort associated with dyslexia. It is most properly understood and practiced as an approach, not a method, program, system or technique.

<http://www.ortonacademy.org/approach.php>

For information about “balanced literacy”, see Dr Louisa Moats article *Systematic, not “balanced” instruction* in the October 2014 LDA Bulletin publication at: <https://www.ldaustralia.org/client/documents/Bulletin-OCT14.pdf>