

Effective provision for all abilities

TransformED Literacy
Framework
Webinar 7

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Structured and systematic teaching
as described in the **Literacy Framework**,
along with the assessments in the **Assessment Framework**,
applied in a **Response to Intervention model**,
ensure that teaching meets the needs of children of *all abilities*.

Structured and systematic reading instruction

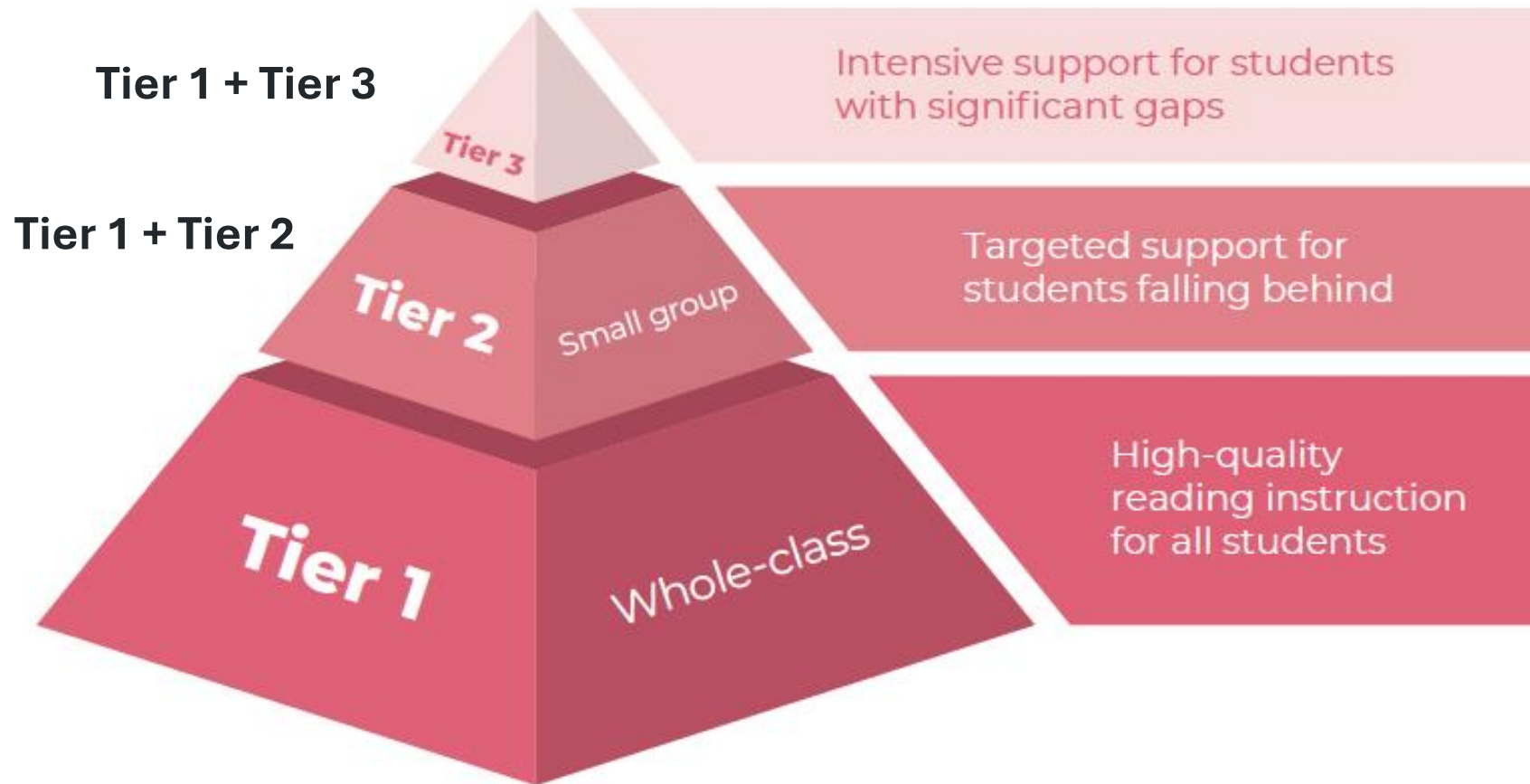
“At its core, structured literacy reflects a systematic, explicit and cumulative approach to teaching reading and writing. It involves a clear focus on decoding: breaking down each word into individual sounds before blending those sounds to form the word. This helps children hear, identify and use different sounds that distinguish words.

Structured Literacy typically includes teacher-led instruction, regular opportunities for practice and responsive feedback. It is designed to support all learners, including those who may experience reading difficulties such as dyslexia. Successful implementation depends on high-quality professional development and thoughtful curriculum alignment.

...

Structured literacy encompasses more than phonics; it includes instruction in phonology, syllables, morphology, syntax and semantics, all of which are addressed in later sections of this framework. This broader scope ensures that pupils develop the full range of skills needed for fluent and meaningful reading.” (*Strong Foundations: A Literacy Framework for Primary Schools, 2025*)

Response to Intervention (or Multi-tiered Systems of Support, MTSS)



Essential elements of Response to Intervention

1. School-wide implementation for prevention and remediation of reading difficulties (or other outcomes)
2. Regular universal screening to identify students who are not making good progress
3. Diagnostic assessments to identify learning needs
4. Providing instruction in three ‘tiers’:
 - Tier 1 — Classroom instruction for all students
 - Tier 2 — Targeted, small-group intervention for students who need additional support*
 - Tier 3 — Individual intervention designed and delivered by a reading specialist or special educator
5. Ongoing progress monitoring assessments to guide decisions about instruction and intervention

* Tier 2 instruction is a more targeted and intensive version of Tier 1 instruction so students can move easily between them.*

Non-categorical

- Any student who does not make good progress in reading should be offered a targeted intervention, irrespective of a diagnosis of a disability or learning difficulty
- Intervention is tailored to the specific educational need of the child, not the perceived needs of a ‘category’ of diagnosed difficulty or disability
- Reading difficulties can emerge at multiple points in reading development, not just in the early years.
- Traditional models labelled children first: For example, 'dyslexic', 'ESL learner', 'intellectually disabled', and then sought different programmes for each category.
- The Science of Reading inverts this logic: Teach all children the same high-quality, structured programme. Monitor who is not progressing. Intensify support for those children.

"The notion that different children need fundamentally different reading instruction has no basis in the science." — Seidenberg (2017)

Universal and equitable

Language background

Phonemic awareness and systematic phonics cross languages. Students learning English as an additional language benefit strongly from explicit decoding instruction.

Socioeconomic background

Research consistently shows structured literacy narrows the achievement gap. Children from low-income households gain most from explicit, systematic instruction.

Cultural background

Culturally responsive teaching is compatible with — and enhanced by — high-quality structured literacy. Content can reflect diverse texts while instruction remains systematic.

Learning differences

Students with dyslexia, language disorders, and intellectual disabilities show significant gains under structured, explicit phonics-based approaches.

No child is harmed by systematic, structured teaching — but many are harmed by its absence.

Thorough and methodical

- When students begin school, there is no conclusive way of knowing which will have difficulties learning to read. Therefore, all students should have evidence-based explicit teaching from the first weeks of school.
- Some children appear to be able to read but are actually using strategies that are not sustainable in the long term.
- Without structured and systematic teaching these children are at risk of going over a ‘reading cliff’ once texts exceed their bank of memorised words and they can no longer rely on other cues.
- Without structured and systematic teaching these children will have gaps in their knowledge. This is often found with struggling readers in post-primary.
- Structured and systematic instruction is a no-gaps approach that makes no assumptions and therefore takes no risks.

Reading strategies that look like reading but lead to a literacy cliff

Memorising whole words by their visual properties or by using other compensating strategies like picture or context cues

Using decoding strategies but with an incomplete version of the code.

Efficiency

When ALL children receive high-quality, structured Tier 1 instruction, the number requiring intervention drops – often dramatically — freeing resources for those with the most persistent needs.

Unstructured Tier 1 Instruction

~30–40% may need Tier 2 support

~20–30% may need significant Tier 3

Resources stretched across many students

Children wait longer for targeted help

Strong Structured Tier 1 Instruction

~15% may need Tier 2 support

~3–5% may need intensive Tier 3

Resources concentrated where most needed

Earlier identification of genuine need

***Prevention is more efficient than remediation.
Strong Tier 1 is the highest-impact investment a school can make.***

Responsive to student need

Structured Literacy is universal in provision but not one-size-fits-all in pace or depth.

The instructional sequence is planned, but the rate at which children move through it is continuously calibrated to class and individual progress data.

How responsiveness works in practice:

- Frequent progress monitoring
- Data-driven decisions to increase pace, allow more practice or reteach
- Within class groupings with scaffolding or enrichment
- Small group intervention for additional teaching and practice (Tier 2)
- Higher intensity and dosage intervention (Tier 3)

Same sequence, different pace.

Some students

Move rapidly — consolidate quickly, may need enrichment

Most students

Progress steadily through the sequence at typical pace

Some students

Require more practice cycles and re-teaching before moving on

Multiple components

Reading is not a single skill; it is an integrated system. Structured literacy develops all components simultaneously within every lesson.

Phonemic awareness

Identifying & manipulating sounds in spoken words

Decoding and encoding

Mapping sounds to letters; blending & segmenting

Fluency

Automatic, accurate, prosodic reading

Oral Language & Vocabulary

Word meaning, morphology, rich language

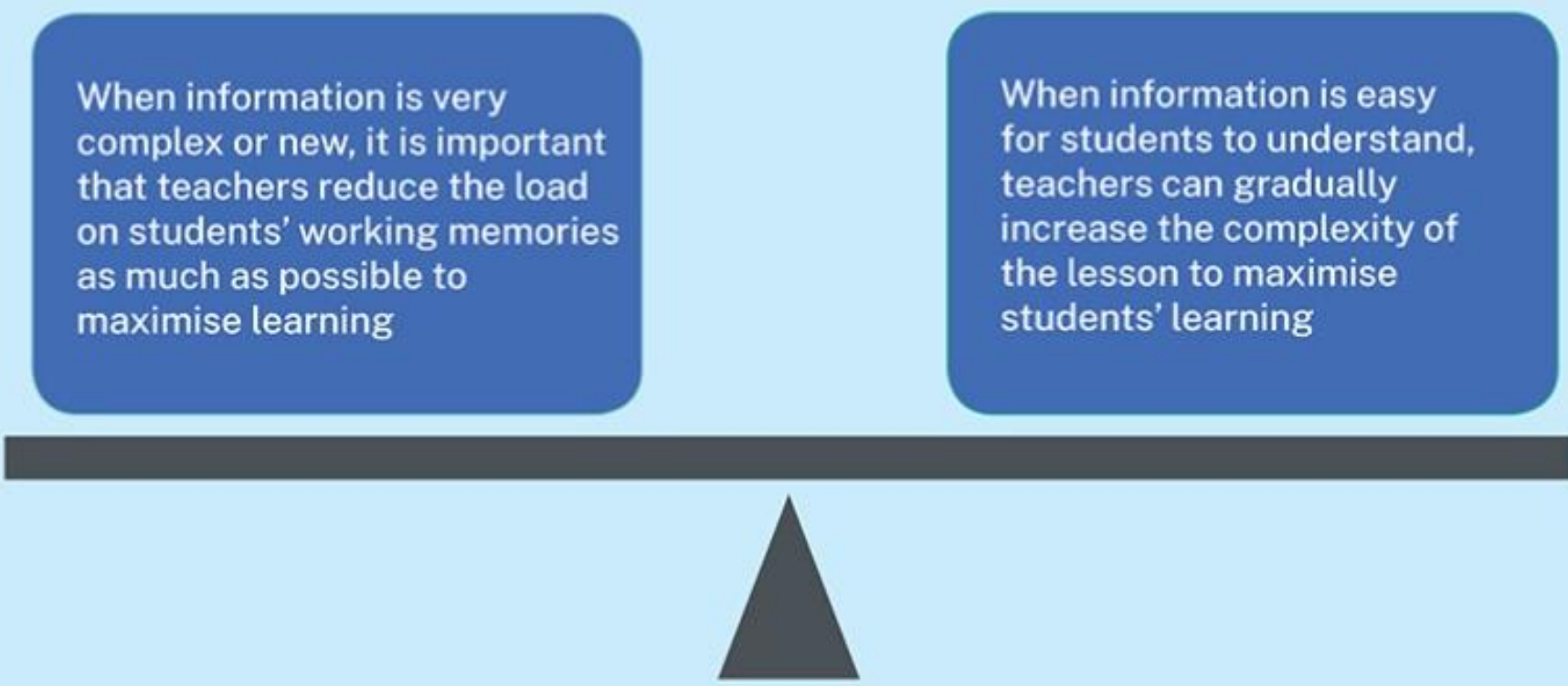
Reading comprehension

Building meaning from text; inference & reasoning

Handwriting

Reinforces phonics; integrates reading & writing

Allows for expertise reversal and implicit learning

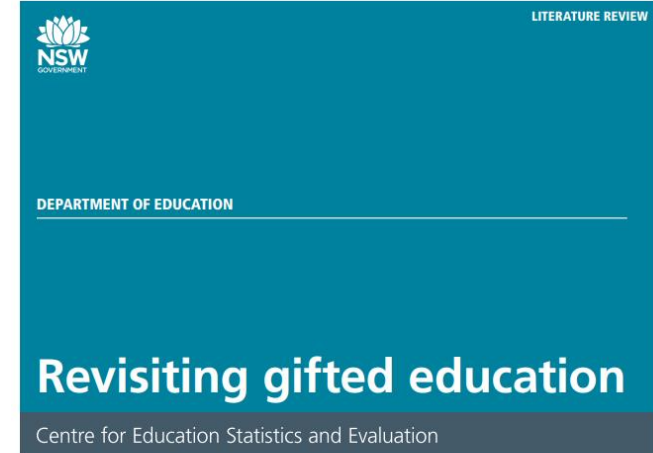


When information is very complex or new, it is important that teachers reduce the load on students' working memories as much as possible to maximise learning

When information is easy for students to understand, teachers can gradually increase the complexity of the lesson to maximise students' learning

Gifted students benefit from structured teaching

- Like all students, gifted learners require scaffolding and structure in learning to help manage the demands of cognitive load.
- Explicit teaching and guided inquiry are just as necessary for gifted students as for all students.
- Gifted learners may be able to move through structured and scaffolded activities at a faster pace, and then can benefit from problem solving and applied tasks.



Accommodating individual differences

- While some children may make faster progress in reading than others, often their spelling and handwriting lags. Systematic explicit instruction develops essential fluency in these skills.
- Even the small number of true precocious readers benefit from elements of structured literacy. Their oral reading may be proficient but vocabulary is still developing.
- Phonics moves quickly from decoding letter-sound combinations to incorporate morphology and etymology. High progress readers can begin learning these more quickly – the content is almost limitless.
- There will be students who have high ability but not in every subject and not every aspect. They may have learned some things implicitly but are not able to explain it.

Structured literacy is not a methodology for struggling readers alone. It is simply the best way to teach all children to read (Kilpatrick, 2015).

In summary

Response to intervention / MTSS

Framework matching intensity to need at every tier

Universal and equitable

Works across language, culture and socioeconomic background

Responsive

Pace and intensity adjusted continuously using data

Multi-component

Phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension taught together

Non-categorical

One high-quality programme for all — differentiated in intensity

Thorough

Explicit, cumulative, mastery-based — nothing left to chance

Efficient

Strong Tier 1 reduces intervention demand across the school

Individually adaptive

Flexible, data-driven accommodations
