

Structured Literacy and the *SIPPS*[®] Program

The International Dyslexia Association identifies Structured Literacy as an effective instructional approach for meeting the needs of students who struggle with learning to read. Structured Literacy utilizes systematic, explicit instruction to teach decoding skills including phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable types, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Structured Literacy instruction has been around for over a century and is sometimes referred to as *systematic reading instruction*, *phonics-based reading instruction*, the *Orton-Gillingham Approach*, or *synthetic phonics*, among other names.

The *SIPPS* (*Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words*) program, developed by Dr. John Shefelbine, is a multilevel program that develops the word-recognition strategies and skills that enable students to become independent and confident readers and writers. Dr. Shefelbine’s research emphasizes systematic instruction, and in many ways parallels the Orton-Gillingham Approach.

Structured Literacy

The table below notes the elements of Structured Literacy aligned to the *SIPPS* program.

Elements of Structured Literacy	<i>SIPPS</i>
<p>Phonology Defined as the study of sound structure of spoken words; includes rhyming, counting words in spoken sentences, clapping syllables in spoken words, and phonemic awareness (manipulation of sounds).</p>	<p>Phonological awareness activities appear in every lesson in <i>SIPPS</i> Beginning, Extension, and Plus. These activities begin with segmenting and blending, include rhyme, and increase in complexity to dropping and substituting phonemes.</p>
<p>Sound-Symbol Association Defined as connecting sounds to print, including blending and segmenting. This should occur two ways: visual to auditory (reading) and auditory to visual (spelling).</p>	<p>Spelling-sounds are explicitly taught throughout the program. Sounds are taught in order of utility, which allows students to quickly begin to read connected text with mastery of only a few phonemes. Students learn and apply new sounds to words in isolation and in books.</p> <p><i>SIPPS</i> Beginning addresses the alphabetic stage of reading development; Extension and Plus address the spelling-pattern phase; and Challenge addresses the polysyllabic/morphemic stage.</p>

<p>Syllable Instruction Defined as instruction that includes teaching of the six syllable types.</p>	<p>Students begin reading two-syllable words as soon as they learn inflectional endings in <i>SIPPS</i> Extension and Plus. Consonant <i>-le</i> syllables are introduced in Extension and Plus. All six syllable types are introduced, reviewed, and applied in Challenge.</p>
<p>Morphology Defined as the study of the smallest unit(s) of meaning (i.e., base words, affixes).</p>	<p><i>SIPPS</i> Challenge includes morphology (base words and affixes) as part of the regular instruction. Students develop strategies to decode polysyllabic words, including seeing the whole word, recognizing known parts, and assembling parts to see the whole word.</p>
<p>Syntax Defined as the sequence and function of words in a sentence (grammar, sentence variation, and the mechanics of language).</p>	<p>As students write sentences in <i>SIPPS</i> Beginning, Extension, and Plus, they learn how sentences are constructed, including capitalization and punctuation.</p>
<p>Semantics Defined as meaning (comprehension of language).</p>	<p>The purpose of teaching foundational skills is to facilitate comprehension. As students become more automatic in their reading, they are able to pay increasing attention to understanding what they read. <i>SIPPS</i> develops accurate and fluent word recognition, which leads to comprehension. All the reading selections provided with the program are accompanied by comprehension questions that confirm the students' understanding of what they read.</p>

Teaching Principles

The table below aligns the *SIPPS* program to the teaching principles of Structured Literacy.

Teaching Principles of Structured Literacy	<i>SIPPS</i>
<p>Systematic and Cumulative Described as material that follows the logical order of the language; sequence must progress from easiest to more difficult concepts that gradually build on one another.</p>	<p><i>SIPPS</i> instruction is systematic and cumulative. Coordinated instructional routines guide progression on a developmental scope and sequence of foundational skills.</p>
<p>Explicit Described as deliberate, clear teaching.</p>	<p><i>SIPPS</i> instruction is explicit, with teacher modeling and student practice in every lesson. Explicit, systematic routines include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Phonological Awareness ● Phonics and Decodable Words ● Sight Words ● Reading a Story/Rereading a Story ● Guided Spelling and Segmentation ● Single-Syllable Phonics ● Syllabic Transformations ● Morphemic Transformations ● Sight Syllables ● Reading by Syllables ● Reading Entire Words ● Fluency Practice/Individualized Daily Reading
<p>Diagnostic Described as informal and formal assessment that informs the teacher of specific student needs.</p>	<p>A one-on-one diagnostic placement test determines each student’s point of need and helps the teacher form small, skill-based groups. Mastery tests occur in regular increments depending on the <i>SIPPS</i> level (approximately every 5–10 lessons) to determine whether the teaching pace is appropriate for the group and whether individuals need extra practice. The goal is for students to show mastery of the skills on the mastery tests, which generally cover phonics patterns and sight words that have been taught and reviewed for at least two lessons before the test. Teacher observation during <i>SIPPS</i> lessons is also essential to informing instruction.</p>

References

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