



Changing how we teach literacy

In February 2023, the First Nation School Board announced a new Literacy Plan for its schools, which came into effect in the 2023/24 school year. You may have seen the [Literacy Plan](#) or heard the words “science of reading” but still have questions about what, exactly, is changing. We hope this helps! If you have more questions, please contact your school, or the First Nation School Board directly.

Q: Why make any changes?

We want our kids to be able to read. Literacy is objectively connected to a better quality of life. For over a decade, Yukon learners have had low literacy rates reported in numerous reports. For many years, our First Nation communities have been asking for a change in our approach.

Q: What are you doing differently?

The First Nation School Board is supporting our school teams to align their instruction practices with research and evidence-based approaches, this is known as the “science of reading.” Science of reading is not a program or methodology, it is a collection of research about how our brains learn to read and how best to teach literacy. This research shows that our brains best learn to read when reading and writing is taught in a “structured” way.

Q: What was happening before this? Can you explain the differences?

In the 80s and 90s, an approach to teaching literacy called “Balanced Literacy” started being taught worldwide. It is likely that most of the parents of today’s Learners were taught how to read using a structured approach and not “Balanced Literacy.”

Balanced Literacy	Science of Reading
<p>Focuses on creating a reading environment with lots of access to books and time for reading.</p> <p>Uses levelled text which is based on how predictable the text is.</p>	<p>Structured approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explicit (directly teaching skills) ○ Cumulative (skills build on each other) ○ Systematic (organization of material follows logical order of language, beginning with the easiest and most basic concepts and elements, progressing methodically to more difficult concepts and elements)
<p>Focuses on repetition and ‘cues’ or guessing to teach kids how to read.</p>	<p>Utilizes decodable text i.e., words that learners can sound out</p>
<p>Repetitive sentences with just one word that changes, and obvious pictures that help the reader understand what the story is about.</p>	<p>Includes phonics and phonological awareness, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, listening and reading comprehension, written expression, and oral language</p>



	Encourage students to sound-out words instead of using cues (e.g. looking at the picture or guessing from context)
Specific programs and authors/books	Many free, or low-cost, materials accessible online and in libraries

Q: How will this impact my child and my family?

This change mostly impacts Educators, which is why we have provided training for them. A team of Literacy Coaches will be providing direct support at all of our schools, and Literacy Teachers will be paired with mentors

Students will be given materials that teach them skill-by-skill, and build on previous lessons. For example, they may have a lesson for the sounds 's', 'a,' and 'm' then they will spend time reading materials with just those sounds. The next lesson will add more sounds, cumulatively.

Parents can expect information shared with them about their child's literacy skills. This will look different than what they may be familiar with because we will be talking about specific literacy skills not just arbitrary levels. This will help parents know exactly where their child is at and what their strengths and challenges are so they can take an active and important role in their learning.

Q: Will my child lose their Reading Recovery Teacher?

We will not be losing the positions of reading recovery teachers-those positions will now be Literacy Teachers and they will provide evidence-based instruction in small-group and one-on-one work.

Our dedicated literacy coaching team has also started this fall and are supporting administrators, classroom teachers and literacy teachers in implementing these new approaches.

Q: What is the science of reading?

The term "science of reading" refers to the research that reading experts have conducted on how we learn to read. This body of knowledge, including research from the fields of education, linguistics, cognitive psychology, and neuroscience, has formed the basis of what we know to comprise effective reading instruction in that it is explicit, systematic, and offer many opportunities to respond. Information from: ufli.education.ufl.edu.