

small Talks

A Think Small Speaker Series



Building Successful Readers Begins at Birth:

Shaping Public Policy in Support of Early Literacy

Tuesday, December 12, 2023

8:30 am - 9:00 am Breakfast & Networking

9:00 am - 10:00 am Small Talks

Wilder Center, 451 Lexington Parkway N., St. Paul, MN



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Building Successful Readers Begins at Birth: Shaping Public Policy in Support of Early Literacy

Sponsored by: Think Small

Moderated by Kim Gibbons, Ph.D.,
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Literacy Improvement

- Literacy Improvement is a system issue - not just a curriculum or teacher training issue.
- A plan to overhaul the system is what is needed. It provides the why and the how.
- Literacy begins at birth and even before!

“Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets.”

“A bad system will beat a good person every time.”

W. Edward Deming

Our Current Context in Minnesota

Outcomes and Policy



Minnesota has 500,000 students that are not proficient readers

- Largest opportunity gap between black and white students
- Rank last for graduation of students with disabilities and for black students
- Poor reading skills impact academic achievement and is associated with an increased risk of not completing high school, death by suicide, incarceration, anxiety, depression, unemployment, and problems accessing health care.



We Know We Have Gaps

- We have achievement Gaps for All Students Compared to Proficiency Standards & between different groups of students (disability, race, ethnicity, economic).
- We also have gaps between research & practice particularly in the area of literacy and early literacy.



The Science of Reading: Facts

- **Consensus** among many related disciplines (developmental psychology, educational psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience, and reading education) about how students learn to read, what goes wrong when students don't learn, and the type of instruction that works the best for the most students.
- Based on thousands of studies, supported by hundreds of millions of research dollars, conducted across the world in many languages.
- Challenges older methods of reading instruction that were based on tradition and observation, not evidence.

Reading and language arts instruction must include:

- Deliberate, systematic, and explicit teaching of word recognition
- Develop students subject-matter knowledge, vocabulary, sentence comprehension and familiarity with the language in written texts.

Why Science of Reading?

- Equitable outcomes for all students
- Prevent inappropriate referrals for special education evaluation
- Reduce cross subsidy
- Reduce the need for supplemental and intensive interventions
- Take the guesswork out of teaching
- More students will become proficient readers



The Science of Reading is **NOT**:

A single component
of instruction

A one-size-fits-all
approach

A political agenda

An ideology or
philosophy

A program of
instruction

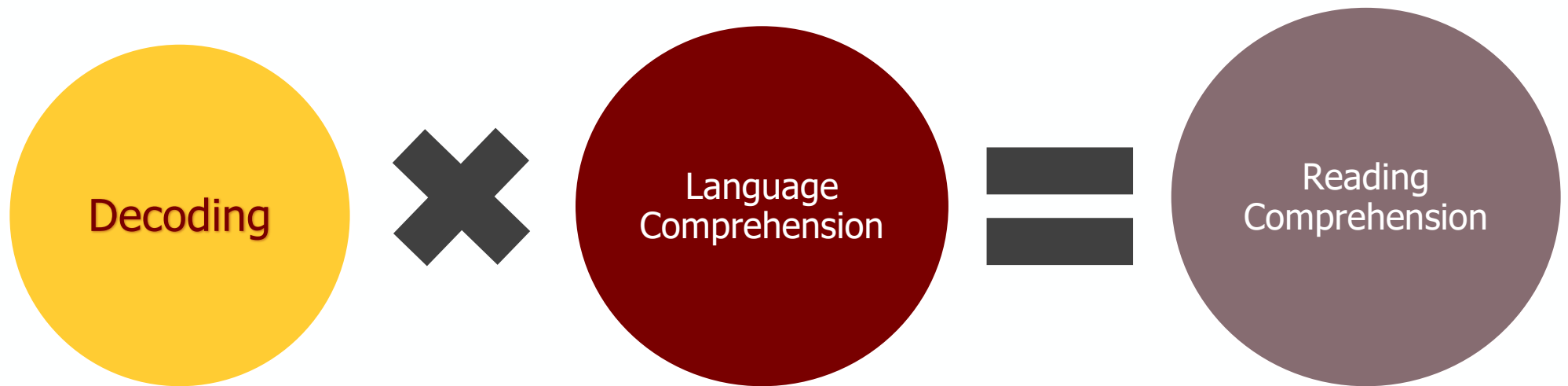
What We Know

- The vast majority of students can learn to read with effective instruction and support.
- Providing high-quality reading programs, early intervention, and individualized attention when needed are essential components of helping students develop strong reading skills.
- Early intervention and evidence-based reading instruction are crucial in helping students develop strong foundational reading skills. Research indicates that with appropriate teaching methods and support, around 95% or more of students can achieve reading proficiency.



Simple View of Reading

Gough and Tunmer, 1986



Literacy Development Path



PRE-SCHOOL

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MIDDLE SCHOOL

HIGH SCHOOL

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

VOCABULARY

LANGUAGE STRUCTURE

INFERENCE & REASONING • VERBAL REASONING

CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT • LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

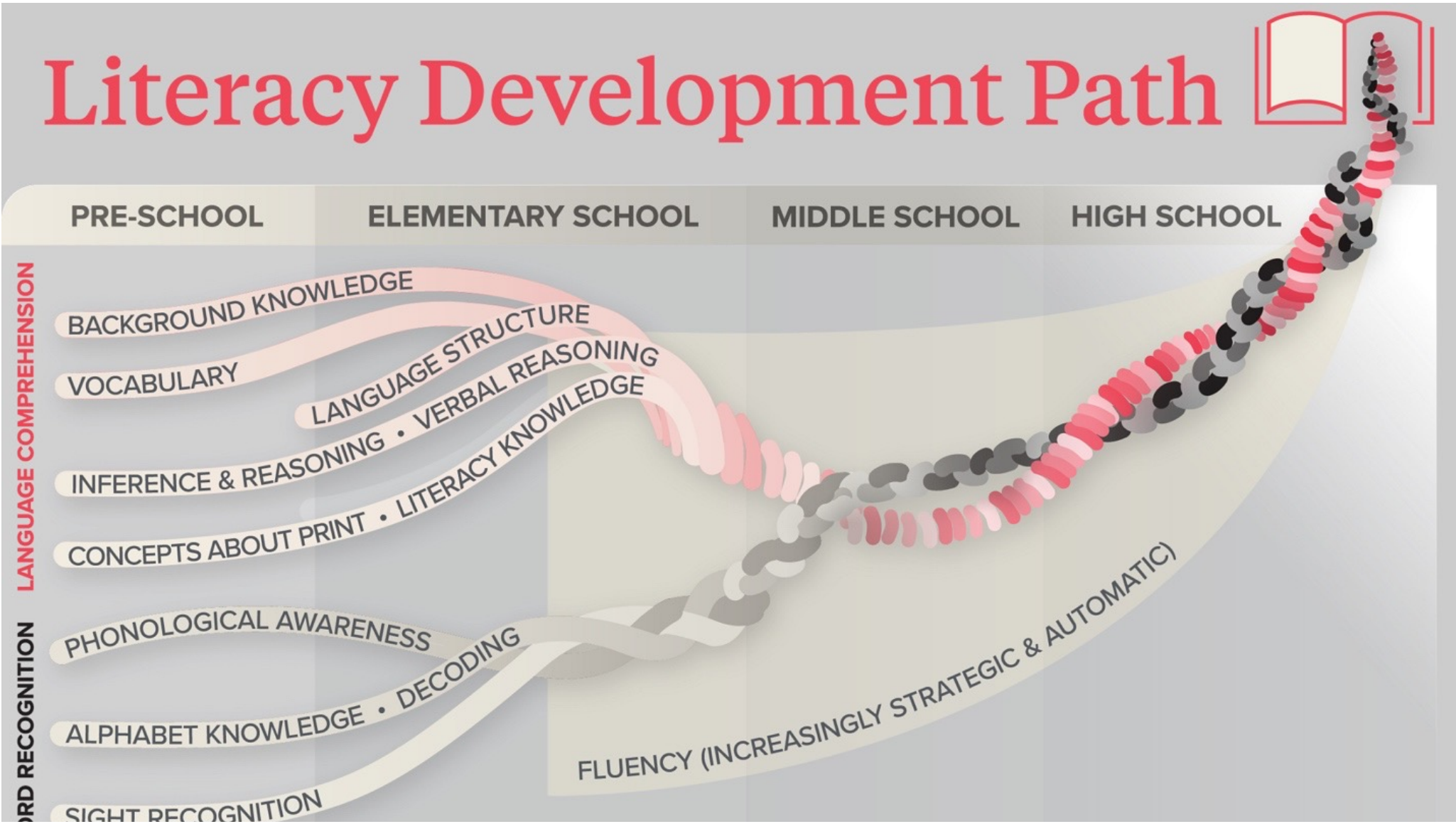
WORD RECOGNITION

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

ALPHABET KNOWLEDGE • DECODING

SIGHT RECOGNITION

FLUENCY (INCREASINGLY STRATEGIC & AUTOMATIC)



Intersection with SOR and Young Children's Literacy Development

- 1. Language Acquisition:** From birth, babies start absorbing language. The science of reading emphasizes exposing infants and toddlers to rich language experiences through conversations, storytelling, and exposure to a variety of words to build a strong foundation for language and literacy development.
- 2. Phonological Awareness:** Between ages 2 and 5, children develop phonological awareness—understanding the sound structure of language. Activities focusing on rhyming, alliteration, and syllable play aid in developing these foundational skills, crucial for later reading success.
- 3. Vocabulary Development:** Exposure to a wide range of words and experiences is pivotal. Reading aloud, discussions, and experiences that introduce new words and concepts enrich a child's vocabulary, supporting comprehension and expressive language skills.
- 4. Print Awareness:** Children learn that print carries meaning and understand the basics of how books work. Pointing out letters, words, and symbols in everyday settings, as well as exposure to books, helps develop print awareness.



Intersection with SOR and Young Children's Literacy Development

- 4. Phonics and Letter Knowledge:** By ages 4-5, children start connecting sounds to letters and recognizing letters. Teaching letter names and sounds in fun and interactive ways, such as games and songs, aids in early phonics development.
- 5. Narrative Skills:** Understanding story structure, sequencing events, and making predictions are part of narrative skills. Engaging children in storytelling, asking open-ended questions about stories, and encouraging them to create their own narratives help develop these skills.

- **Engaging parents and families is critical!**
- Parents and caregivers play a crucial role. Reading to children, engaging in conversations, and providing a language-rich environment at home significantly impact early literacy development.

Literacy and System Change: What is Needed?



Professional Learning



Curriculum aligned to SOR



Valid and Reliable Assessments to measure student progress



Collaboration through Professional Learning Communities



Sufficient Time Allocated to Instruction



Instructional Coaching to help transfer learning to practice



Family engagement



A Continuous Improvement Framework: MTSS

Minnesota MTSS (MnMTSS) Definition (2020)

MnMTSS is a systemic, continuous improvement framework for ensuring positive social, emotional, behavioral, developmental, and academic outcomes for every student.

MnMTSS provides access to layered tiers of culturally and linguistically responsive, evidence-based practices and relies on the understanding and belief that every student can learn and thrive.

MnMTSS engages an anti-bias and socially-just approach to examining policies and practices and ensuring equitable distribution of resources and opportunity.

MnMulti-Tiered System of Support (MnMTSS)

- It **IS** the MN school improvement framework and focuses on system alignment to improve outcomes for **ALL** students.
- It **IS** defined in statute.
- It **IS** strongly encouraged in the Read Act.
- It **IS** the overarching framework to impact literacy outcomes.
- There **IS** training and support available at no cost.



Read Act

Subd. 4. **MTSS Framework.** A district is encouraged to use a data-based decision-making process within the MTSS framework to determine the evidence-based core reading instruction and Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions required to meet a student's identified needs.

Moving from Silos to Synergistic Systems

