

# BYRAM HILLS

## CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



# *Literacy Study Takeaways*



*Creating the Leaders of the Next Generation*

## PURPOSE OF THE LITERACY STUDY GROUP

We recognize the importance of literacy as a gateway skill which provides access to **lifelong learning** across all content areas.

In the spirit of **continuous improvement**, the Byram Hills School District will engage in a yearlong study of literacy *to deepen our knowledge and understanding of how young children learn to read and write.*

The takeaways from this study -- in collaboration with all K-5 faculty -- will help our **continuous improvement process** in literacy to best *meet the needs of all our students.*

# OVERVIEW

- Facilitated by two **expert literacy researchers**
- Five evening meetings
- Teachers, administrators, and parents
- Four additional public meetings
- Created resource page on the District [website](#) →
- *Examples of some actions to date:*
  - Trained all K-5 special education teachers in **Orton-Gillingham**
  - Trained teachers in ***Fundations***
  - Offering **various literacy PD** this summer and next year
  - Developing a **3-5 year literacy plan** with specific goals
  - Engaging **all faculty** in discussion and planning of our goals



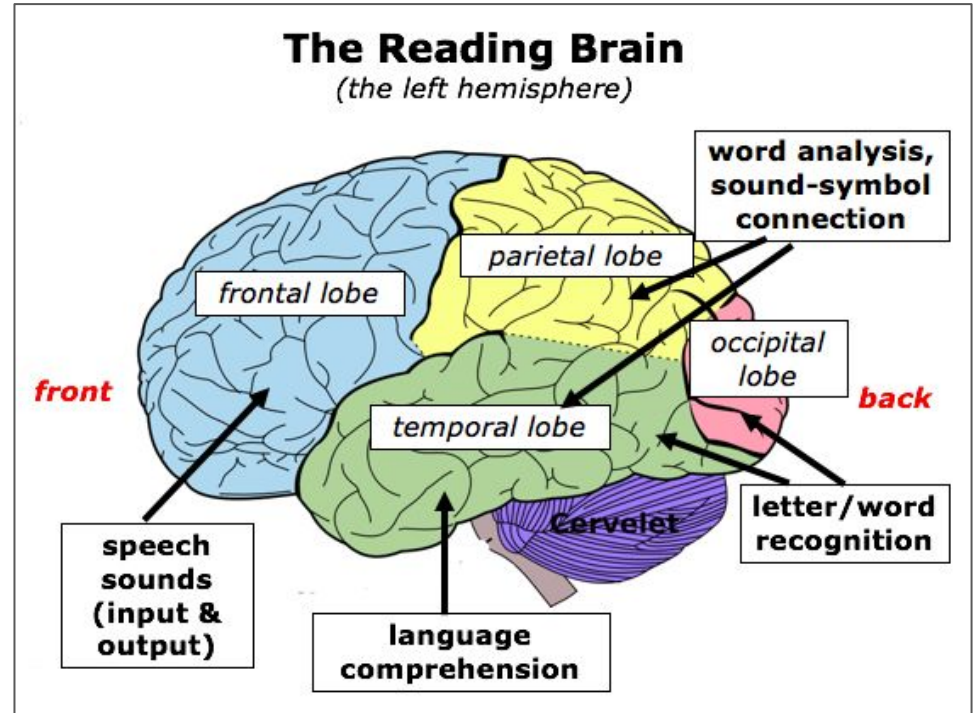
# TAKEAWAYS

## Organized into six themes:

1. *The teaching of reading is complex!*
2. *Common curriculum and instruction benefit students, but differentiation is necessary.*
3. *Curriculum and assessments must align to standards.*
4. *Students need access to a variety of texts & resources.*
5. *Communication within and across stakeholders establishes common expectations that benefit students.*
6. *Many questions still exist!*

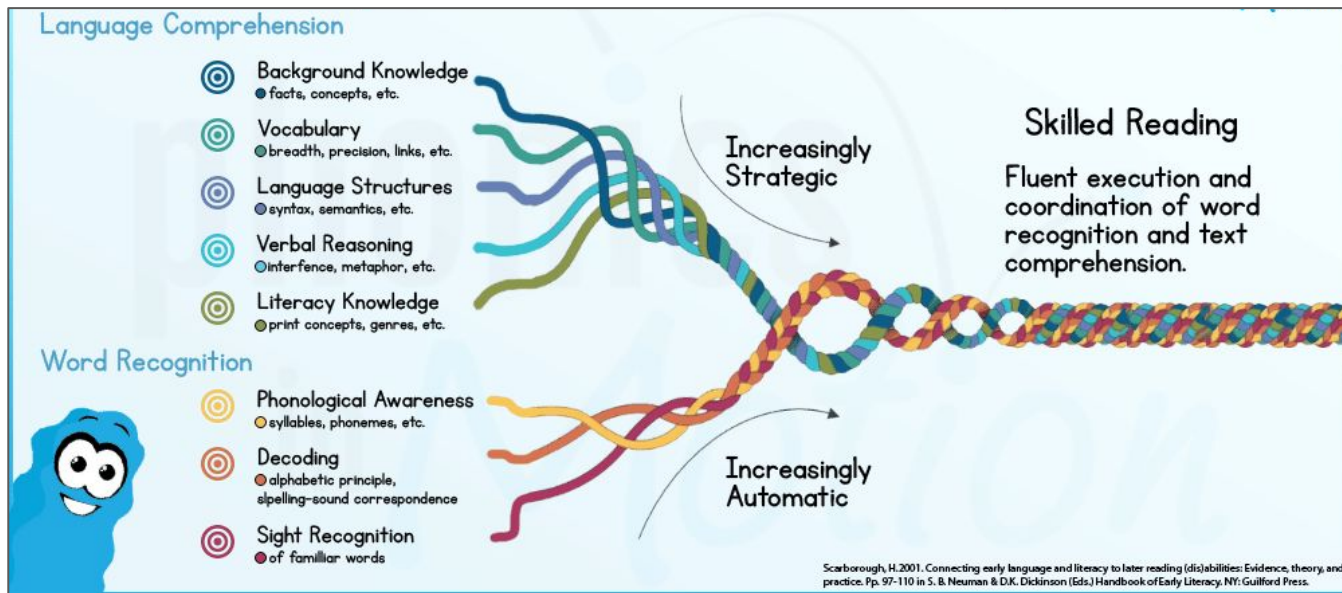
# TAKEAWAYS - THE TEACHING OF READING IS COMPLEX!

- The **science of reading** pulls from many disciplines, including: speech language pathology; neuroscience; psychology; pediatrics; and reading/educational research.
- The science of reading is **not** a curriculum, program of instruction, or a single component of instruction.
- The brain is not hard-wired to read; we must **change the brain's structure** to read, which involves several areas of the brain: ➡
- Most students benefit from a multi-sensory approach to reading.
- **Orthographic mapping** is the process used to permanently store words into long term memory.



# TAKEAWAYS - THE TEACHING OF READING IS COMPLEX!

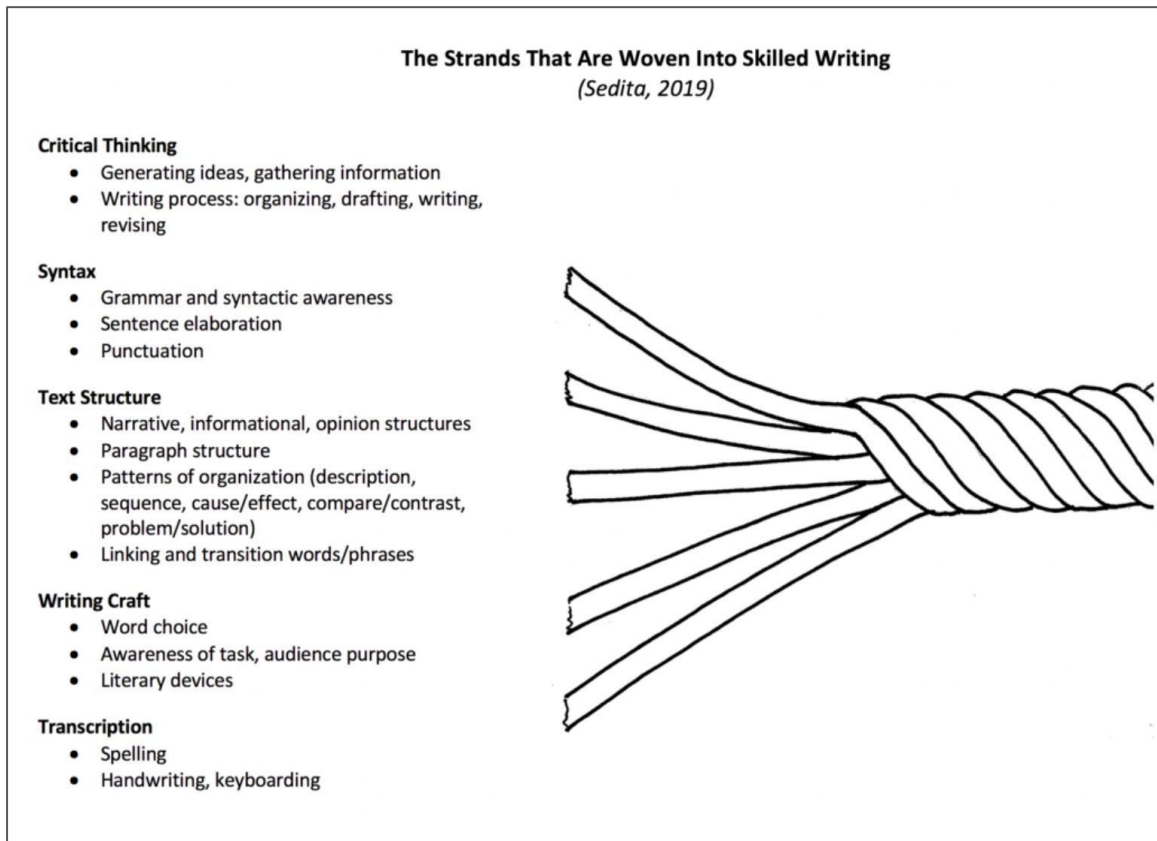
- **Scarborough's reading rope** identifies two main elements of reading and their corresponding strands; each is essential to develop skillful reading:



- Teaching phonics patterns include: hearing, reading, writing, automaticity, and transfer. **Explicit and systematic phonics instruction is needed**, however, utilize small group differentiated instruction for the range of learners, including advanced learners.

# TAKEAWAYS - THE TEACHING OF READING IS COMPLEX!

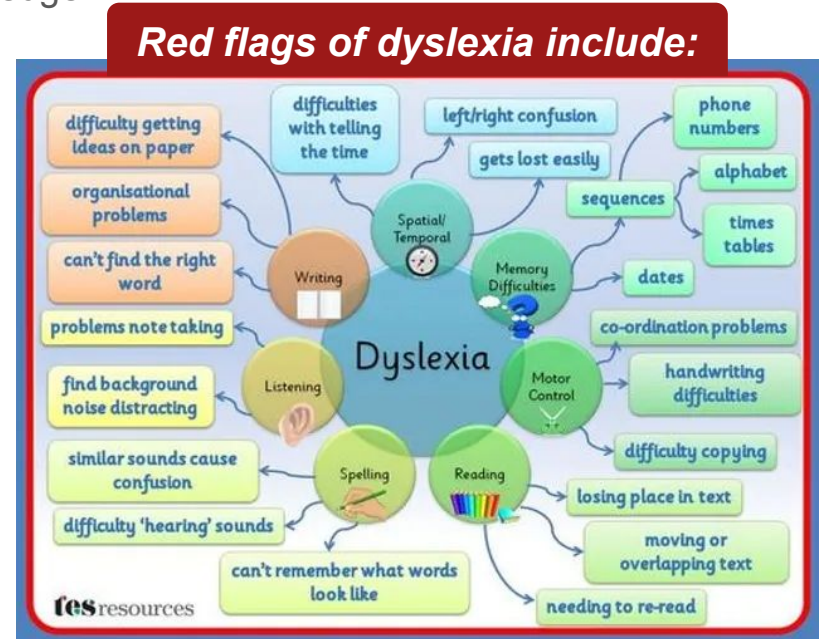
- Skilled **writing** consists of the following strands: ➡
- Students benefit when writing is integrated into the disciplinary content areas as well as the literacy block, including:
  - General comprehension
  - Awareness of epistemological differences
  - Builds academic language





# TAKEAWAYS - THE TEACHING OF READING IS COMPLEX!

- There are ***misconceptions*** about dyslexia.
  - It is **not**: reversing or inverting letters; more common in boys than girls; linked to intelligence or to vision; and outgrown.
  - It **is characterized by**: difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition; poor spelling; and poor decoding abilities. As a result, students may have difficulties with reading comprehension, and growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.
  - These difficulties are usually related to deficiency in the phonological component.
- Dyslexia comprises **about 80%** of all learning disabilities.
- Dyslexia is strongly heritable.
- Individuals with dyslexia are likely to suffer from generalized anxiety and higher rates of depression; children often show stronger emotional responses.
- There is not a single test for diagnosing dyslexia.





# TAKEAWAYS - COMMON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION BENEFIT STUDENTS, BUT DIFFERENTIATION IS NECESSARY.

- **Disciplinary (content) knowledge** correlates with reading comprehension. A content-rich curriculum builds strong background knowledge and vocabulary.
  - *On comprehension tests, students with strong background knowledge on a topic outperform students without the background knowledge regardless of reading ability. (Recht & Leslie, 1988.)*
  - Consider content-driven units in grades 3 and above.
- Writing can be integrated into disciplinary content areas and during the literacy block.
- **Read alouds** can build student vocabulary and comprehension, and they provide opportunities to support students' social-emotional skills.
- Students need multiple opportunities to learn new vocabulary. (See [Marzano's 6-step process](#).)
- Additional strategies include: partner reading, choral reading, repeated reading, echo reading (younger students), paired reading (older students)

# TAKEAWAYS - COMMON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION BENEFIT STUDENTS, BUT DIFFERENTIATION IS NECESSARY.

- **Continuity of curriculum and reading instruction** is needed.
- Explicit and systematic (i.e., sequential) reading instruction benefits most students.
- Each student needs **appropriate texts**:
  - Reading levels should be used with caution; texts should match students' learning goals.
  - Students benefit from both common and differentiated texts.
  - Students benefit from texts in a variety of content areas.
  - **Estimated reading levels can be used:**
    - Reading levels can cover a wide range for students (i.e, reading bands)
    - When students have the prior knowledge, the vocabulary, and interest, they can read texts **that are more difficult** than when they read an isolated cold text
- Provide time for **teacher sharing and learning together** to evaluate what is currently working and areas for growth.

# TAKEAWAYS - CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENTS MUST ALIGN TO STANDARDS.

- An **assessment audit** can help evaluate assessments and consider how they are meeting needs of students and fitting into the MTSS plan. Build on what works and revise what needs improvement. (Include a review of i-Ready, curriculum-based assessments, skill-based, norm-referenced, etc.)
- **Universal screening tools** with **thresholds** guide decision-making and may be followed by brief, efficient, and repeatable testing of age-appropriate skills or behaviors.
- **Review and refine the MTSS plan** to include some use of **norm-based cut scores** on assessments with entry and exit criteria for appropriate interventions. Develop interventions to match skill-level needs and determine if students are responding to tier 2 and 3 interventions. Annually review data to determine if interventions are working.



# TAKEAWAYS - CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENTS MUST ALIGN TO STANDARDS.

- **A single test for dyslexia does not exist**, but there are **red flag indicators** that may show signs of dyslexia.
- Diagnostic assessments should be used for word study (post transitional readers) in spelling, phonics, and sight words (for example, Dolch or Fry.)
- **Fluency is the bridge between word recognition and comprehension.** Assessments for fluency can include cut scores for fluency rate. Fluency assessments include three areas:
  - **Rate:** words correct per minutes; accuracy; automaticity
  - **Prosody:** inflection; intonation
  - **Expression:** prosody; phrasing



# TAKEAWAYS - *STUDENTS NEED ACCESS TO A VARIETY OF TEXTS & RESOURCES.*

- **High quality texts** and curriculum materials are a necessary resource for teachers.
- Evaluate existing resources and **determine needs for additional resources**, including:
  - Decodable texts
  - High quality, high interest texts
  - Texts in the disciplinary content areas
  - High quality texts for read alouds across K - 8.
- Assessments aligned to MTSS plan.



# **TAKEAWAYS - COMMUNICATION WITHIN AND ACROSS STAKEHOLDERS ESTABLISHES COMMON EXPECTATIONS THAT BENEFIT STUDENTS.**

- Support **parent knowledge** of reading in order to support student learning and growth at home.
  - Possible examples include: handbook; webpage; principal's coffees; back-to-school nights; newsletters; etc.
  - Provide specific ways parents can support fluency, vocabulary, spelling, etc., at home.
- Share curriculum, programs, and classroom practices with parents, including the “why.” This builds common knowledge that will support teachers’ practices.
- Discuss, share, and build common practices across classrooms. (This might include instruction as well as homework, grading, and assessment practices.)



# TAKEAWAYS - *MANY QUESTIONS STILL EXIST!*

- How do we continue to support our students who exhibit **reading difficulties and learning disabilities** in reading?
- How do we continue to **differentiate reading instruction** in the classroom to meet student needs in efficient ways?
- What tier 1 strategies can be utilized to support reading? What tier 2 and 3 practices align with tier 1 for more intensive support?
- How does the 6-12 program continue to support student comprehension in literacy?
- How do we **maintain continuity and alignment** of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices within grade levels and across grade levels?
- How can preschools support the Byram Hills reading program?
- How can we **build and support parent knowledge** of reading? How can we communicate the “why” of literary curriculum and instruction to parents?
- How do we (as teachers and administrators) make sense of current and new research when researchers themselves disagree?

# BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



# DISTRICT NEXT STEPS

## Literacy Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

*We will review our literacy curricular, instructional, and assessment practices, building upon previous work conducted over the past several years and using **the knowledge and experience of our K-5 faculty**. We will engage in a continuous improvement process over the next three to five years to reflect upon current practices, consider research and best practices in reading and writing, and revise/refine current practices and curriculum as necessary.*

### Specifically, we will:

- a. Share our takeaways with the Board of Education, parents, and K-5 faculty.
- b. Develop a three to five year plan in collaboration with K-5 administrators and faculty to identify specific literacy goals and intended student outcomes,.
- c. Continue discussions with parents as we implement the plan.

# DISTRICT NEXT STEPS

## *Next areas of focus may include:*

- Review **alignment** within and across grades of our curriculum scope and sequence.
- Evaluate the use of **research-based** instructional strategies.
- Conduct an **assessment audit** and review screening and diagnostic tools.
- Assess the need for additional **high quality and/or decodable texts**.
- Expand the integration of **content knowledge** in the literacy curriculum.
- Review the curriculum **alignment** between *general education* and the special education programs.
- Review the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (**MTSS**) plan and revise as appropriate.
- Consider the **continuity** of the literacy curriculum **beyond K-5**.

# HOW TO CONTINUE THE WORK!

## *Over the next three to five years:*

<b><i>Where are opportunities to do this work?</i></b>	<b><i>Who?</i></b>	<b><i>When?</i></b>
Release days	Grade level teams	Throughout the year
Faculty meetings	All teachers	Monthly (when possible)
PGPs	Tenured teachers' choice	Throughout the year
Learning communities	All teachers' choice	October - May
Superintendent conference day	All teachers	March 15, 2024
New teacher in-service course	Year 2 teachers & open to all	Throughout the year
Various in-service courses	Various teachers	Summer and during year
Curriculum advisory reps	ELA reps	Monthly & summer

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*Thanks to all the teachers, administrators, and parents for participating and collaborating in our continuous improvement process.*

*Creating the Leaders of the Next Generation*