2025-2026
Science of Reading
WCSD Academy Series

Washoe County School District

Learning Intention and Success Criteria

Learning Intention

We are learning about the Science of Reading so we can support teacer with using evidence based strategies in their classrooms.

Success Criteria

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- ✅ Explain what the Science of Reading is and why it's important
- ✅ Identify the key components of effective reading instruction
- ✅ Distinguish between SoR and older approaches like balanced literacy
- ✅ Describe how decoding and comprehension work together in reading

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Core Principles of the Science of Reading

1. **Reading Is Not Natural**
2. **The Simple View of Reading**
   Reading Comprehension = Decoding × Language Comprehension
3. **The Role of Phonemic Awareness**
4. **Systematic, Explicit Instruction**
5. **Structured Literacy**

- A term aligned with the Science of Reading, **Structured Literacy** emphasizes instruction in
  - Phonology
  - Sound-symbol association (phonics)
  - Syllable instruction
  - Morphology (prefixes, suffixes, roots)
  - Syntax
  - Semantics

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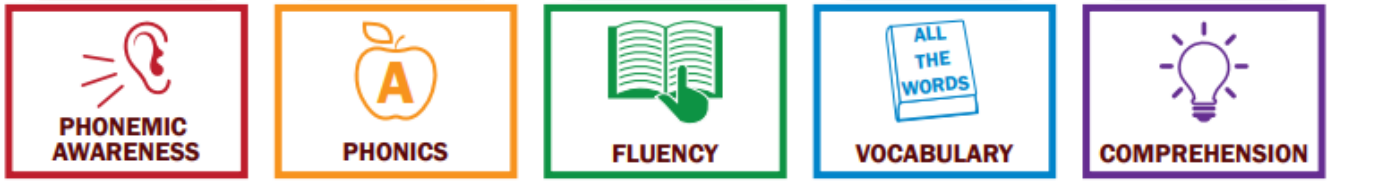
5 Pillars of Early Literacy

The National Reading Panel identified five key concepts at the core of every effective reading instruction program: **Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension.** Since the panel's report was released in 2000, these concepts have become known as the "five pillars" of early literacy and reading instruction.



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How is this different from what we've been doing?

- Many schools historically used "balanced literacy" or "whole language" methods that emphasize exposure to books and guessing from context. The Science of Reading challenges these by showing that explicit phonics and decoding skills are crucial for most learners.

Balanced Literacy developed as a middle ground between phonics and whole language. It aims to "balance" different approaches, but often **leans heavily on whole language practices**, with inconsistent phonics instruction.

Whole Language is a literacy philosophy that assumes:
Children learn to read naturally, like they learn to speak. It emphasizes immersion in authentic reading and writing experiences rather than explicit instruction.

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The simplified version from the Science of Reading

Reading Must Be Taught

- Unlike talking, reading is not something our brains naturally do—we have to learn it step by step.

Two Parts of Reading

- To understand what you read, you need:
- **Decoding** – sounding out words
- **Comprehension** – understanding what the words mean

You need both to be a strong reader

Sounds and Letters Matter

- Learning how letters and sounds go together (phonics) is one of the most important skills. Kids need to be taught how to:
- Hear sounds in words (like hearing the “b” in “bat”)
- Match sounds to letters

Teach It Clearly and Step by Step

- The best reading instruction is:
- **Explicit** – clearly explained
- **Systematic** – taught in a logical order

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Science of Reading Vision for WCSD

All students, regardless of background or ability, will become proficient, confident readers through evidence-based reading instruction rooted in the Science of Reading. Our classrooms will be environments where educators are equipped, supported, and empowered to deliver systematic, explicit, and engaging literacy instruction that builds upon foundational skills for continuous improvement of all students.

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Science of Reading

- By Spring 2028, all PK–2 classrooms implement daily, systematic phonemic awareness instruction using district-approved curriculum and tools aligned to the Science of Reading.
- Tier I instruction in all PK–3 classrooms includes explicit, cumulative phonics instruction using District adopted curriculum.
- All PK-5 classrooms include regular fluency practice and regular progress monitoring.
- All Tier I PK-8 instruction should include intentional, vocabulary and academic language instruction.
- Teachers across grade levels plan and deliver daily comprehension instruction using grade-level texts and evidence-based strategies.
- Students engage in daily writing activities connected to reading tasks, including opinion, informative, and narrative writing aligned with grade-level expectations.
- SB460 requirements

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Key Points

% of Students on Grade Level

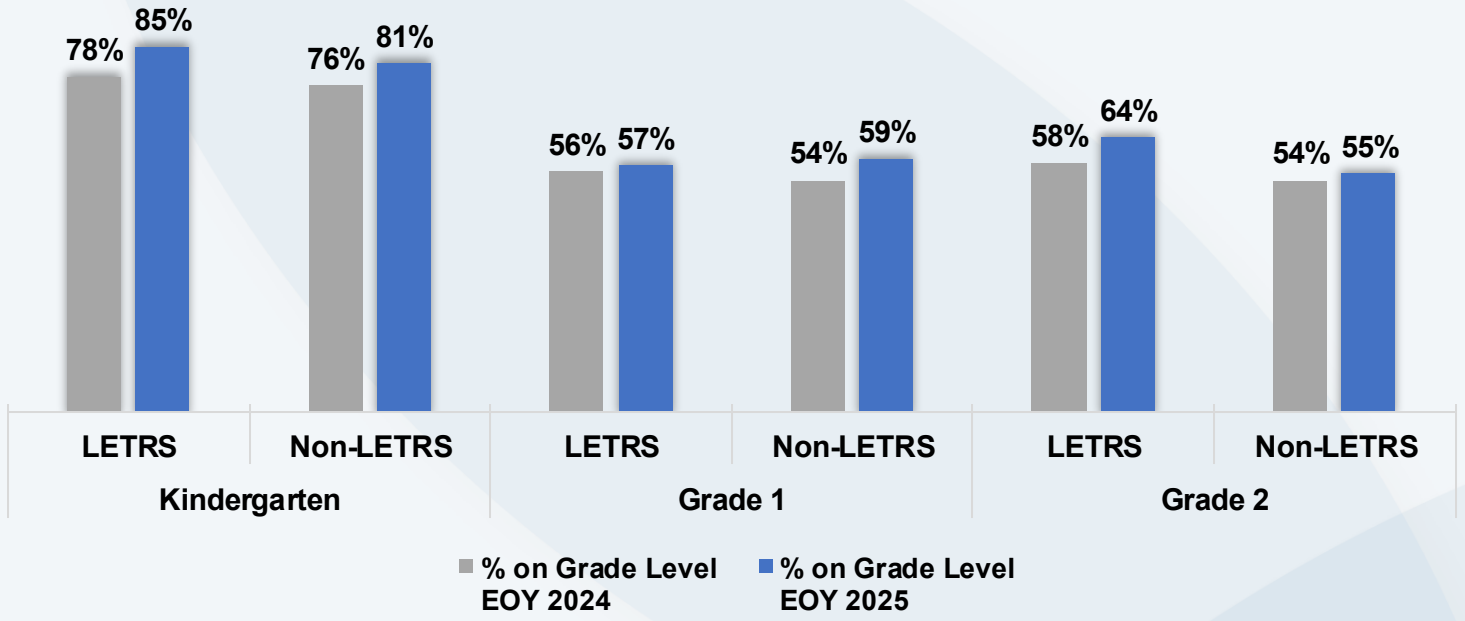
End-of Year (EOY) results for SY 2024 and SY 2025 indicate:

- Kindergarten students of LETRS trained teachers (+7) increased spring to spring at a **slightly higher** rate than non-LETRS trained teachers (+5).
- Grade 1 students of LETRS trained teachers performed **slightly worse** than non-LETRS trained teachers (+1 vs. +5).
- Grade 2 students of LETRS trained teachers **performed better** than non-LETRS trained teachers (+6 vs. +1).
- In all grade levels, **students of LETRS trained teachers began at a higher rate of reading proficiency**, likely indicating some self-selection into training.

LETRS Professional Learning for K-5

End of Year i-Ready Reading **On Grade Level** Performance among K-2 Teachers Trained in LETRS vs. Not Trained

Kindergarten		1st Grade		2nd Grade	
LETRS Trained	Not Trained	LETRS Trained	Not Trained	LETRS	Not Trained
+7	+5	+1	+5	+6	+1



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Key Points

% of Students on Grade Level

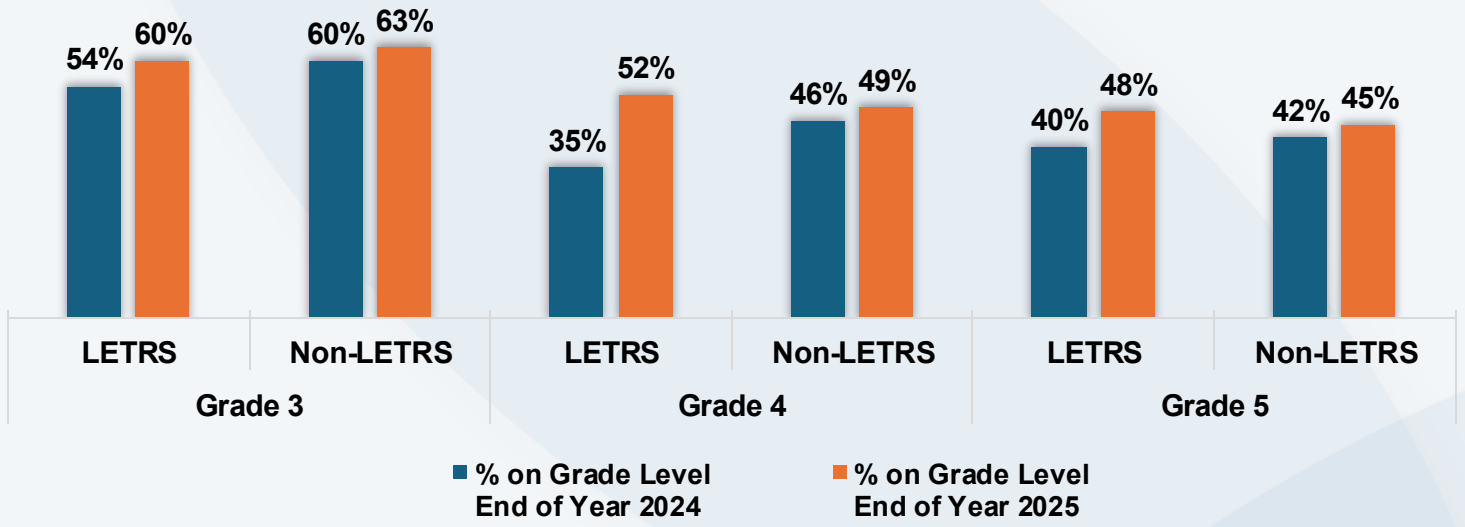
End-of Year (EOY) results for SY 2024 and SY 2025 indicate:

- Grade 3 students of LETRS trained teachers (+6) increased spring to spring at a **higher** rate than non-LETRS trained teachers (+3).
- Grade 4 students of LETRS trained teachers performed **much higher** than non-LETRS trained teachers (+17 vs. +3).
- Grade 5 students of LETRS trained teachers **performed better** than non-LETRS trained teachers (+8 vs. +3).

LETRS Professional Learning for K-5

End of Year i-Ready Reading **On Grade Level** Performance among Grade 3-5 Teachers Trained in LETRS vs. Not Trained

Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5	
LETRS Trained	Not Trained	LETRS Trained	Not Trained	LETRS	Not Trained
+6	+3	+17	+3	+8	+3



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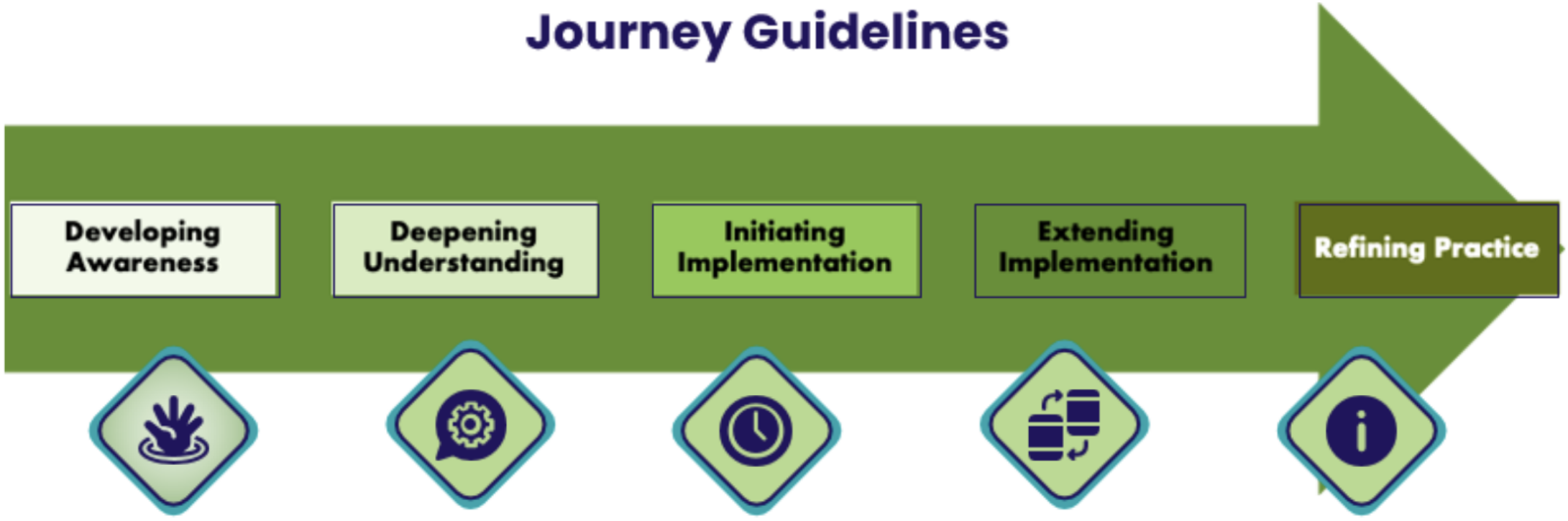
Where are you on your Science of Reading Journey?

Journey Guidelines



Developing Awareness

Exploring basic materials.
Open discussion with fellow educators.

Deepening Understanding

Base level professional learning and deeper reading/processing.

Initiating Implementation

Continuous change driven professional learning and beginnings of adjusted practice.

Extending Implementation

Full alignment of instructional materials within the Science of Reading related models.

Refining Practice

Full implementation of a SoR curriculum, framework and alignment across PreK-12.

Where are you now with Science of Reading (SoR) at your school?

Component	Introduced (I)	Expanded (E)	Transformed (T)	Notes / Evidence
1. Leadership Commitment	Leaders are aware of SoR and beginning to prioritize it.	Leaders communicate SoR vision and align plans/resources.	Leadership consistently promotes and evaluates SoR integration.	
2. Professional Development in SoR	Initial PD sessions on SoR held for some staff.	PD is ongoing and reaches most or all instructional staff.	PD is sustained, job-embedded, and results in changes to practice.	
3. Teacher Use of Curriculum Aligned with SoR Principles	Some teachers use SoR-aligned materials or pilot curriculum.	Teachers use SoR-aligned curriculum and consistency across grades.	Curriculum use is consistent, monitored, and driving student growth.	
4. Instructional Practices (e.g., phonics, phonemic awareness)	Teachers trained in key SoR practices and beginning to apply them.	Practices like explicit phonics are used regularly across classrooms.	High-fidelity implementation with observed improvements in instruction and outcomes.	
5. Use of Diagnostic and Formative Assessments	Some assessments aligned to SoR (e.g., PAST) in use.	Systematic use of assessments to inform instruction and intervention.	Data practices are embedded in teacher routines; drive instruction and grouping.	
6. Intervention Systems Based on Data	Initial steps to group students for targeted support.	Structured interventions aligned with SoR in place schoolwide.	Intervention is responsive, data-driven, and showing strong student response.	
7. Sustainability Plan / Long-Term Vision	Initial planning conversations underway.	Written plan for sustaining SoR implementation exists.	Systems in place for leadership succession, PD, materials, and monitoring.	

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What to expect for SoR Academy Series

- August 1
  - Overview
- September 26
  - Phonics and Phonemic Awareness
- December 12
  - Fluency and Comprehension
- February 27
  - Vocabulary
- May 15
  - Writing

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What are you expected to do with this information when you get back to your school?

- Support
- Feedback
- Conversations
- Professional Learning

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Did we meet our Success Criteria and what questions might you still have?

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August 1st Academy Survey

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