

# Early Literacy

## GLOSSARY/LITERACY CONCEPTS

These brief annotations are provided to support readers who may not be familiar with the academic literature of early literacy or the teaching of reading. For more information see *The Literacy Dictionary, the Vocabulary of Reading and Writing* by Harris, Hodges eds. 1995.

### **Alphabetic principle**

The foundation concept, taught as pre-reading skill, that each sound or phoneme of a language has its own graphic representation (letter or group of letters).

### **Automaticity**

Fluent processing of information that requires little thought or attention.

### **Balanced literacy**

Informal term for use of a wide variety of reading and writing instructional approaches including decoding (phonics) strategies, word recognition (sight words), and process reading and writing instruction; term used as a combination of competing approaches that created divisions in the literature and instructional approaches in the past. A balanced literacy program includes phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency practice, vocabulary development and varied comprehension strategies as well as attention to the processes of reading and writing and motivation to read.

### **Basal Reading Series**

A published collection of student texts, workbooks, teacher materials and supplemental materials used for developmental reading and, sometimes, writing instruction.

### **Big book**

Enlarged version of a beginning reading book, usually with illustrations and very large type, used by a group of students to read together or be read to by a teacher and learn about concepts of print and reading.

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### **Comprehension**

Understanding the intended meaning of a communication; accurately understanding what is written or said; the purpose or goal of all reading

### **DIBELS: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills**

DIBELS are five brief measures of the important skills forming the basis for early success in reading. DIBELS measure a student's ability to hear the individual sounds or phonemes in words, to decode words, and to read connected text. DIBELS are typically administered from pre-kindergarten through third grade, the time when these skills should be firmly established. Required assessment in Reading First schools.

### **Digital media**

Generally refers to electronic sources of information, including the Internet, DVDs and CDs, e-books and digital television.

### **Emergent literacy**

A theoretical framework that views reading and writing development from the child's point of view and examines changes over time in how the child thinks about literacy and in the strategies the child uses in attempts to comprehend or produce written language

### **English language learners (ELL)**

Students with a native or first language other than English.

### **English as a second language (ESL)**

Program for teaching English language skills in an English-speaking community to students whose first language is not English; also English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

### **Fab Five or Big Five**

Informal reference to the core elements in Reading First instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

### **Fluency**

Easy, clear, fluid written or spoken expression of ideas, done without hesitation.

**Graphophonic**

Connecting symbols (letters) to sounds.

**Guided reading**

Reading instruction in which the teacher provides the structure and purpose for reading and for responding to the material.

**High frequency words**

Words that appear many more times than most other words in spoken or written language.

**Independent reading level**

The readability or grade level of material that is easy for a student to read with few word identification problems and high comprehension.

**Learning center**

Area of a classroom or library dedicated to specific tasks, separated from others; a place where students can work on specific skills or activities in a semi-independent learning environment.

**Linguistic awareness**

A prerequisite to learning to read; the ability of a speaker/hearer to grasp and use the grammar and phonological knowledge used in a language.

**Listening**

The ability to attend to sound; the act of understanding speech.

**Listening center**

A place in a library or classroom or lab where a student can use a headset to listen to recorded instructional material.

**Metacognition**

Awareness and knowledge of one's mental processes such that one can monitor, regulate and direct them to a desired end; in reading, knowing when what one is reading makes sense by monitoring and controlling one's own comprehension.

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**Metalinguistic**

Referring to language in relation to culture.

**Motivation to read**

A factor in early literacy because children who view reading as a desirable positive behavior are more likely to learn to read.

**Multimodal literacy**

Using such sources as text, television, art, music, audio and the Internet to comprehend concepts.

**Phoneme**

Minimal sound unit of speech.

**Phonemic awareness**

Awareness of the sounds that make up spoken words.

**Phonics**

A way of teaching reading and spelling that stresses symbol-sound relationships, used especially in beginning reading instruction.

**Picture book**

A book in which the illustrations are as important as the text, with both contributing to the telling of the story; often the first books introduced to children and read to them.

**Pre-reading**

Activities engaged in before the reading act, to build skills, to explain vocabulary, to give background of a story or to have students identify purpose for reading.

**Print awareness**

A learner's growing recognition of conventions and characteristics of a written language; such as in English reading from the top to bottom of page, left to right of page, meaning of punctuation and spaces.

**Read aloud**

(v.) act of reading a story or text orally to an individual or group.

(n.) a designated time when a reader or readers read orally to each other or a group.

**Reading readiness**

Readiness of a person to profit from beginning reading instruction. This term is being replaced by *emergent literacy*.

**Rhyme**

Identical or similar recurring final sounds in words within or, more often, at the end of lines of verse. Used in early literacy as word play to introduce phonemic awareness and motivation to read.

**Shared reading**

An early childhood instructional strategy in which the teacher involves a group of young children in the reading of a particular big book in order to help them learn aspects of reading, including print conventions, reading strategies, decoding skills and predictions.

**Vocabulary**

Background knowledge of words and their meanings in different contexts.

**Word family**

A group of words sharing a common phonic element, root or base, used in word play and games with early readers.

**Writers/readers workshop**

Instructional strategy in which the teacher provides an intensive seminar on how to read and/or write. The focus is on the reading and writing process and sharing of products with others.