



The Transformational  
Schenck School  
Experience Articulated:

The Schenck School  
Reading Model



**F**or over 62 years, The Schenck School has been transforming the lives of students with dyslexia through the Orton-Gillingham approach to teaching reading. Students come to us at different grade levels – third grade being, historically, the largest entry point – with a wide variety of past school experiences. These school experiences often involve both academic challenges and questioning of self-worth. Schenck School teachers, through expertise, compassion, and dedication, help each student unlock reading while helping each child develop an awareness of their personal strengths. The Schenck School experience is transformational.

How is this transformational experience accomplished during a student's short time at The Schenck School? To answer that question, a team of faculty and expert reading staff developed The Schenck School Reading Model (TSSRM): an articulation of what is involved in the transformational experience of teaching and learning at The Schenck School.

The Schenck School Reading Model is the graphic representation of the **five essential elements** of the reading program at The Schenck School. It is a reflection of Schenck School instruction in the context of our intensive Orton-Gillingham remediation approach to teaching learners with dyslexia. The Model makes explicit what is happening in our classrooms throughout a student's time at the School.

In addition, the Model is grounded in and incorporates many of the elements of the science of reading that have been evolving over the past few decades, dating as far back as The National Reading Panel Report of 2000 – and earlier – and extending to the present day. The Model will continue to develop with the field of reading research, which has accelerated in recent years with the advent of fMRI technologies in the early 1990's and the growing fields of linguistics, cognitive science, neuroscience, psychology, and other relevant fields studying reading acquisition and reading interventions. The Model will be used in parent education and professional learning at The Schenck School.

As illustrated in the graphic representation, the Five Essential Elements of The Schenck School Reading Model are:

- Learning Environment
- Decoding & Encoding
- Phonological & Phonemic Awareness
- Writing
- Reading Comprehension



**LEARNING ENVIRONMENT** is the foundation of the Model and is, arguably, one of the most transformational of the Five Essential Elements for Schenck School students during their short time with us, given our intensive remediation approach. Our learning environment of positive, supportive team teaching in each classroom at every grade level is transformational for learners with dyslexia. In addition, this learning environment supports our diagnostic and prescriptive approach to teaching reading and writing.



**DECODING & ENCODING** or, put more simply, 'reading and spelling' are taught hand in hand at The Schenck School. Whatever is written is read and whatever is read is grounded in the

instruction of the logical structure and rules of the English language. *Decoding* is the ability to translate a word from print to speech generally using knowledge of sound-symbol correspondences or phonics. *Encoding* is the ability to produce written symbols for spoken language or spelling. Spelling and reading build and rely on the same mental representation of a word. Knowing the spelling of a word makes the representation of it sturdy and accessible for fluent reading (Snow et al, 2005).



### PHONOLOGICAL & PHONEMIC

**AWARENESS** (taken separately): phonological awareness is a broad term that refers to the ability to identify, think about, and manipulate parts of words including syllables, onsets and rimes, and phonemes; *phonemic awareness* is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds in spoken words. Phonological and phonemic awareness are the foundation of the alphabetic principle. The alphabetic principle is the understanding that letters and letter combinations are used to represent individual phonemes in spoken words, critical for beginning reading and spelling.

## FIVE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE SCHENCK SCHOOL READING MODEL

### LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Positive student-teacher environment
- Diagnostic, appropriately paced and cumulative
- Similar learning profiles
- Oral language

### DECODING & ENCODING

- Alphabetic principle
- Letter formation
- Syllables
- Decoding/encoding
- Morphology
- Oral language

### READING COMPREHENSION

- Background knowledge
- Discussion, reasoning, making connection
- Language structure: syntax, grammar & usages
- Literary structures
- Vocabulary/morphology
- Fluency
- Oral language

### WRITING

- Handwriting
- Written expression
- Language structure: syntax, grammar & usage
- Oral language

### PHONOLOGICAL & PHONEMIC AWARENESS

- Phonological/morphological awareness
- Phonemic awareness
- Oral language





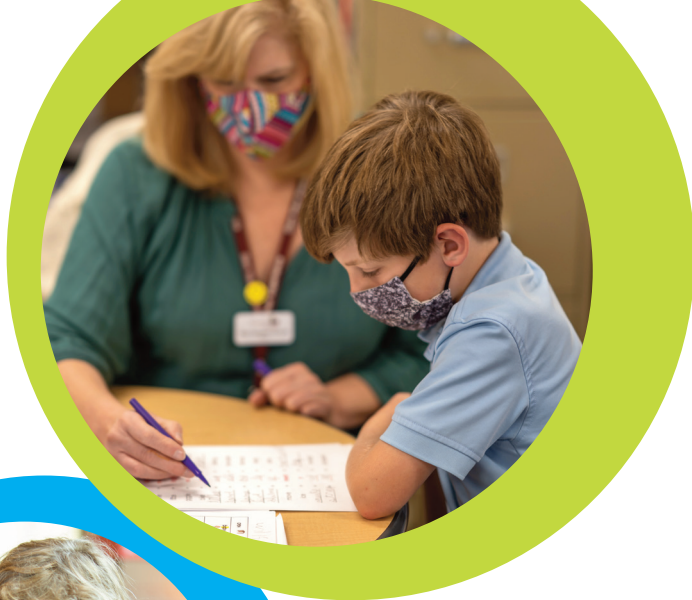


**WRITING** involves a variety of functional skills such as handwriting, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar. Grammar relates to the functions of words and how words combine to make sentences. It is the system and structure of language and consists of syntax and morphology. Written expression also involves composition skills such as planning, organization, determining content, and revision to express information effectively (see Progressive Therapy Associates; Graham, 2008; Westby, 2012).



**READING COMPREHENSION** is the ultimate goal of literacy instruction. Understanding what we read transforms us by explaining the world around us and transporting us to other worlds. Comprehension is not a single construct but a multi-dimensional cognitive activity (Catts, 2018) and is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language (RAND Reading Report, 2002).

As noted in the details of each of the **five essential elements** in the reading model graphic, **oral language** is considered to be a component of each of the elements of The Schenck School Reading Model. This reflects the importance of oral language in the science of reading and taps the verbal strengths of Schenck School students in their development as readers and writers.



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