

GROTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
MAY 8, 2023 @ 6:00 P.M.
CENTRAL OFFICE, ROOM 11

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kim Shepardson Watson-Chairperson, Andrea Ackerman-Vice Chairperson, Dean Antipas, William Horgan (remote), Matthew Shulman (arrived at 6:51 p.m.), Rita Volkmann, Beverly Washington (remote), Jay Weitlauf (remote)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Liz Porter

ALSO PRESENT: Susan Austin, Phil Piazza, Denise Doolittle, Clint Kennedy

I. CALL TO ORDER - Chairperson Kim Shepardson Watson called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. REVIEW OF APRIL 17, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: Antipas, Ackerman: To approve the COW minutes of April 8, 2023.
PASSED - UNANIMOUSLY

III. DISCUSSION RE: READING K-3 PROGRAM (Attachment #1)

Superintendent Austin noted that at the beginning of the year, teachers were recognizing gaps in children's literacy development, especially after the pandemic. The children's phonics and phonemic awareness were especially impacted. There has been Legislation from the State mandating districts to purchase a basic program or submit a reading waiver. Groton's reading waiver was submitted at the end of February 2023. Ms. Austin stated that in Groton, we believe that students should be reading at the end of third grade, we believe in a strong literacy program, and we have highly qualified teachers and tutors. The superintendent noted the following initiatives, which will be put in place in the next year:

- Professional learning for all K-3 teachers with a PLC book talk entitled, "Shifting of the Balance"
- Participation in a Master Class provided by CAPSS and CSDE as a 3rd cohort. The leadership and literacy team will be able to participate in 5 full day sessions. There will be a designated reading consultant and a retired Superintendent that will come out to the district to help with implementation and to monitor and answer any questions that may arise.
- Continue with embedded coaching with the literacy consultant with a focus on science of reading
- Selection of the universal screener K-3
- Continue to provide MTSS (Multi-tiered Systems of Support) for students who need intervention.

Dr. Piazza focused on the article entitled *Phonics First?* provided in the BOE packet and focused his comments on the importance of examining the research on this issue closely, making sure information comes from reliable sources, backed by scientific research. This article focused on common misconceptions often used in the conversation around literacy instruction. It also spoke to the importance of having a strong foundation of understanding on what is being taught (scope), how it is being taught (sequence) and consistency of practice and routines in classrooms for literacy instruction. This segued into the presentation by the district literacy specialists and classroom teachers.

Staff members in attendance introduced themselves. Kerry Leff (TR), Aly Merrill (TR) and Sarah Beth Stonaha (MR) gave an overview of the PowerPoint presentation regarding "*A year in the life ... Our journey to create a strong Phonics Curriculum for Groton Elementary Schools.*" Additional presenters were Aaron Ribchinsky (NEA), Amanda Chaisson (CB), and Corey Mott (TR). Corey Mott shared a video of how he teaches spelling.

Superintendent Austin asked for comments from Principals in attendance (Ryan Chaney, Seth Danner, Jamie Giordano, Christine Dauphinais, and former Principal Valerie Nelson), on their input on reading support given to teachers for reading instruction. Principals all addressed how parents can support children at home with literacy, and how the schools' outreach to parents provides parent engagement.

Denise Doolittle, Director of Pupil Personnel Service, gave an overview of *Specific Learning Disability (SLD)/Dyslexia* document. (Attachment #2)

Board members asked in depth questions throughout each presentation.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ackerman, Volkmann:

To adjourn at 8:23 p.m.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Catherine Kolnaski
STEAM Magnet
School

A year in the life...

Northeast
Academy Arts
Magnet School

Our journey to create a strong
Phonics Curriculum for
Groton Elementary Schools

Mystic River
Magnet School

Thames River
Magnet School

Charles Barnum

Agenda

- The Simple View of Reading
- Our Work
- Why?
- Looking Ahead

Teacher
Feedback

Committed to
the work

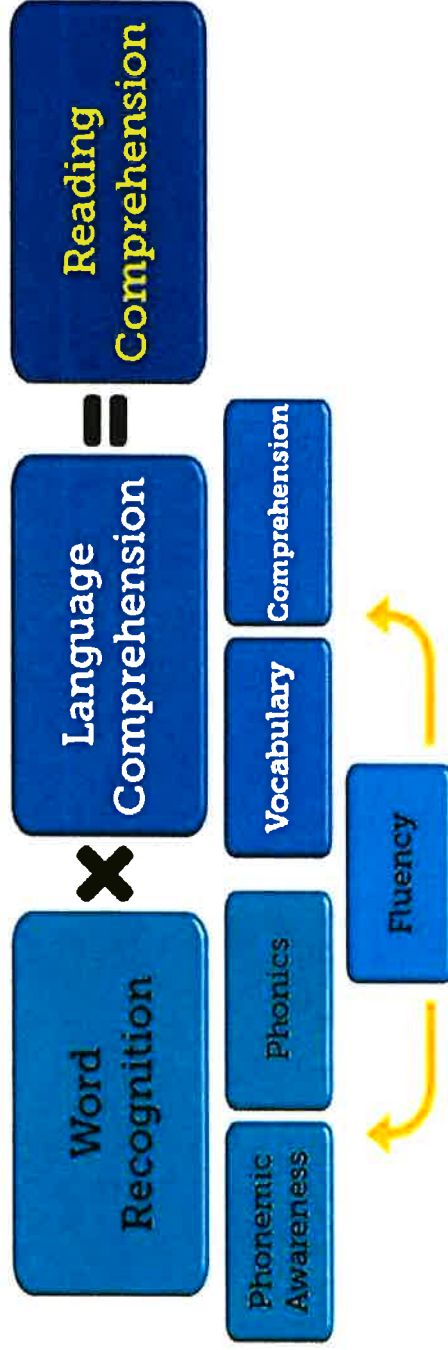
Frequent
Meetings as an
ELA team

Included
Administration

Trust the
research and
the resources

Susan and Phil
allowed for time
to meet and plan

THE SIMPLE VIEW OF READING



Scope and Sequence

Wilson

CORE Phonics

University of Florida (UFLI)

Teachers College

What we've been working on

Links:

- [Hegerty](#)
- [Shifting the Balance](#)
- [The Science of Reading: Literacy Look-Fors](#)

Professional Development

Hegerty: PreK-2

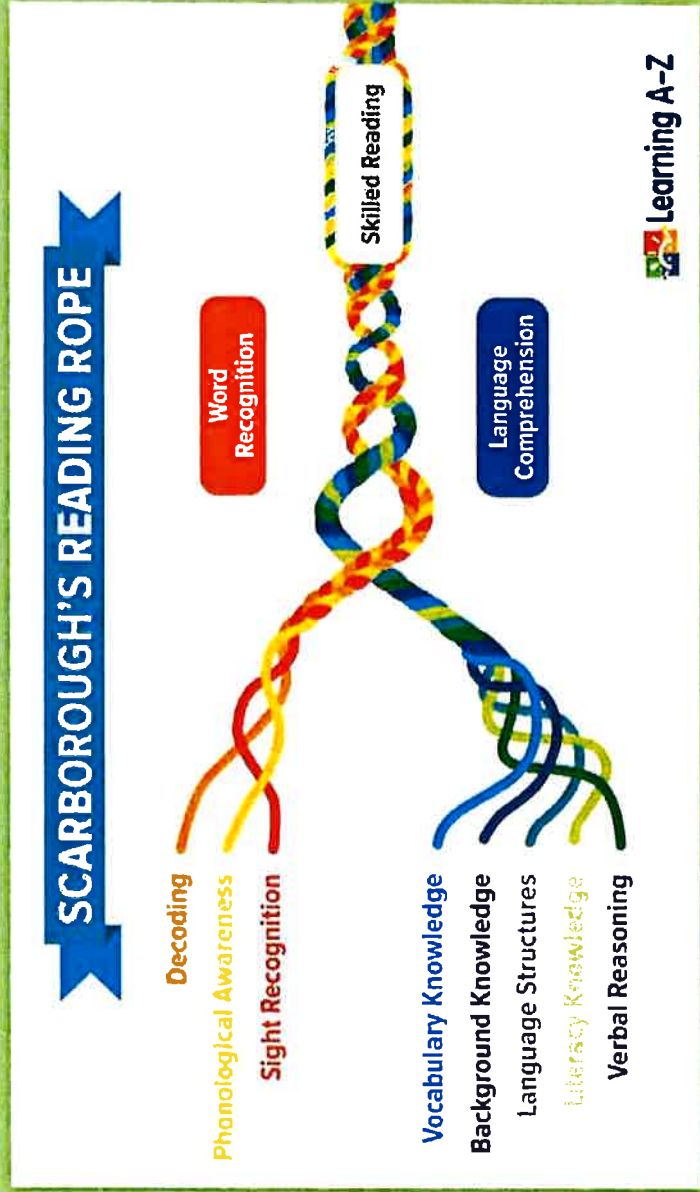
Universal Screener

Shifting the Balance

Science of Reading

- The Reading Rope
- Animated Reading Rope
- Rope: The International Dyslexia Association

Why we are doing this



June and
Summer Work

Curriculum review
with all K-2
teachers

Summer curriculum
writing

Grade 3 Scope and
Sequence

Looking
ahead...

2023-2024
School Year

Implementation PD

Shifting the Balance
PLCs

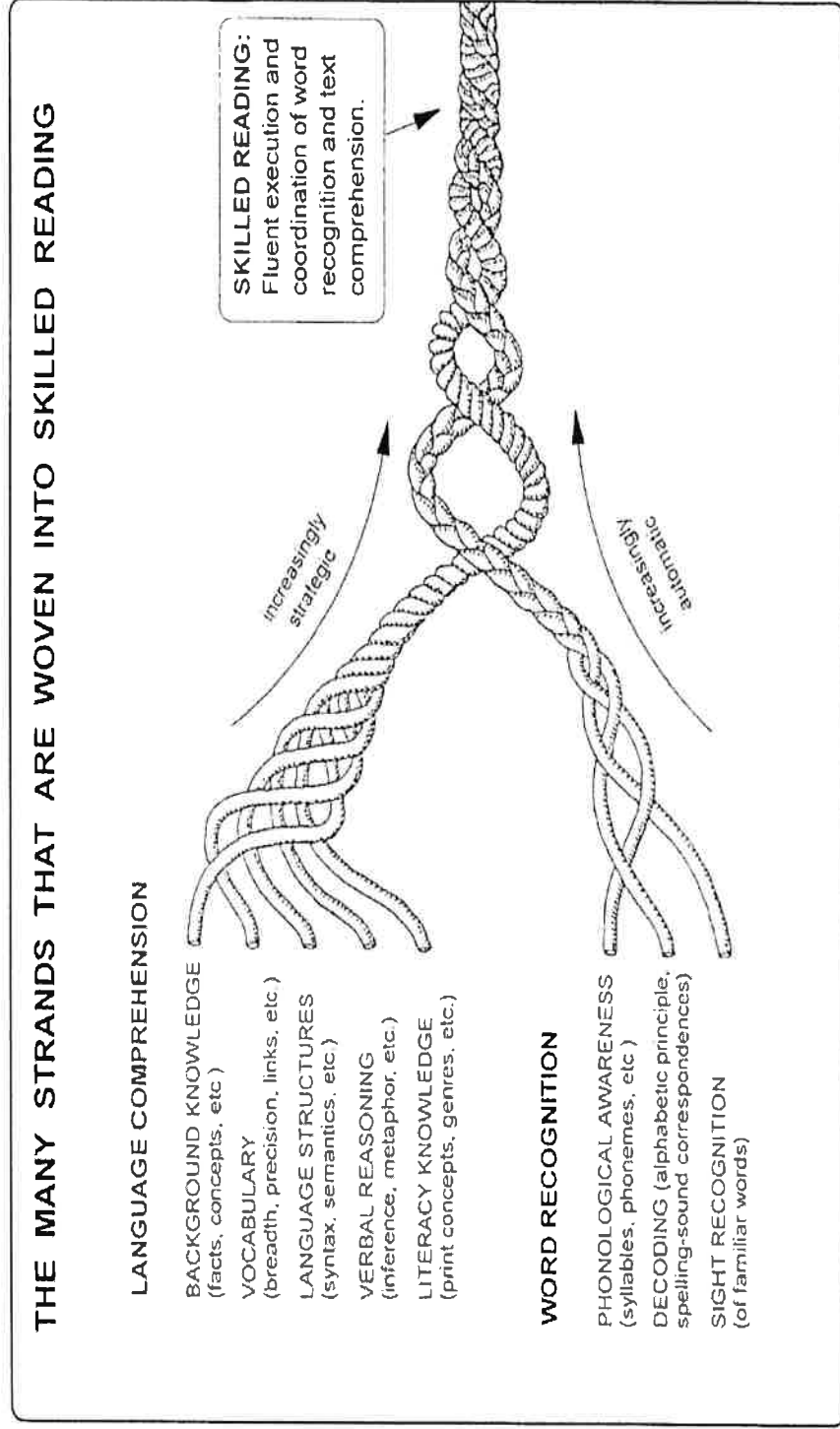
Imbedding
Coaching

Specific Learning Disability (SLD) / Dyslexia

CSDE 2022 Updates

PPS Department

Scarborough's Reading Rope



CSDE Working Definition of Dyslexia, Revised 2022

- Dyslexia is included in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) as a specific learning disability (SLD). Dyslexia impacts reading, specifically decoding and accurate and/or fluent word recognition and spelling.
- Dyslexia is neurobiological in origin and is unexpected and/or inconsistent with a student's other abilities often despite the provision of appropriate instruction.
- Dyslexia **usually** results from a significant deficit in phonological processing (i.e., a persistent difficulty in the awareness of and ability to manipulate the individual sounds of spoken language).

Essential Clarifications

- Dyslexia is **NOT primarily** the result of visual, hearing, or motor disability; an intellectual disability; emotional disability; a lack of appropriate instruction; cultural factors; environmental or economic disadvantage; or limited English proficiency.
- Typically, students with dyslexia have strengths in areas such as reasoning, critical thinking, concept formation, problem solving, vocabulary, listening comprehension, and social communication (e.g., conversation).
- Early identification and appropriate instruction targeting the underlying phonological, word reading, and spelling deficits that characterize dyslexia may minimize its educational impact.
- Effective, research-based interventions for phonemic awareness and/or phonics may bring some students with dyslexia to grade expectations in those areas, but the students may still have lingering difficulties in reading fluency, spelling, and/or written expression, which may require intervention.

CSDE Eligibility Criteria

- The student **does not achieve adequately** for the student's age or to meet State-approved grade-level standards in one or more of the following areas: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and mathematics problem solving, when provided with appropriate learning experiences and instruction.
- The student **does not make sufficient progress**, in the area(s) of concern, to meet age or State-approved grade-level standards, even with scientific, research-based interventions.

or

- The student **exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses (PSW)** in performance, achievement, or both, in the area(s) of concern, relative to age or State-approved grade-level standards that is determined by the PPT to be relevant to the identification of a specific learning disability, using appropriate assessments.
- The student **has been provided appropriate instruction** (i.e., explicit and systematic instruction in the essential components of reading, math, and writing, delivered by qualified personnel).
- The student **meets exclusionary factors** (i.e., the student's difficulties are not primarily the result of any of the following factors: visual, hearing, or motor disability; an intellectual disability; emotional disability; cultural factors; environmental or economic disadvantage; or limited English proficiency).
- The **evaluation is sufficiently comprehensive** to appropriately identify all of the student's special education and related services, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category.

Specific Types of Reading Disabilities

- **Specific Word-Recognition Difficulties (SWRD)***
 - Difficulties with real word reading, nonsense word reading, and/or automaticity of word reading
 - Broad oral language comprehension, including vocabulary knowledge is average or higher
- **Specific Reading Comprehension Difficulties (SRCD)**
 - Difficulties with reading comprehension that are NOT due to inaccurate or nonautomatic decoding
 - Often these problems are based in vocabulary/oral language comprehension
- **Mixed Reading Difficulties (MRD)**
 - Difficulties with reading comprehension that are based on BOTH work reading AND vocabulary/language comprehension
 - Reading comprehension difficulties exceed what can be explained by poor decoding

* Often students with this disability are identified as SLD/Dyslexia