



Early Reading: Skills, Strategies, and Support

Presenter: Beth Cosentino, Project Director, SPAN's NJTSS-ER

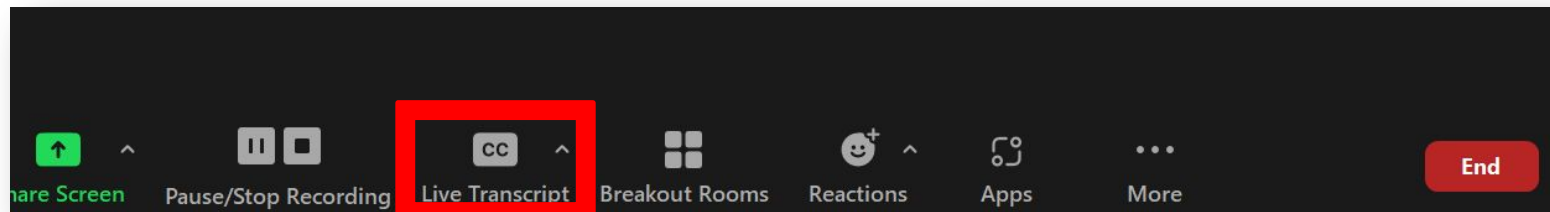
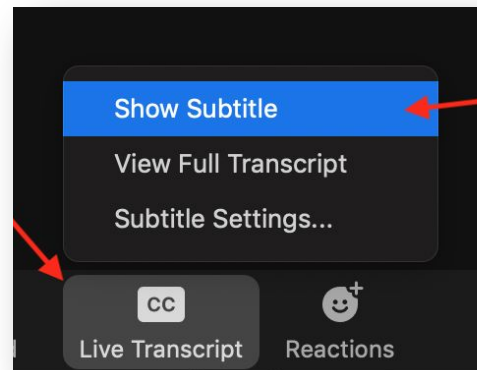
Date: Monday, March 23, 2026

Location: Springfield Public Schools and via Zoom

NJTSS-ER is a partnership between the New Jersey Department of Education and SPAN Parent Advocacy Network

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Meeting Agenda & Goals

- SPAN Parent Advocacy Network
- Poll
- The Big 5 Early Reading Skills
- Scarborough's Reading Rope
- Executive Functioning
- Questions and Reflection



Who is SPAN?

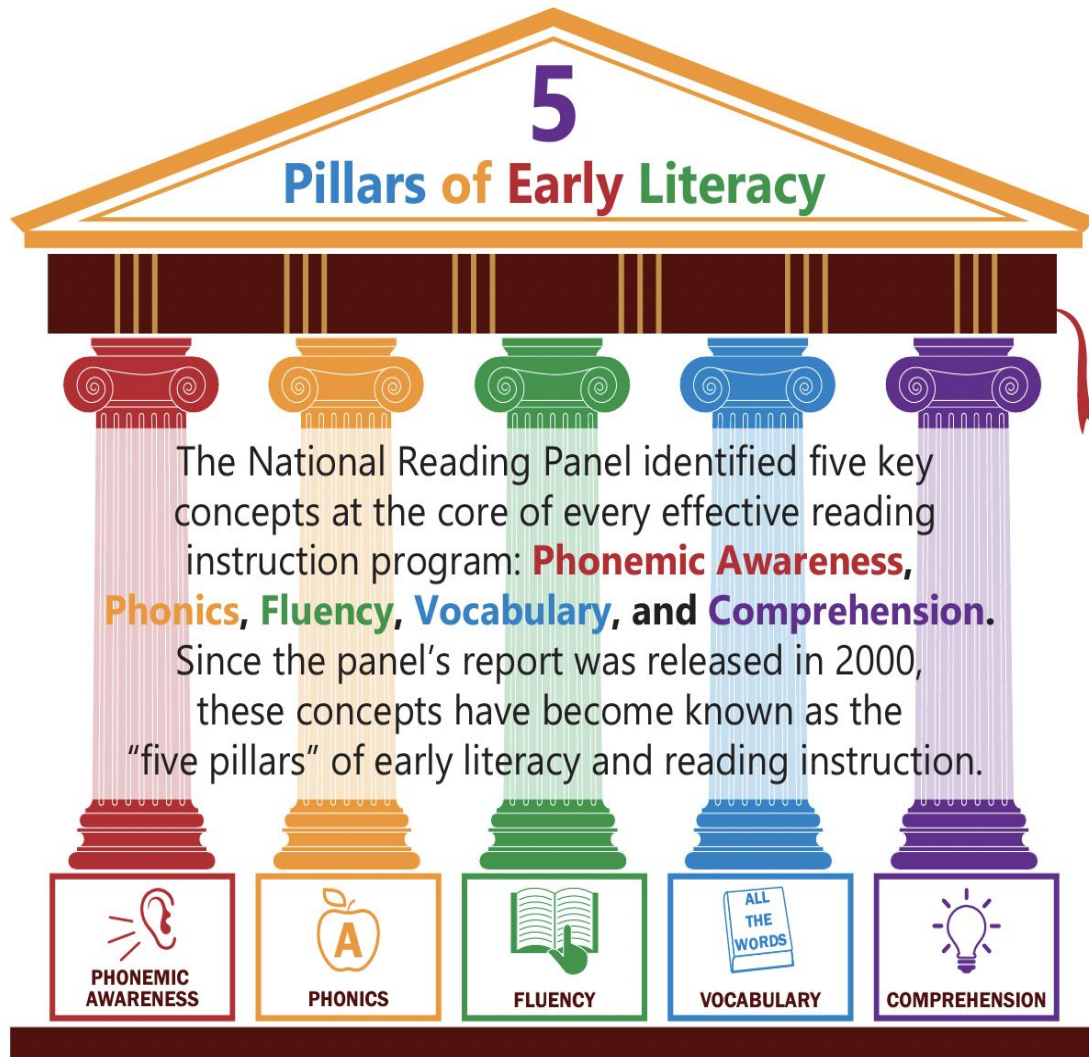


Since 1987, from a kitchen table to . . .

- Families in New Jersey and beyond have made SPAN their first stop for support and resources.
- SPAN'S projects and programs serve parents of children from birth to age 26 and women of childbearing age
- Over 40 local, statewide, regional, national, and programs
- Programs in education, health and mental health, human services, childcare, and child welfare.

Empowered Parents: Educated, Engaged, Effective





Phonemic Awareness

What is it? The ability to hear and identify sounds (or phonemes) in words.



“bat”
“mat”
“cat”

Phonics

What is it? The understanding that letters represent specific sounds.



/c / / a / / t/ = cat
↑ ↑ ↑ ∪

/p / / l / / ay/ = play
↑ ↑ ↑ ∪

Fluency

What is it? The ability to read smoothly and accurately with expression.



Vocabulary

Knowing what the words mean; how to say and use them correctly.



“Shake”



Reading Comprehension

The ability to understand what you are reading.





The 5 Pillars of Early Literacy

New Jersey Tiered System of Supports for Early Reading

The 5 Pillars of Early Literacy




Key Literacy Skills



The Big 5 for Reading

Phonemic awareness:

The ability to hear sounds, or phonemes, in words, e.g. "play" rhymes with "day"



PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Phonics:

The understanding that letters represent individual sounds, e.g. lwl lel ltl



PHONICS

Fluency:

The ability to read (at the "just right" level) smoothly & accurately with expression



FLUENCY

Vocabulary:

Knowing what the words mean; how to say and use them correctly, e.g. different meanings of "shake"



VOCABULARY

Comprehension:

The goal; the ability to understand what you are reading, e.g. "What happened in the story?"



COMPREHENSION

Check out the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports for Early Reading Project for more information on literacy:

spanadvocacy.org/early-reading/

or Scan the QR code



New Jersey Tiered System of Supports for Early Reading (NJTSS-ER):
Engaging families in science-based reading instruction and intervention is a partnership between the New Jersey Department of Education and SPAN Parent Advocacy Network

Scarborough's Reading Rope

THE MANY STRANDS THAT ARE WOVEN INTO SKILLED READING

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE
(facts, concepts, etc.)

VOCABULARY
(breadth, precision, links, etc.)

LANGUAGE STRUCTURES
(syntax, semantics, etc.)

VERBAL REASONING
(inference, metaphor, etc.)

LITERACY KNOWLEDGE
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

WORD RECOGNITION

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

DECODING (alphabetic principle,
spelling-sound correspondences)

SIGHT RECOGNITION
(of familiar words)

SKILLED READING:

Fluent execution and
coordination of word
recognition and text
comprehension.

increasingly
strategic

increasingly
automatic

Language Comprehension: 5 Strands

Background Knowledge

What a person already knows about the world and particular topics, including facts, ideas and experience; also known as “prior knowledge.”

Vocabulary

To know the meaning of a word and to understand the range of word meanings (breadth); how to use a word (precision) and how it connects (links) to other words or ideas in the text.

Language Structures

The arrangement of words, phrases, and sentences in oral and written communication. “Syntax” is the arrangement of words. “Semantics” is how words relate to one another.

Verbal Reasoning

The ability to draw conclusions without something being explicitly stated in a text (inference) or to understand metaphors (comparing two unlike things by stating one thing is the other).

Literacy Knowledge

The understanding of the concepts of print (letters vs words, reading left to right, spaces between words, etc) and genres (different types of books).

Word Recognition: 3 Strands

Phonological Awareness

The ability to recognize parts of spoken words; such as rhymes, syllables, phonemes (individual sounds).
Ex: the word bat has three sounds.

Decoding

To translate a word from print to speech utilizing knowledge of the alphabetic principle (letters and letter combinations represent the sounds of spoken language) and spelling-sound correspondences.

Sight Recognition

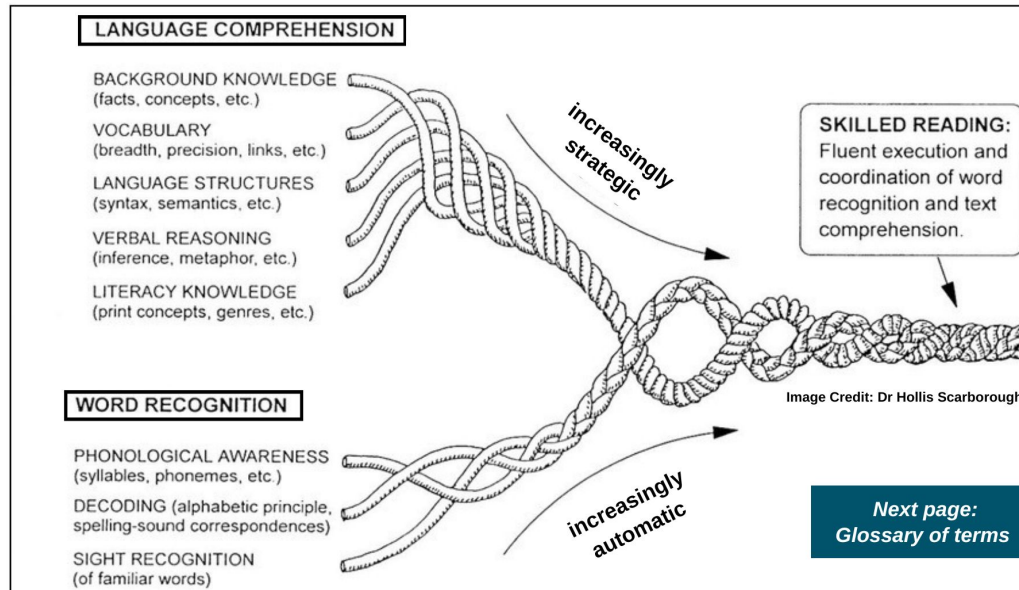
To be able to instantly know a word, and its meaning, without having to decode it.

Scarborough's Reading Rope

Building
your
knowledge

New Jersey Tiered System of Supports for Early Reading (NJTSS-ER) Scarborough's Reading Rope

The Illustration below shows the many skills that are needed to become a strong reader.



New Jersey Tiered System of Supports for Early Reading (NJTSS-ER) is a partnership between the New Jersey Department of Education and SPAN Parent Advocacy Network



For more information, contact Beth Cosentino NJTSS-ER Director at SPAN:
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spanadvocacy.org/early-reading



Scarborough's Reading Rope Glossary

New Jersey Tiered System of Supports for Early Reading (NJTSS-ER) Scarborough's Reading Rope Glossary

UPPER STRANDS

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION - the ability to understand written and spoken language.

- **Background knowledge** - what a person already knows about the world, and particular topics, including facts, ideas, and experience; also known as: *prior knowledge*.
- **Vocabulary** - to know the meaning of a word and to understand the range of word meanings (breadth); how to use a word (precision) and how it connects (links) to other words or ideas in the text.
- **Language structures** - examples include: the arrangement of words in sentences (syntax), as well as how words' meanings relate to one another (semantics).
- **Verbal reasoning** - to draw conclusions without something being explicitly stated in a text (inference) or to understand metaphors (comparing two unlike things by stating one thing is the other).
- **Literacy knowledge** - includes concepts of print (letters vs words, reading left to right, spaces between words, etc) and genres (different types of books).

LOWER STRANDS

WORD RECOGNITION - the ability to recognize words accurately and quickly when reading.

- **Phonological awareness** - the ability to recognize parts of spoken words; such as rhymes, syllables, phonemes (small, individual sounds). Ex: the word *bat* has three sounds: /b/ /a/ /t/. Blended together: 'bat'.
- **Decoding** - to translate a word from print to speech utilizing knowledge of the alphabetic principle (letters and letter combinations represent the sounds of spoken language) and spelling-sound correspondences.
- **Sight recognition** - to be able to instantly know a word, and its meaning, without having to decode it.

Interested in learning how Scarborough's Reading Rope relates to Reading Instruction? Watch the recording of *What Every Parent Needs to Know about Early Reading, Part II* from the NJTSS-ER Project video playlist.



Executive Functioning

“the management system of the brain”



THE OT TOOLBOX.COM

Self-Regulation

Working Memory

Attention

Persistence

Executive Functioning

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is a coping mechanism that develops over time and can be practiced for us to handle stressful situations.

Activities to help self-regulate

- Active breath: cupcake breathing
- Stand up and stretch: reach for the stars
- Deep pressure: bear hug



Executive Functioning

Attention

There are different types of Attention, but simply stated it is the ability to take in information.

Activities to help with attention

- Listen: Freeze dance
- Look: I spy



Executive Functioning

Working Memory

Working Memory is a skill that allows us to work with information without losing track of what we're doing.

Activities for working memory

- Matching: flip the card game
- Alphabet: picnic items to pack



Executive Functioning

Persistence

Persistence is the ability to stick with something.

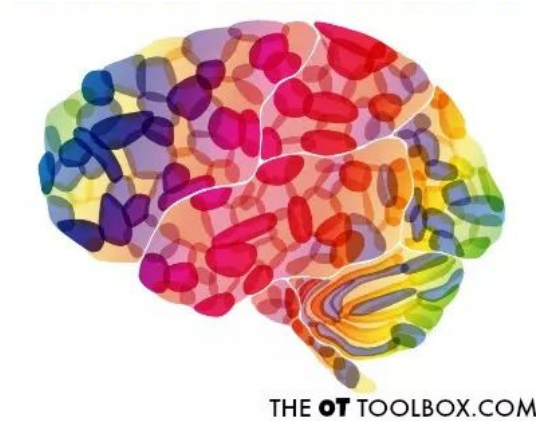
Activities to help with persistence

- Going in order: number dot-to-dot
- Looking & trying: building a puzzle
- Following instructions: baking cookies



Executive Functioning

“the management system of the brain”



Questions

SPAN's Online Library for NJTSS-ER

NJTSS-ER

New Jersey Tiered System of Supports – Early Reading (NJTSS-ER) Engaging families in science-based reading instruction and intervention is a partnership between the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Student Support Services and SPAN Parent Advocacy Network.

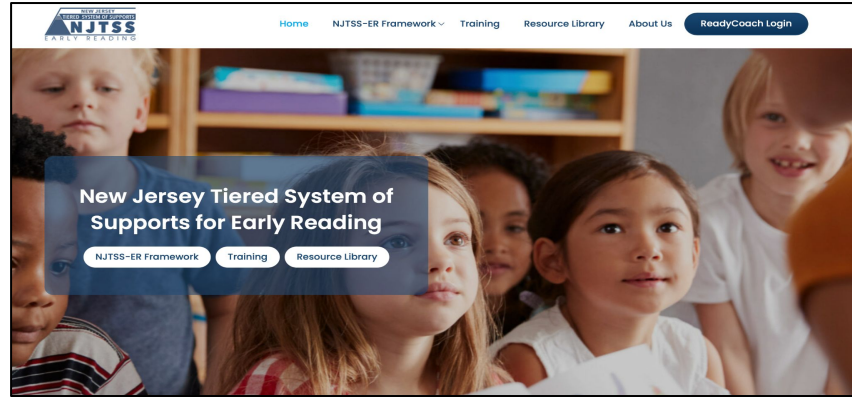
NJTSS-ER Resource Collection for Families is an initiative that promotes the engagement of science-based reading strategies at home and provides information on best practices for partnering with your child's teacher.

SPAN's Webpage for NJTSS-ER: tinyurl.com/3hk53za9

- Links to Online Resources for Early Reading
- Activities Pages
- Tip Sheet for Back to School
- Checklist for Parent Teacher Conferences
- Previous NJTSS-ER Presentations & Recordings



NJTSS-ER Trainings for Teachers



Rutgers University/NJDOE Webpage for NJTSS-ER:

- NJTSS-ER Framework
- Free Online Training Opportunities
- Resource Library





Thank you for joining!
Please fill out the Reflection Form.

Stay in touch!

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