What is the Orton-Gillingham Approach?

Hi, I'm Dana Harbert, and I am the head of the reading department at Eagle Hill School.

The Orton-Gillingham approach is an approach. It's a structured, multisensory, phonetic approach that continually spirals back so you're always reviewing. Basically, we're teaching students to learn to read by using what they already know and then helping them make progress in the areas where they need work, where they need to learn.

Ordinarily, in the Orton-Gillingham approach, we would assess a student we're going to be teaching. If I'm tutoring a student, I would first assess to see where the student has strengths — where the student is secure with phonograms, with spelling generalizations and rules, with syllable-division patterns, syllable types, all these different areas, and more — to make sure the student is secure in those areas.

And oftentimes, of course, you're going to be working with a student who isn't secure in all of those areas.

And that's where you decide what to work on and what to teach. You're always going to be relying on a student's strengths to help you teach the areas where the student needs to learn.