



# Research Foundations

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GRADES K-3



# Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction

*JillE Literacy* is built on **research-proven approaches, strategies, and practices** that teach the skills students need to become successful readers and writers.

## The Elements of Literacy Learning

**Research says...** **Literacy learning is complex.** It requires oral language and vocabulary, phonological knowledge, and comprehension skills and strategies.

Motivation and engagement also play a pivotal role (Guthrie & Klauda, 2016). Research consistently shows that literacy is most effectively nurtured in contexts where communication is valued, learning is purposeful and enjoyable, and texts are relevant and engaging.

*JillE Literacy* supports all elements of literacy learning through a unique combination of research-based instructional approaches, purposeful instruction in meaningful contexts, and engaging student materials that help teachers unleash the joy of literacy learning in every classroom community.

## Oral Language and Vocabulary

**Research says...** **Literacy is built on a foundation of talk.** When learning to read and write, children draw on their oral language, linking new textual experiences to their prior knowledge of how language works. There is also a reciprocal relationship between oral language and literacy. Just as children's oral language and vocabulary knowledge help them make sense of texts, the texts children read expand and enrich their understanding of language and vocabulary (NZME, 2010).

**Students also need to learn what is often called academic language, or the “language of school”** (Foorman et al., 2016; Shanahan et al., 2010). Engagement with a wide range of language-rich texts provides an effective context for academic language learning, “introduc[ing] children to unfamiliar topics, interesting and complex syntax, and rare or sophisticated words” (Paratore et al., 2011, p. 124). Teachers can help students develop “word consciousness” by calling attention to interesting new words and filling their classrooms with the kinds of activities that encourage students to think deeply about language (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2014; McKeown et al., 2012). Teachers can also embed support for academic language and vocabulary into a variety of instructional approaches and routines (Apthorp et al., 2012; Fisher et al., 2016).

*JillE Literacy* draws on oral language to support literacy skills while building oral language competencies in the context of reading and writing. Throughout the series, books and poems feature rich language and vocabulary that develop word consciousness. Teachers model academic language while scaffolding speaking and listening skills, such as asking and answering questions, expressing and justifying opinions, and citing text evidence. Students practice using academic language during Group Talk and Partner Talk routines as they explore a variety of texts and prepare for writing. In these ways, *JillE Literacy* creates a learning environment that values student talk, embracing the mutually supportive relationship between oral language and literacy.

## Phonological Knowledge (Phonological Awareness and Phonics)

**Research says...** **Phonological knowledge refers to the skills and understandings children need to develop to “crack the code” of written language.**

These foundational literacy skills include the ability to hear and manipulate meaningful segments of oral language (phonological and phonemic awareness) as well as a growing understanding of how these elements of language are represented in written language (phonics, word recognition, and word analysis).

**A large body of research demonstrates the critical role that phonological knowledge plays in literacy learning** (Duffy, 2009; Pressley, 2006). Research shows that phonemic awareness is a strong predictor of literacy learning and that phonics knowledge is also essential (Tunmer & Nicholson, 2011). Explicit and systematic instruction helps students develop these fundamental understandings, but phonological skills should be contextualized and incorporated into daily literacy activities rather than taught in isolation (Cunningham, 2005). Researchers also caution that this instruction should take place in a “low intensity” environment where teachers model and scaffold, rather than drill, and where they provide feedback that helps support students’ emerging literacy skills (Fisher et al., 2016; Foorman et al., 2016; Shanahan et al., 2010).

***JILLIE Literacy* utilizes an explicit and contextualized approach to building phonological knowledge. Explicit support is incorporated into whole-class and small-group reading, which provides a meaningful context for learning rather than teaching skills in isolation. This approach provides immediate opportunities for students to apply new skills to their reading, which also makes learning more purposeful and engaging. Skills build over time in an intentional sequence that incorporates ongoing review and practice. This systematic approach helps students acquire the phonological skills that provide a solid foundation for decoding, fluency, and reading comprehension.**

## Reading Comprehension

**Research says...** **While oral language, vocabulary, and phonological knowledge are essential to literacy development, comprehension is its end goal.**

The purpose of reading for meaning should be stressed from the earliest literacy levels onward. There is plentiful evidence that early interventions focusing on comprehension as well as code learning instruction have the greatest impact (Slavin et al., 2009).

**Reading comprehension is at the heart of *JILLIE Literacy* because understanding the meaning of text is at the heart of reading. From the earliest levels, the process of “decoding” the verbal and visual elements in a text is clearly in service to the ultimate goal—to read for understanding and enjoyment. The embedded comprehension support utilizes instructional practices that have demonstrated their effectiveness over time and across multiple studies. These practices include: exposure to a volume and range of texts, building disciplinary and real-world knowledge, teaching comprehension strategies, engaging students in discussion, teaching text structure, and integrating reading and writing. Support for each of these practices is shown on the following pages.**



### Reading Comprehension, continued

#### Research says...

Research shows that effective support for reading comprehension should include:

- **Exposure to a volume and range of texts**

As Cunningham and Zibulsky (2014) note, “research has unequivocally shown that children who read more have greater vocabularies and stores of knowledge, which makes reading easier and more pleasurable, which in turn, makes children more prolific readers” (p. 322). It cannot be assumed that competence in one genre or a single context will generalize to other genres or contexts (Duke & Roberts, 2010). Therefore, it is critical to provide students with books from multiple genres and interest areas and to help them log as much reading time as possible. ***JiLLE Literacy supports comprehension by providing a wide variety of fiction, poetry, and informational texts that expose children to multiple topics, genres, and text forms.***

- **Building disciplinary and real-world knowledge**

Comprehension of text requires integrating prior knowledge of the topic with the new knowledge implicit in the text. By deliberately including real-world and interdisciplinary topics, teachers can not only engage students’ interests, but also promote both content-area and literacy knowledge (Duke et al., 2011). ***All of the fiction books in JiLLE Literacy include relatable situations and authentic opportunities for social-emotional learning. Half of the Leveled Books are informational texts on a wide variety of topics, which build real-world and content-area knowledge.***

- **Teaching comprehension strategies**

Direct instruction in comprehension strategies, such as making predictions, visualizing, making inferences, and summarizing, has been shown to have a positive impact on reading comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002). But simply learning these strategies is not enough. Students also need to learn why, how, and when to apply them. Teachers must not only teach comprehension strategies but also provide opportunities for students to practice using them (Lai et al., 2009). ***JiLLE Literacy provides explicit instruction in comprehension strategies as well as teacher-guided application and practice in the context of reading. The instructional prompts and support built into the Shared Books, Poetry Cards, and Take & Teach (Leveled) Books help students build an expanding bank of comprehension strategies as they practice applying them to a wide range of increasingly complex texts.***

- **Engaging students in discussion**

A large body of research has shown that discussions focused on texts, whether teacher-led or between peers, play an important role in reading comprehension (Murphy et al., 2009). Two strategies with proven effectiveness are higher order questioning (McKeown et al., 2009) and discussion of comprehension strategies (Wilkinson & Son, 2011). ***Robust, text-based discussion is a hallmark of JiLLE Literacy. Throughout all texts and lessons, students respond to higher order questions, discuss comprehension strategies, and ask their own questions. These whole-class, small-group, and partner discussions get all children talking about multiple aspects of texts, building higher order thinking and deeper comprehension.***

## Reading Comprehension, continued

- **Teaching text structure**

Studies have demonstrated that explicitly focusing on text structure can benefit text comprehension even for very young students (Stevens et al., 2010). This instruction should occur within the context of reading and writing, and focus on helping students become aware of a text’s structure and use familiar structures to help them understand and remember information (Duke et al., 2011). ***JillE Literacy helps students build awareness of text structure from the earliest Leveled Books, in which students begin to use basic graphic organizers to support retelling. As more text forms are introduced, students practice using a variety of graphic organizers to represent text structure and organize their ideas in preparation for writing.***

- **Integrating reading and writing**

Research has shown that the integration of reading and writing promotes higher literacy achievement. Writing in response to reading supports comprehension because it makes students think more deeply about what they have read (Graham & Hebert, 2010). Reading also provides mentor texts that call attention to the choices authors make and which create a common vision of what good writing looks like (Graham et al., 2012). ***Throughout JillE Literacy, students write in response to poetry, fiction, and informational texts. At higher levels, the Leveled Books serve as mentor texts with explicit support for different genres, text structures, and literary techniques. Writing activities for every book challenge students to apply what they have learned to their own writing.***

## Motivation and Engagement

**Research says...**

**Motivation is highly correlated with reading comprehension, as it is with learning in general** (Duke et al., 2011). Not surprisingly,

reading activities that are pleasurable and satisfying have a positive impact on children’s attitudes towards reading and their desire to read (Cremin, 2010). Reading success also leads to a positive spiral effect.

**Indeed, one of the most significant influences on reading success is mindset**

(Dweck, 2006). Students with a *growth* mindset believe that they can be successful with hard work and effort (Dockterman & Blackwell, 2014). These students are motivated to take on challenges and look at mistakes as opportunities to grow (Quay & Romero, 2015). Conversely, students with a *fixed* mindset interpret difficulties as proof that they are just not good at reading (Blackwell et al., 2007). This leads to a decline in motivation and engagement when children face challenging tasks (Guthrie & Klauda, 2016). To support learning, teachers must attend to students’ social-emotional needs, including feelings students have about themselves as learners (Farrington et al., 2012).

***In JillE Literacy, the keys to literacy progress are practice, success, and enjoyment.***

***The whole-class resources create enjoyable reading experiences that allow all students to be successful, while the small-group resources support motivation with engaging leveled texts that help students achieve significant reading growth without struggle or frustration. Throughout the series, ongoing practice, scaffolding, and support for social-emotional learning help all children build the mindset that they can and will succeed.***



## Differentiated Instruction

### Research says...

**There is no mythical average child, and not all students learn in the same way.**

Students differ in many ways: their intellectual and social-emotional development, their language and background, their preferences for working alone or in groups, and, of course, their interests. Variability is simply the norm (Cantor et al., 2018). But explicit instruction in foundational skills and comprehension strategies, combined with differentiated instruction based on students’ needs, can help all students develop into the confident and capable readers they deserve to become (Murphy, 2010).

**Providing a variety of instructional approaches helps diverse students develop the skills needed for independent reading and writing while building a true love of reading**

(Taylor, 2011). Teachers also need to be prepared to differentiate to meet children’s needs (Opitz & Ford, 2008). Small-group reading instruction differentiates instruction by focusing on the specific needs of individual students, which ultimately accelerates their progress and builds reading proficiency (Fountas & Pinnell, 2016). Small reading groups are also a perfect opportunity to teach and practice the close reading skills needed for deep comprehension of texts (Beers & Probst, 2013).

**JillIE Literacy features a system of diverse instructional approaches that work together to build confident, enthusiastic readers. Essential skills are modeled during shared reading and read aloud sessions, further supported and practiced during small-group instruction, and applied independently during independent reading, writing, and learning center activities. Carefully crafted reading materials provide leveled texts and targeted skills instruction differentiated to each student’s development and needs. Through this robust combination of evidence-based approaches, JillIE Literacy helps teachers support all learners in becoming successful readers and writers.**

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