

Literacy Development – Key Stages

Questions and Answers

Is there a way to access this series for later review?

Yes, there is a link in the email, which will take you to the recording. We've also included printable notes.

How beneficial is it for children to listen to stories online? I'm specifically asking about the ones where the page of text and illustrations are displayed page by page.

There is a lot of research about the benefits of listening to stories - preferably with an adult who can bring the story to life and answer questions, but also online. There's a difference, however between just listening and listening plus following text.

We'll be addressing this in more detail in the next webinar of the series, particularly when we discuss the Reading Ladder and its importance for struggling readers.

Is there an assessment for The Big Five?

There are certainly ways in which these can be formally assessed, but we have also produced a range of screening tests, which later webinars will cover in detail. In the meantime, you can access these screening tests through your StepsWeb login and all screening tests include detailed instructions as well as the test materials themselves. Contact us if you need a hand finding them!

Do we know if there is much of a cross-over in struggling learners of dyslexia and ADHD-attentive and ADHD-inattentive (ADD)? Especially in the regards to working memory

There are many similarities. Working memory and auditory processing difficulties are typical of both ADHD and dyslexia. The same literacy teaching methodology is applicable to both groups. We'll be covering specific difficulties in more detail in the later webinars, so we hope you'll find that useful.

Can the brain repair itself over time, if training is given?

Yes, the research in this area also shows that the Visual Word Form Area can be activated, even in adults. It just needs the right activities. Incidentally, it's not so much a case of a brain needing to 'repair' itself. It's more that the right area for reading fluency hasn't yet been activated.

How do you see programmes like Reading Recovery fitting into literacy progression?

There isn't really enough space to give you a proper answer here, but research shows that Reading Recovery does not address the core difficulties shown by many learners in this category, particularly those who are dyslexic.

It is fine for those learners who did just need 'more of the same', but isn't a structured approach in terms of fundamental literacy skills. Many specialists in this field feel that there is not enough emphasis on the core processing and perceptual skills, such as phonological awareness and aspects of memory. Dyslexic learners also need a very tight structure in terms of building their awareness of phonic patterns.

We will be covering methodology as the Series progresses and this will provide more information on this aspect.

Will you be producing comprehension and reading activities any time soon?

There are reading passages and other reading exercises in the workbooks themselves, but we are hoping to build some into the online StepsWeb programme as well. However, all words introduced in StepsWeb are used in context, with a strong emphasis on vocabulary building and comprehension. It's interesting that those schools who measure comprehension and vocabulary have found that StepsWeb produces as much gain in those areas as in reading and spelling.

Bear in mind that StepsWeb is not designed to replace every aspect of your literacy curriculum. It is intended to teach the core skills involved in reading and spelling, but in no way replaces the reading, writing or oral language aspects, which are also crucial. However, StepsWeb provides a systematic, structured literacy progression, which enables every learner in your class to progress at their own level and speed. This does not replace your teaching in any way – but it does free you up for the important direct teaching needed.

We strongly recommend that suitable decodable readers are used with lower-level or struggling readers, to provide additional practice with core decoding skills. Also, one of the key issues with comprehension is reading fluency. There are several aspects within the Steps programme which specifically develop this aspect. The main ones are Word Flash and, in the workbooks, Speedreading. For struggling readers, we also recommend printable games, such as the Stargame, which can be very valuable for language skills, as well as reading fluency.

Is this Science of Reading?

Not sure exactly how to answer this one! The 'Science of Reading' approach which is popular at the moment is a focus on some aspects of research into how literacy develops, which is exactly what we are covering here. However, one issue in this field is the difficulty of interpreting research findings in a wider context, so we have taken care to show how each aspect of research affects a child's literacy development and how we use research to inform our understanding of teaching methodology.

When we cover methodology in more detail, we will be clarifying some of the modern research and how best to use that research in our teaching.

Answers to Sounds Quiz questions

seat **3 sounds** **s – ea – t**

box **4 sounds** **b – o – ck – s** (excuse the spelling changing, but there's no other way of representing the individual sounds we can hear in this word – see note below)

quack **4 sounds** **q – u – a – ck**

The first one is pretty uncontentious, but we've deliberately included two which will cause debate! Think of it in this way:

box

How many sounds in sock?	-	s – o – ck	3 sounds
Make sock into socks	-	s – o – ck – s	4 sounds
Spell 'box' as it sounds	-	b – o – ck – s	4 sounds

'Socks' rhymes with 'box'. If 'socks' has 4 sounds, then so has 'box'. The only reason we don't see this is that we are distracted by the spelling of the word. The reality is that 'x' is the only letter which can have two sounds.

quack

This may be contentious to people who teach 'qu' as one unit. Yes, in English it is one 'unit' (usually a blend, but sometimes a digraph), but it's still often made of two sounds. See the following examples:



queen	q – u – ee – n	(‘qu’ as a blend)
quiche	qu – i – che	(‘qu’ as a digraph – word is from the French, who don't pronounce the ‘u’)

Many teachers regard 'qu' as one sound because they're used to the fact that 'q' always goes with 'u'. Actually, with words from other languages, it doesn't always!

burqa **b – ur – q – a**

Feel free to get in contact if you have comments or questions – your feedback is always welcome and we will endeavour to incorporate any important suggestions or questions into future webinars in this Series.