

HOW WE TEACH READING AT WEAVER CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER, INC.

At the Weaver Child Development Center, we are committed to introducing and supporting every child with the ability to read. Learning to read is an essential and exciting skill. Reading brings the gift of success and a joy to life.

As a staff, we are learning more about what research says about how children learn to read. The research that we're learning about and implementing is called the Science of Reading.

When We Know Better, We Do Better!

Decades of research have determined that reading occurs in a specific way in the brain in all people. It does not occur naturally the way that speech does. The process must be taught. It is a process of building neuro-pathways in the brain that links sounds of speech to written symbols or letters. The strings of letters are attached to meaning, and then those "letter strings with meaning" are stored in the brain's "letterbox" for later retrieval that is instantaneous and effortless. This process is called orthographic mapping and it is our goal to help our students build a giant "letterbox" of instantly retrievable words. That translates into fluent reading and subsequent comprehension. Guessing at words based on context does not aid in orthographic mapping, phonics decoding does.

Our Training

The primary Weaver teaching staff has undergone intensive training in the Orton-Gillingham approach to reading through the Institute for Multi-sensory Education: IMSE.

Orton-Gillingham is a sequential, multi-sensory approach to teach literacy. IMSE's program breaks reading and writing into smaller skills, and builds on them.

The Science of Reading

"The body of work referred to as the "science of reading" is not an ideology, a philosophy, a political agenda, a one-size-fits-all approach, a program of instruction, nor a specific component of instruction. It is the emerging consensus from many related disciplines, based on literally thousands of studies, supported by hundreds of millions of research dollars, conducted across the world in many languages. These studies have revealed a great deal about how we learn to read, what goes wrong when students don't learn, and what kind of instruction is most likely to work the best for the most students."

- Dr. Louisa Moats

Points of Research

Code Emphasis in Primary Grades: This means that grades K-3 will focus on acquiring the skills to crack the code of our alphabet to the speech sounds in English. (There are 44 speech sounds in English and 150 ways to read and spell them!) Kids must first learn to decode/sound-out words before they can understand the meaning of text, therefore, we will emphasize instruction in “cracking the code” in grades K-3.

Explicit and Systematic Phonics Instruction: We have an order or continuum of phonics skills, progressing from simple to complex, that will be followed. Students will progress through the continuum as they master skills. In third grade, word study will continue with more grammar and morphology (learning about word parts such as Greek and Latin roots).

Early Intervention: If we see any signs that your child may be struggling with the foundational skill of reading, we will not take a “wait and see” approach; we will immediately implement interventions and monitor their progress. The best solution to the problem of reading failure is early identification and intervention.

Phonemic Awareness: This is the ability to get to the individual sounds in words by listening and to identify and manipulate this sounds orally. This is a necessary foundation.

Decodable Readers: Our early readers will be working with decodable readers. These are books or passages that only include words that the students can “decode” (sound-out) according to the skills they have been taught thus far. Our kids need practice with the phonics skills they are learning and these books and passages provide that practice.

Assessments: Students will be assessed using diagnostic assessments in letter and letter sound recognition, letter formation, word reading, and nonsense word reading to find out areas in the continuum of phonics skills in which they need help. In the later grades, the Oral Reading Fluency rate will be assessed. This is a nationally normed one-minute assessment that gives us a good indication of how easy or difficult reading is for your child.

Knowledge Building and Vocabulary: Research has indicated that reading comprehension is closely connected to the background knowledge we have on a topic we’re reading about and by understanding the vocabulary contained in the text.

Comprehension: The ultimate goal of all reading instruction is for students to understand what they read. The model of The Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer (1986) demonstrates that reading comprehension occurs only when students have both Decoding/Word Recognition Skills and Language Comprehension skills. Children need the essential skills to get the words off the page as well as knowledge, vocabulary, and a good understanding of how our language works in order to comprehend what they read.

* The above information and wording was borrowed from Big Horn Elementary located in Sheridan, WY.

Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *Remedial and special education, 7*(1), 6-10.