

Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties

A professional learning series presented by David Kilpatrick, Ph.D.

Module 2 Session 5

*Sponsored by the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) and created in collaboration with
Specific Learning Disability Specialists Jill Marshall and Veronica Fiedler*



COLORADO
Department of Education

Module 2: Current Approaches to Reading Instruction: Why Many Learners still Struggle

Session 5: The Phonics Approach to Reading: Strengths and Limitations

Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties

Objective:

Through engagement in this series of 13 on-demand webinars, participants will understand the current research, implications, and the essential elements necessary for assessing, preventing, and overcoming reading difficulties.



ASSESS



PREVENT



OVERCOME

Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties

Webinar Series Modules

Module 1: Reading Research and the Research to Practice Gap

Module 2: Current Approaches: Why Many Learners Still Struggle

Module 3: The Simple View Of Reading

Module 4: Word-Level Reading

Module 5: Reading Comprehension

Module 6: Introduction to Reading Assessment; Assessing Phonological Skills

Module 7: Assessing Phonics Skills

Module 8: Assessing Word Identification and Reading Fluency

Module 9: Assessing Reading Comprehension and Related Skills

Module 10: Effective Approaches for Preventing Reading Difficulties

Module 11: Effective Interventions for Reading Difficulties

Module 12: Case Examples of Reading Disabilities

Module 13: Specific Learning Disability Identification

Module 2 Overview

Module 2:

Current Approaches to Reading Instruction: Why Many Learners Still Struggle

2.1 A Very Brief History of Reading Instruction

2.2 Why Current Reading Instruction Doesn't Work for Many

2.3 Visual Memory Theory of Reading

2.4 Three-Cueing System Theory of Reading

2.5 Phonics- Strengths and Limitations

Learning Intentions



Module 2 Session 5: The Phonics Approach to Reading: Strengths and Limitations

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ Describe the phonics approach to reading
- ✓ Indicate why letter-sound knowledge and “statistical learning” are essential for reading an alphabet-based writing system
- ✓ Understand the central but limited role of phonics in reading
- ✓ Understand why the phonics approach does not help close the gap with a substantial portion of weak readers

The Phonics Approach to Reading

- Focus is on learning letter-sound relationships
- Various types of phonics instruction
 - Synthetic, analytic, embedded
 - Synthetic more popular
- Extensive research over four decades shows better results than whole word or three-cueing approaches
- English has many irregular words but is not random
 - Otherwise, sat, cat, mat, hat could be spelled as random sequences rtq , mrw, ztz
- Phonics focuses on the consistencies of spellings

The Phonics Approach to Reading

- Despite the consistently superior results to the three-cueing and whole word approaches, it has limits
 1. For the top two thirds of readers, the benefits tend to “wash out” by 3rd to 4th grade
 - However, the bottom third show ongoing benefit over time
 2. Too many weak readers never “catch up” with phonics
 3. A percentage of weak readers do not seem able to learn via phonics
 4. There is no built-in mechanism or theory about fluency and building the sight vocabulary

The Phonological-Core Deficit

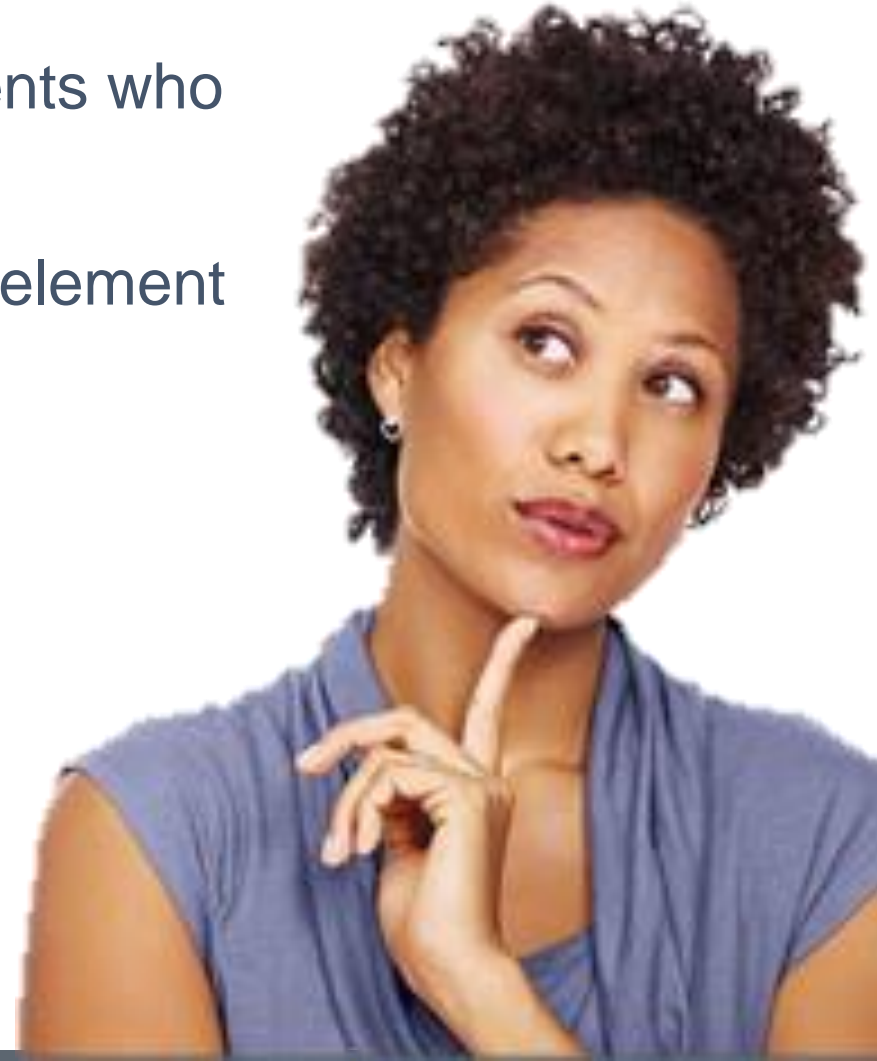
- The “phonological-core deficit” is the primary reason students struggle in word-level reading (covered in a later module)
- It encompasses one or more of five skills
 - Phonological/phonemic awareness
 - Phonemic blending
 - Rapid automatized naming
 - Phonological working memory
 - Nonsense-word reading
- Depending on the level of severity of the phonological-core deficit, there may be roughly three levels of response to phonics-based instruction
 - (And you know all these students!)

Phonics and the Phonological-Core Deficit

- Consider the bottom end of the continuum of phonological skills and the impact on phonics instruction:
 - Mild phonological issues
 - These students typically develop the phonemic-level skills they need for reading as a result of phonics instruction
 - They would have done this with a non-phonetic reading approach
 - Moderate phonological issues
 - These students typically develop good phonics skills but limited generalization to sight word acquisition and fluency
 - More severe phonological issues
 - These students do not respond well to phonics instruction
 - They do not have sufficient phonological skills to benefit from phonics

Summary: Module 2 Session 5

- ✓ The phonics approach gets superior results to the whole word and whole language approaches
- ✓ However, there are still a sizeable percentage of students who struggle, even with a phonic approach
- ✓ Phonics skills represent a necessary but not sufficient element in skilled word-level reading



Reflect and Connect:

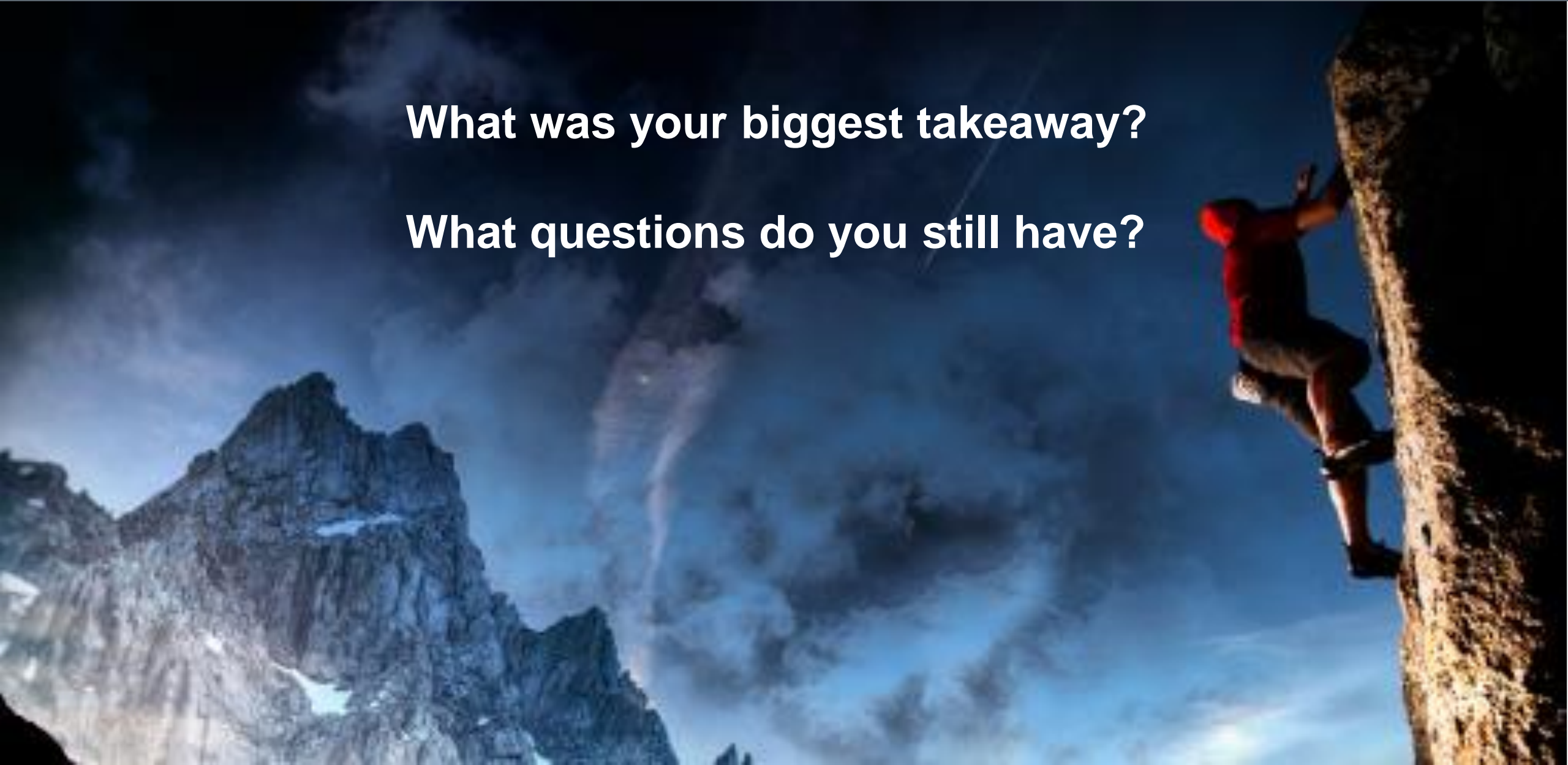
Why might the phonics approach be slightly more effective than other classic teaching methods? Why is it still ineffective for the most struggling readers?



Wrap Up

What was your biggest takeaway?

What questions do you still have?



Up Next

Module 3.1: The Simple View of Reading





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Please visit the CDE Specific Learning Disability Website for more information:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/SD-SLD>