

Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties

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

Module 7 Session 1

*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 7: Assessing Phonics Skills

Session 1: Assessing Letter-Sound Skills and Phonics Skills



Vision

All students in Colorado will become educated and productive citizens capable of succeeding in society, the workforce, and life.

Mission

The mission of the CDE is to ensure that all students are prepared for success in society, work, and life by providing excellent leadership, service, and support to schools, districts, and communities across the state.

**Every student,
every step of the way**

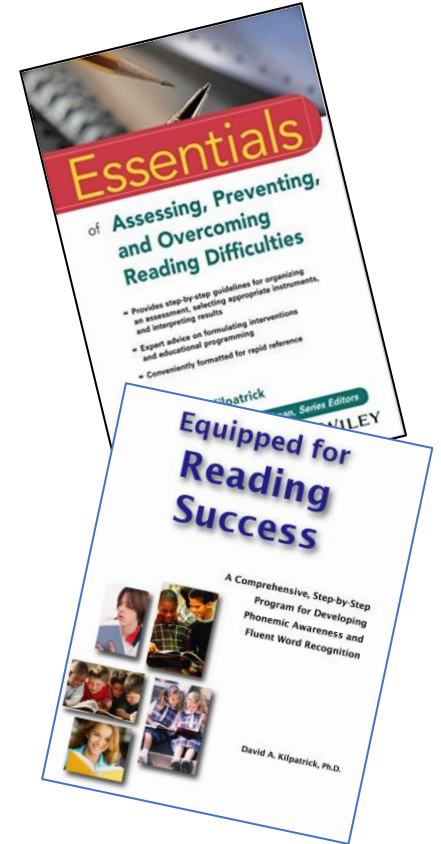
Reference and Disclaimer

- This on-demand webinar series, *Assessing, Preventing and Overcoming Reading Difficulties*, was developed by David Kilpatrick, Ph.D, in collaboration with the Specific Learning Disability Specialists in the Exceptional Student Services Unit of the Colorado Department of Education.
- Content of the webinar series was originally included in the book *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties* (Wiley, 2015).
- This material was developed under a grant from the Colorado Department of Education. **The content does not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.**

The Presenter



DAVID A. KILPATRICK, PHD is Associate Professor of Psychology for the State University of New York, College at Cortland. He teaches courses in learning disabilities and educational psychology. He is also a New York State Certified School Psychologist and has conducted over a thousand evaluations of students with reading difficulties during his 27 years with the East Syracuse-Minoa Central School District. David is currently involved in a number of research and writing projects. He facilitates professional development workshops for educators and presents regularly in districts, and at state and national conferences. He is the author of *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties* (Wiley, 2015), and *Equipped for Reading Success-A Comprehensive Step-by-Step Program from Developing Phonemic Awareness and Fluent Word Recognition*.



Series Designed for Use in Multiple Ways

1. **Complete all 13 modules:** Participants who engage in all thirteen modules will be provided a comprehensive learning experience encompassing research, impact, and critical elements of assessing, preventing, and overcoming reading difficulties.
2. **Complete individual modules:** Participants may view a session/s for specific information and guidance on topics related to assessing, preventing and overcoming reading difficulties. This format is ideal for short professional development opportunities, e.g., during an Impact Team meeting or Professional Learning Community.
3. **Complete as a book or chapter study:** Participants may view all or part of the series as a tandem companion or supplemental resource for supporting a study of the book: *The Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties* (Wiley, 2015)

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 to Reading Instruction: 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 7 Overview

Module 7: Assessing Phonics Skills

7.1: Assessing Letter-Sound Skills and Phonics Skills

7.2: Should We Assess Orthographic Skills?

Learning Intentions



Module 7 Session 1: Assessing Phonics Skills

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ Indicate the importance of assessing nonsense word reading
- ✓ Describe two different ways of assessing nonsense word reading
- ✓ Identify concerns and caveats in assessing phonics skills

Assessing Letter-Sound Skills

- Letter-name and letter-sound tasks are standard on kindergarten screening batteries
 - Performance on these in fall of kindergarten predicts later reading abilities
- Some achievement batteries have a letter-naming test
 - Letter-naming functions as the first items on some word identification tests
- Letter naming and letter sounds
 - Letter sounds are more difficult, but both have predictive validity
- Letter-sound skills + phonological blending = phonic decoding
- How best to assess phonic decoding?

Nonsense word reading tasks

Nonsense Word Reading

- Unfortunately deemed “inauthentic” by some, however . . .
 - All newly encountered words are functionally nonsense words before they are properly identified
 - Most multisyllabic words have one or more syllables that, by themselves, are nonsense words (*ta-ble*; *kin-der-gar-ten*; *lo-ca-tion*; *sep-a-rate*)
- Correlation between nonsense word reading and real word reading is very high ($r = .88$ to $.94$)
 - As high as giving two word identification tests or two nonsense word tests
- The correlation between nonsense word reading and *irregular word reading* is very high
 - This is consistent with written word-learning theories (self-teaching hypothesis and orthographic mapping)
 - It is inconsistent with a visual memory notion of irregular word reading

The Value Nonsense Word Reading

- Nonsense word reading is our best way to assess phonic decoding skills
- Phonic decoding skills represent a necessary level of word-reading development (see Module 4.2)
 - Skilled readers are able to read nonsense words, whether taught phonics or not
- Given its foundational nature for word-level reading, every evaluation of word-level reading should include an assessment of nonsense word reading

Nonsense Word Reading Tests

- Universal screeners typically include nonsense word reading
 - However, some limit word complexity, which limits their value
- Most academic assessment batteries now have such tests
 - Words go from easy to more difficult and thus valuable from grades 1-12
 - Poor nonsense word reading in older students is valuable information

Timed vs. Untimed Nonsense Word Reading Tests

- Ideally, administer both timed and untimed nonsense word reading subtests
 - Untimed subtests evaluate letter-sound *knowledge*
 - Timed subtests evaluate letter-sound *proficiency*
- This typically means comparing “cross-battery”
 - For example, comparing the TOWRE-2 *Phonemic Decoding* to an untimed nonsense word reading test from the WJ-IV, WRMT-III, WIAT-III
 - KTEA-3 has timed and untimed subtests on the same battery
- TOWRE-2 is highly recommended
 - Developed based upon federal grant initiatives (you already paid for it!)
 - Routinely used in research studies as a valid assessment
 - Only takes 45 seconds for the *Phonemic Decoding* subtest

Concerns Regarding Phonic Decoding Assessment

- Requires the interpretation of individual subtests
 - Avoid global/composite scores that include nonsense word reading
 - Compensators can have decent comprehension and word reading which masks poor nonsense word reading, yet reading is a chore for them
 - This is correctable if we identify it, but regular word reading tasks may not identify it
 - Use at least 2 nonsense word reading subtests from 2 batteries
 - One could be from a universal screener, if consistent with other battery
- Keep timed and untimed separate – they are not parallel for addressing subtest reliability
 - Thus, four subtests may be involved, but these are all brief and they are all central to evaluating word-reading skills

Interpreting Nonsense Word Reading Scores

- Generally, put more weight on nonsense word reading scores than real word reading scores
 - Better index of the raw, word reading skills uncontaminated by individual experience with words on word identification subtests
- Put more weight on timed scores than untimed scores
 - Ultimately, we want to see letter-sound *proficiency*, not just letter-sound knowledge
- Recalibrate what is considered “average”
 - Scores in the bottom third should receive attention

Summary: Module 7 Session 1

- ✓ Phonics skills are essential for reading an alphabet-based written language
- ✓ Nonsense word reading is our best assessment of phonic decoding skills
- ✓ Nonsense word reading is a great way to assess the “underpinnings” of word reading development
- ✓ Nonsense word reading can be untimed or timed, and both types of assessment should be administered



Reflect and Connect:

How have you used nonsense word reading subtests? Is there anything you might now do differently?



Wrap Up

What was your biggest takeaway?

What questions do you still have?



Up Next

Module 7.2

Should We Assess Orthographic Skills?



THANK YOU

GRACIAS
ARIGATO
SHUKURIA
JUSPAXAR
DANKSCHEEN
SPASSIBO
SHACHALHUYA
NUHUN
CHALTU
YAQHANYELAY
TASHAKKUR ATU
WABEEJA
MAITEKA
YUSPAGADATAM
HUI
SUKSAMA
EKHMET
SPASIBO
DENKAUJA
HENACHALHYA
UNALCHEESH
HATUR
GLI
TINGKI
BIYAN
SHUKRIA
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EFCHARISTO
AGUYJE
FAKAAUE
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GAEJTHO

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

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