

# Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties

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

## Module 9 Session 2

*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 9: Assessing Reading Comprehension and Related Skills**

### *Session 2: Language Comprehension and Related Tests*

# 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 9 Overview

## **Module 9: Assessing Reading Comprehension and Related Skills**

9.1 Reading Comprehension Tests

**9.2 Language Comprehension and Related Tests**

# Learning Intentions



## **Module 9 Session 2: Language Comprehension and Related Tests**

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ **Identify language skills that support reading comprehension**
- ✓ **Select and interpret language-related tests to further understand the source of reading comprehension difficulties**

# The Simple View and Reading Comprehension

- The *Simple View of Reading* indicates that reading comprehension is the product of
  - 1) word-level reading skills *and*
  - 2) language comprehension skills
- Thus, language comprehension skills are an important source of information about reading comprehension
- This would affect both assessment, instruction, and intervention
- Poor language comprehension is the basis of two types of reading difficulties, *hyperlexia* and the *combined type*

# Language-Related Skills that Affect Reading Comprehension

- Vocabulary/Semantic knowledge
- Grammar and syntax
- Background knowledge
- Construction of a mental model
- Working memory
- Attention
- Inferencing
- Comprehension monitoring
- Nonverbal visual-spatial skills



# Vocabulary Knowledge

- Includes words and idiomatic expressions
- Verbal portion of traditional IQ tests or VIQ subtests
  - Used in countless studies in the reading research as an index of language skills
- Speech-language batteries are a better source
- Assessed informally and the problem of the two lexicons
  - Everyday-usage lexicon
  - Broader semantic lexicon
- For EL students – longer trajectory

# Grammar and Syntax

- Essential for language comprehension
- Typically not a separate language issue
  - Usually co-occurs with vocabulary concerns
- Can be assessed by a speech-language pathologist

# Background Knowledge

- Two general types
  - General background knowledge
    - A few tests available on normed test batteries
  - Specific topical knowledge
    - Interesting study on baseball
    - Not as easy to assess

# Creating a Mental Model

- Also called a *situation model*
- Central to language comprehension and thus to reading comprehension
- Based upon vocabulary, grammar & syntax, and background knowledge
- Requires inferencing
- There are not many direct tests for this
  - Assess indirectly via testing the necessary components

# Working Memory

- Seems to correlate with all types of learning
- The temporary store of information while that information is being integrated into meaningful units of receptive understanding
- Can negatively affect language comprehension among those with strong vocabulary
- Many subtests available
  - Digit Span, Memory for Sentences

# Attention

- Also seems to influence all types of learning
- May influence listening comprehension differently than reading comprehension
  - Here we can distinguish between *listening* comprehension and *language* comprehension
- There are many assessments/rating scales for attention
  - The goal here is not for ADHD diagnosis, but for trying to determine if attention is a factor

# Inferencing

- Central to language comprehension
  - Much information in communication is assumed and not explicitly supplied
- Is necessary for developing a mental model
- Requires vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge
- Some subtests from speech-language batteries

# Comprehension Monitoring

- Awareness of one's understanding
- Not much by way of formalized assessment
- Assessed informally
  - Stop and ask
  - Deliberately include something nonsensical



# Nonverbal Visual-Spatial-Perceptual Skills (VSP)

- Least studied area
- However, studies have trickled into the research literature from the 1950s to today
- Correlational data
- Prediction data
  - Kindergarten VSP predicted 8<sup>th</sup> grade RC better than mother's educational level, K letter ID, and K narrative comprehension ( $n = 433$ )
- Training data
- Several tests available

# English Learners

- English Learners often function like hyperlexics
- Word-level reading grows faster than reading comprehension
- Their difficulties with many language-related elements mentioned above are due to their status as English Learners
  - We cannot be assume they are due to an inherent language difficulty
  - But knowing which skills can be targeted can be helpful

# Considering Language Comprehension Difficulties

- The above elements are all potential contributors to language difficulties (vocabulary, background knowledge, working memory, etc.)
- Most of these can be directly assessed
- Such assessment should accompany reading comprehension tests in students with reading comprehension difficulties
  - They allow for teachers and speech-language pathologists to focus their instructional and intervention efforts

# Summary: Module 9 Session 2

- ✓ Language comprehension difficulties can affect reading comprehension
- ✓ Language comprehension is influenced by several specific skills, such as vocabulary, background knowledge, and/or working memory
- ✓ Assessments of the language-related skills can help identify the source(s) of the language comprehension difficulties that affect reading comprehension
- ✓ Knowing a student's language skill profile can assist in targeting interventions



## **Reflect and Connect:**

What reading comprehension subtests do you use? How might you use or interpret them differently?

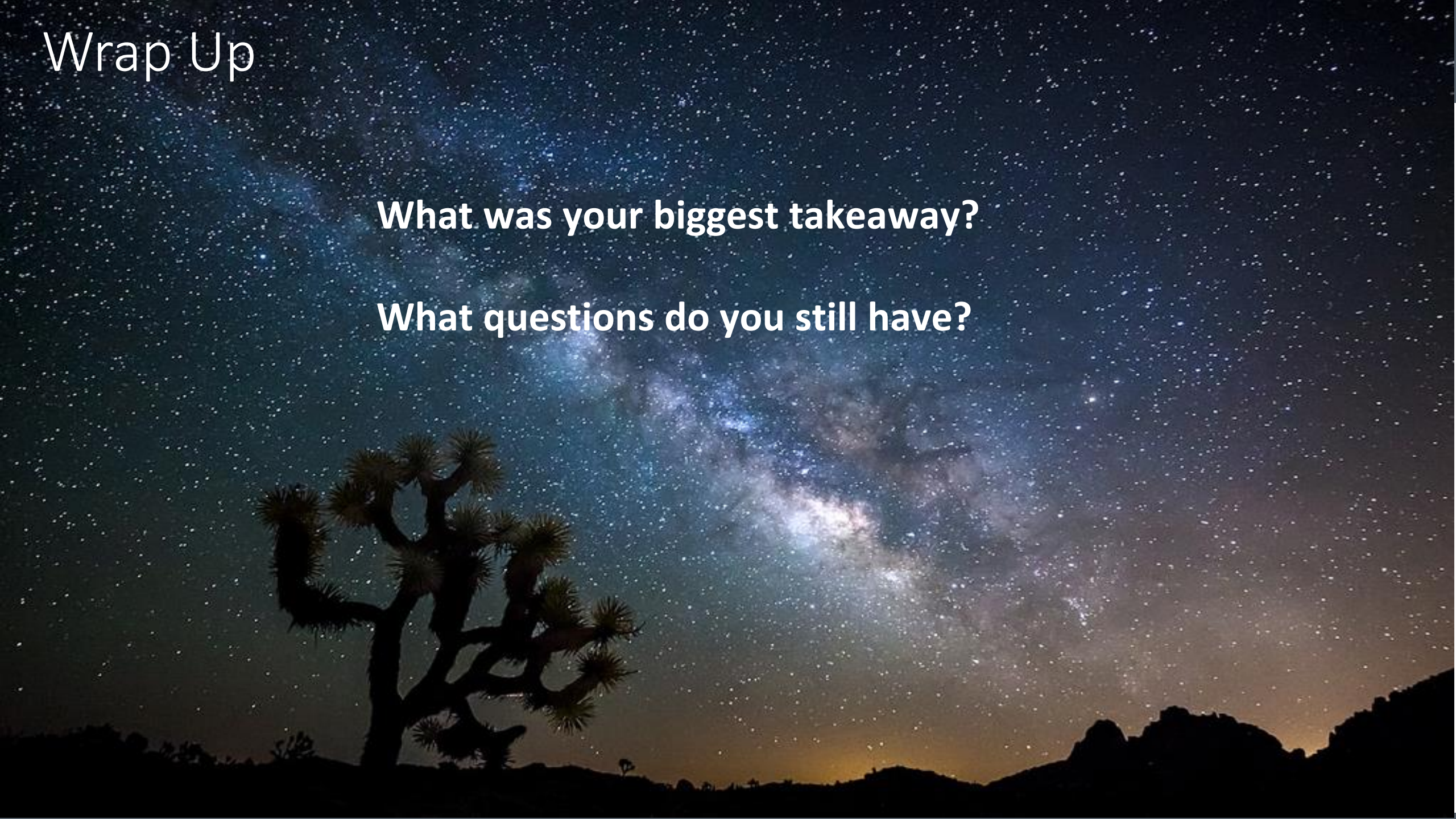




# Wrap Up

**What was your biggest takeaway?**

**What questions do you still have?**





# Up Next

## **Module 10.1**

### **Evidence for the Prevention of Reading Difficulties**





*Thank You*



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

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