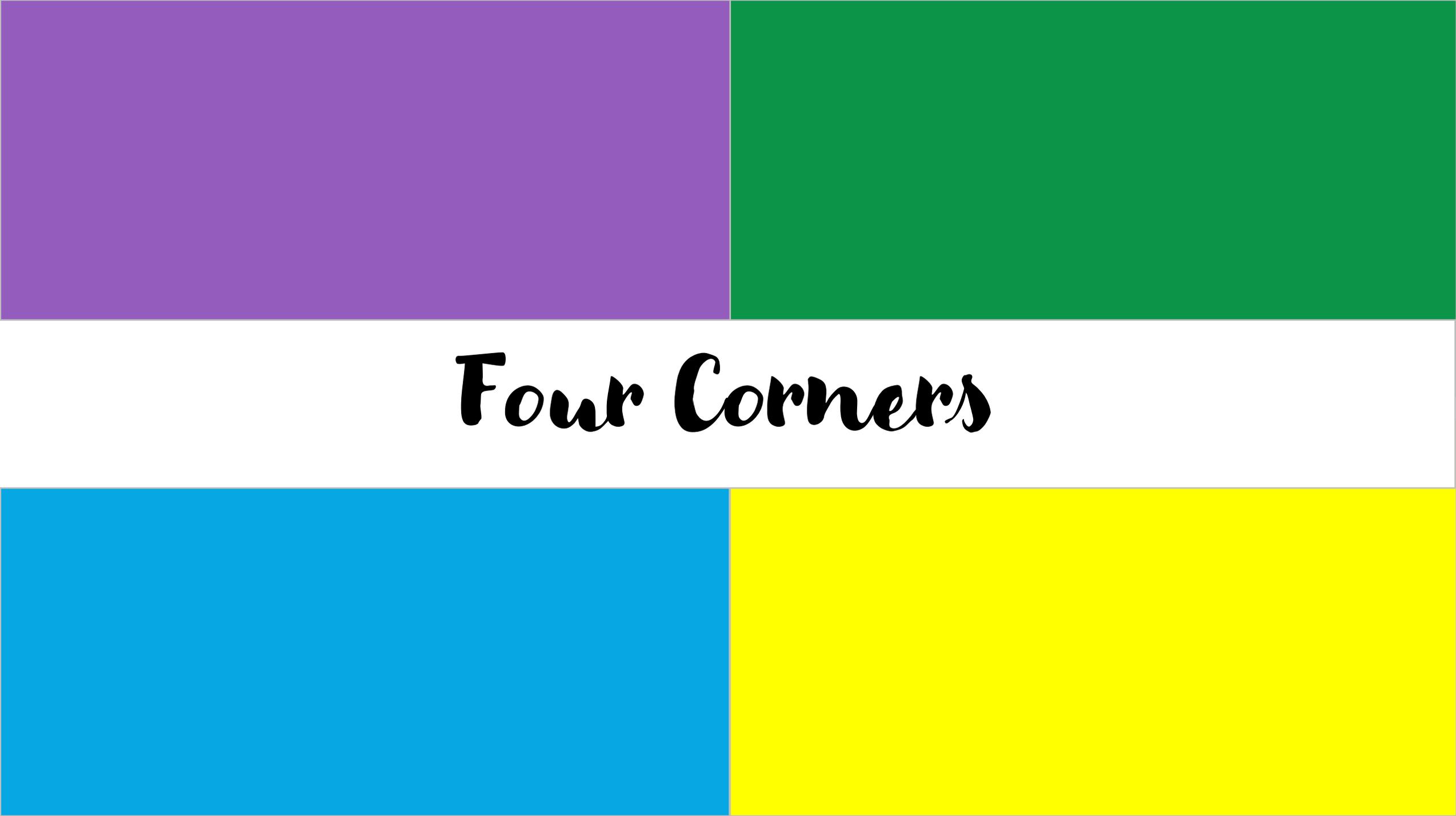# Research-Based Independent Centers

May 2025 - Anne Hickling

Free downloadable resources and slides at
www.PracticeMakesPermanent.ca

Four Corners

Which afterschool snack are you most likely to have?

How have you organized small groups / independent centers in the past?

| K | 1 |

What worked well? What were some challenges?

| 2 | 3 |

Which activity are you most likely to enjoy on the weekend?

What wonders or questions do you have?

Summarize

Research-Based Independent Centers
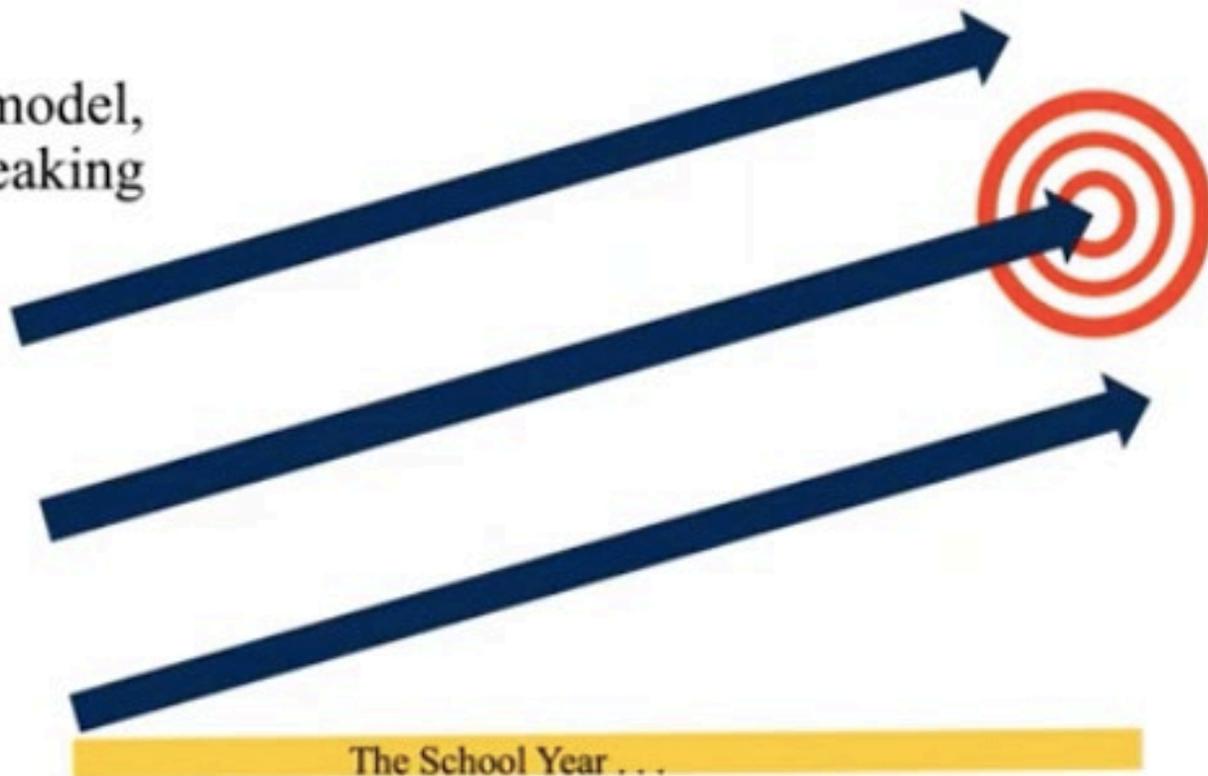
[Quality Tier 1 Literacy Instruction in the Primary Grades](#)

EQUALITY

Quality Tier I Instruction Capitalizes on Small-Group Time

For children not with the teacher, research-supported experiences such as:

- Writing
- Dyad reading
- Re-reading texts just used in instruction
- Reading along with recorded books
- Brief handwriting practice
- Engaging with select computer programs
- And . . .

Nell K. Duke
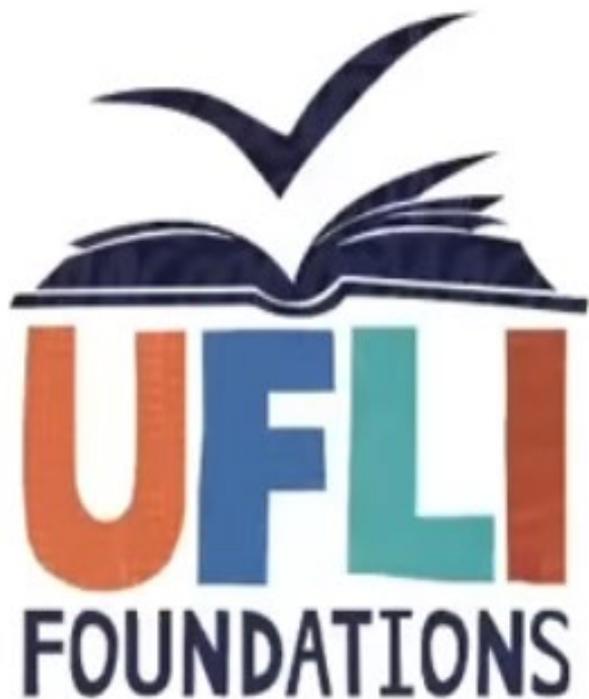
UFLI Foundations Progress Monitoring & Differentiations

Center Ideas

- Skill Review
  - phonemic awareness
  - alphabet knowledge
  - decoding
  - encoding
  - irregular words

Goal: Building both accuracy _and_ automaticity

Center Ideas

- Interacting with Text
  - read by yourself
  - read with a partner
  - listen to an audio book
  - identify words that have targeted graphemes
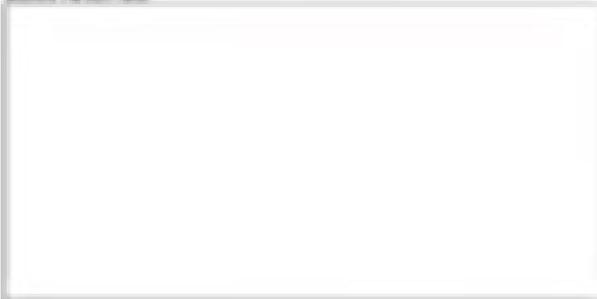
Tips for Center Management

- Students should be able to independently navigate centers (routines, material management, content, problem solving, etc.) without teacher assistance
- Activities should maximize opportunities for practice
- Routines should be consistent and easy to follow
- Students do not need to visit each center every day
- Heterogenous grouping
- Rotations should be about 10-15 minutes

Center Ideas

- Skill Review
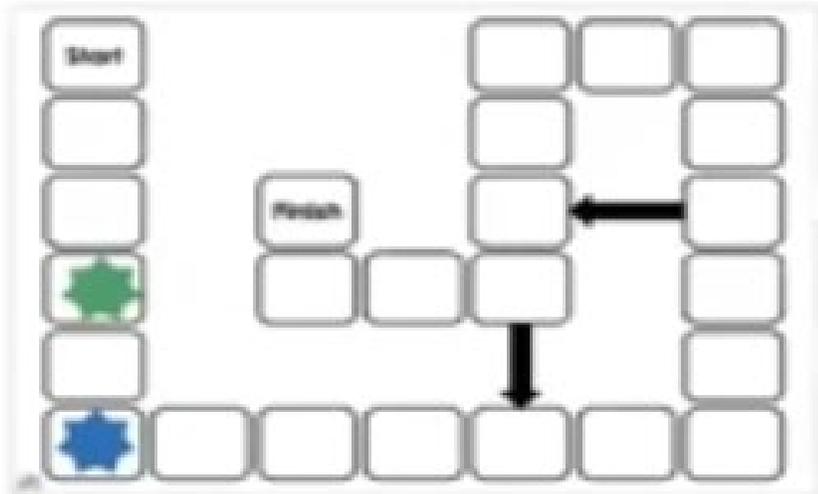
UFLI Foundations Toolbox (with free printable games and decodable passages)

"A center is independent; it is not instructional. What you're able to do at a center is typically practice concepts that you've already learned. So you would never want to put a student at a center activity and expect them to do their own learning, because you've increased the chances that they're going to mis-learn information and make errors, or that they're just going to fake learning so that you don't interrupt them for behavior problems. Centers are not active learning opportunities. They, again, are typically practicing fluency of a previously learned skill."

-Jamey Peavler, S7E3 Science of Reading: The Podcast

The Instructional Hierarchy

Acquisition

Fluency

Adaptation and Generalization

Students are inaccurate with limited proficiency

Students perform a skill accurately, but slowly and laboriously. They are not automatic.

Students are accurate and automatic, and beginning to use the skill in new contexts.

Instructional Hierarchy Document from ONlit
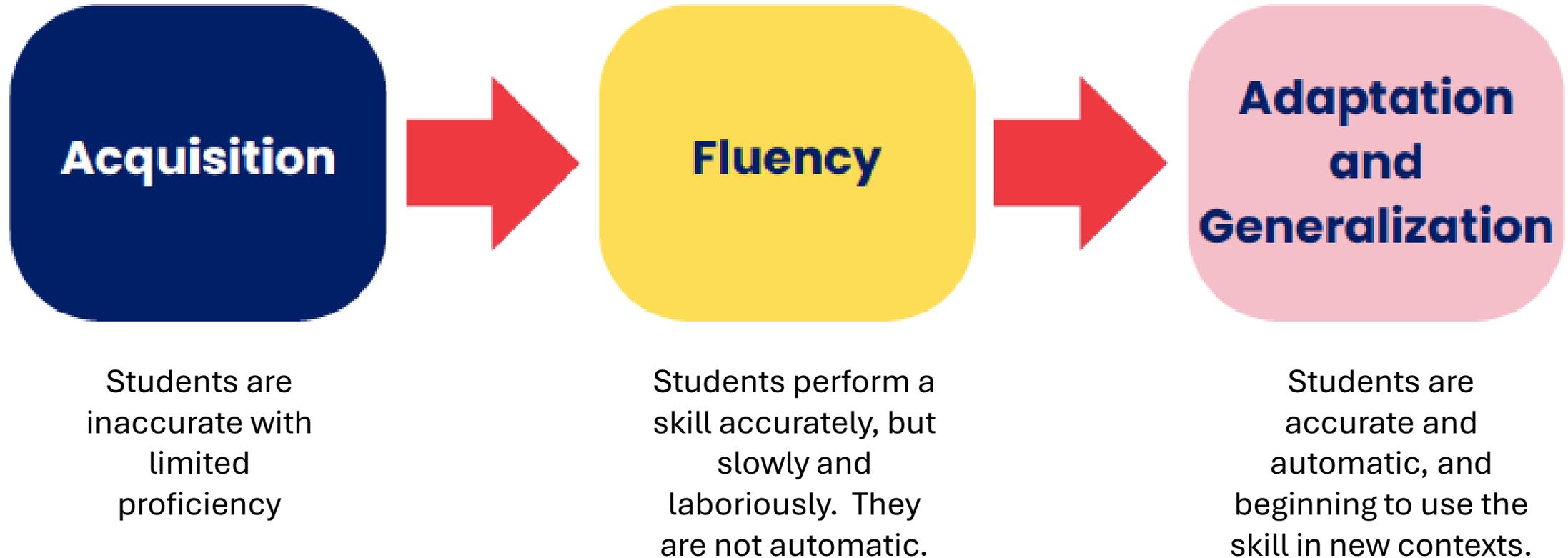
Working Memory

This is where we hold and process new information. It has a small capacity. If information is not transferred to long-term memory from here, it will be forgotten.

Cognitive Load Theory with Zach Groshell

Increasing Germane Load

Working Memory Capacity

Germane Load
Learning

Extraneous Load
Competing Demands
for Attention

Intrinsic Load
Insufficient Skills
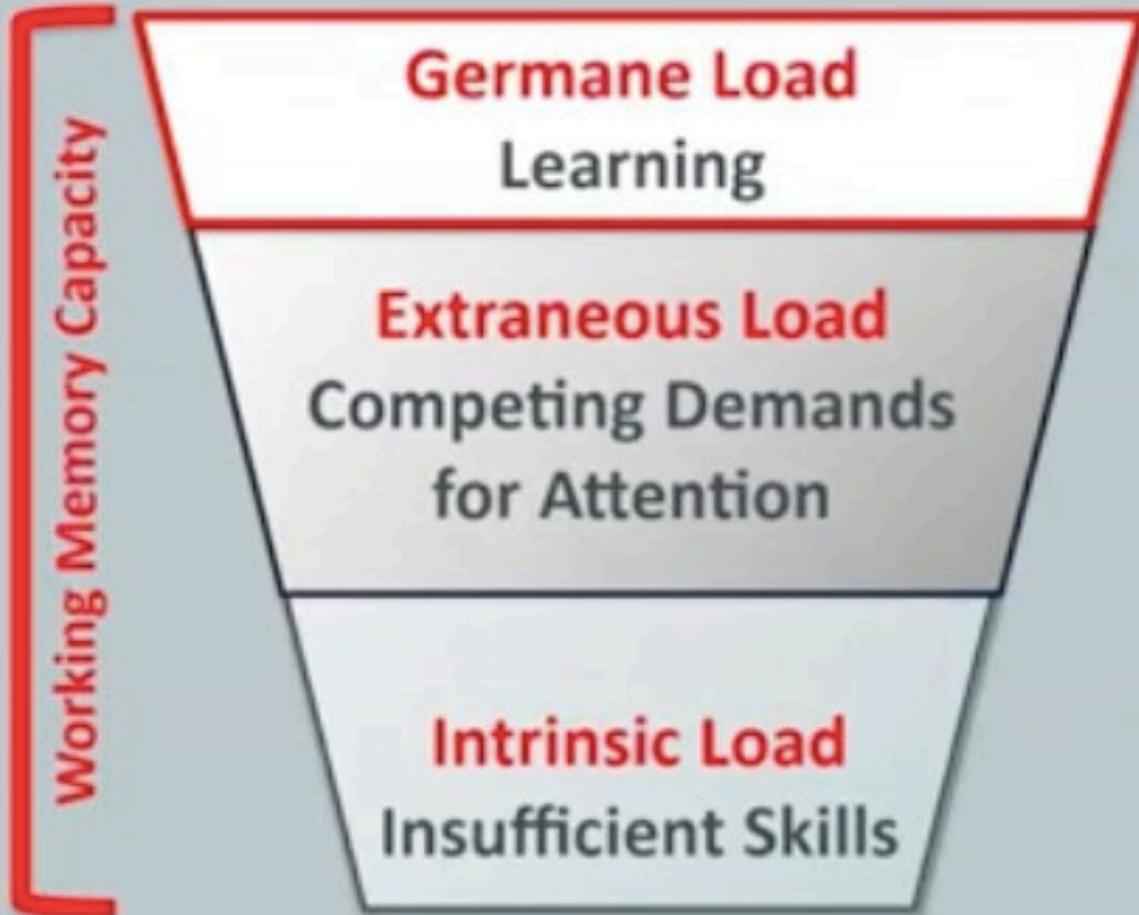
- **Demonstrate** or **model** *exactly* what students will do

- When teaching **new procedures**, use familiar content

- When teaching **new content**, use familiar procedures

"It is beneficial for procedures to be the same. This reduces the cognitive load and allows students to focus on practicing the skill, not new instructions."

- Jamey Peavler, Maximizing the Benefits of Small-Group Instruction

Strategic Partners (Triads)

Homeroom List with Grid

Homeroom:

Pupil #	Usual Name	Grade									
	B, Hassan	01									
	B, Hussein	01									
	B, Tariq	01									
	B, Shehryar	01									
	C, Divit	01									
	D, Anureet	01									
	D, Satinder	01									
	D, Eshan	01									
	E, Jassleen	01									
	H, Rishan	01									
	K, Havishma	01									
	L, Gurmehr	01									
	L, Abhiroop	01									
	N, Abdi,	01									
	O, Hodan	01									
	Q, Arjan	01									
	S, Aniyah	01									
	T, Arshpreet	01									
	U, Mohammad	01									

							Grade							
KF	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	Total	
	19												19	

[Listen Again] Ep. 80: A Primary Teacher's Perspective on Science of Reading, Small Group Instruction, and Sound Walls

Lindsay Kemeny, Ep.80 on Melissa & Lori Love Literacy

Roll and Read
Lesson 18: e /ĕ/

set	~~bet~~	~~den~~	fed	
met	net	peg	pen	p
ten	beg	den	net	m
d	set	bet	bed	g

Learning Centers

Link to Learning Centers Slideshow on PracticeMakesPermanent.ca
*Please download a copy to edit.
Works best in Desktop version of Powerpoint.

Read to a Friend

Austin & Nishaan
Nimoona & Samarah
Gracey & Hunardeep
Aadvik & Rehmat
Seerat & Gurkavenpreet

Listen to a Story

Nabil
Gurjot
Gurshan
Hiba
Jade
Gurman
Rilyn
Raj
Sebastian

Roll & Read

Austin & Nishaan
Nimoona & Samarah
Gracey & Hunardeep
Aadvik & Rehmat
Seerat & Gurkavenpreet

14:17

Listen to a Story

Nabil
Gurjot
Gurshan
Hiba
Jade
SeGurman
Rilyn
Raj
Sebastian

UFLI Possibilities

Progress Monitoring

Spelling Assessment

Monitoring students' growth is an essential part of skill development. Effective progress monitoring allows you to see exactly which students need extra support on which skills and when they need it. Unfortunately, administering frequent, individual assessments can be extremely time consuming.

To address these issues, we are providing a simple way for you to monitor progress on a more frequent basis through a group-administered assessment: spelling tests that align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence. Spelling assessments for ongoing progress monitoring can be a great way to quickly measure decoding skills. Although a child who is proficient in decoding words may not be proficient in encoding them, one who is proficient in encoding is almost guaranteed to be proficient in decoding.

However, the way spelling tests are typically used does not accomplish this. Memorizing a list of 10-20 words requires very different (and much less useful) skills than learning how to apply a set of grapheme-phoneme correspondences. We recommend that you administer the assessment provided here in place of whatever spelling tests you have administered in the past.

Rather than send home a list of specific words for children to memorize (and promptly forget!), we suggest that you send home sounds and patterns for students to practice after you have introduced each concept. For example, to assess students' understanding of the VCe spelling pattern for /ā/, your assessment might include the words make, fame, and lane, but you would send home the words fake, lame, and mane for practice. We have created word lists like this for spelling assessments to align with each concept in the scope and sequence. Home support handouts with different words for practice are available for download from the UFLI web site (ufliteracy.org).

Depending on where your students are in the scope and sequence, assessments can include any combination of the following types of items:

- **Grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs).** For these items, you will pronounce a phoneme, and your students will write the associated grapheme, much like the process used in the Auditory Drill portion of each lesson.
- **Regular words.** These items will be words formed with the grapheme-phoneme correspondences and patterns learned thus far in the lessons. The newly introduced correspondences will be highlighted.
- **Irregular words.** During their lessons, students will learn to read and spell irregular words using the heart word method. That is, they will learn to recognize the regular grapheme-phoneme correspondences in the word and to remember any irregular part(s) "by heart." These words are assessed in their own section of the test.
- **Sentence dictation.** In addition to spelling individual words, children will also write sentences that you dictate, much like the sentences they write during Step 8 of the lesson. These sentences may include both regular and irregular words.

We recommend tha[t]
Weekly assessment pr[]
your decisions about th[]
support.

Use data from asses[]
children still need su[]
support, and who has [e]
this information, you [c]
support the following [group]
need. Use the suppler[]
word lists) from the le[sson]
plan the content of you[r]

Suggested P[]
Less[]

Mon.	Tues.
Concept 1 Day 1	Concept 1 Day 2

Data-Based Plan[ning]

Student	
Wilson, Daniel	
Ramos, Lizette	
Jordan, Olivia	
Santos, Antonio	
Potter, Josiah	
Crenshaw, Zoe	
Cobb, Lesandra	
Williams, Kristyn	
Long, Amelia	
Perez, Andrea	
Sullivan, Matteo	
Barnes, Lauren	
Knopp, Ava	
Barnet, Jenae	
Perez, Miguel	
Horner, Kelsey	
Marcus, Damian	
Bartley, Baxter	
Napier, Stephon	
Parker, Ethan	
Robertson, Chandler	5

Data-Based Planning for Small Group Support

Student	Concept 1	Time
Wilson, Daniel	0	10-12 minutes daily
Ramos, Lizette	0	
Jordan, Olivia	1	
Santos, Antonio	1	
Potter, Josiah	2	5-8 minutes, 2-3 days
Crenshaw, Zoe	2	
Cobb, Lesandra	2	
Williams, Kristyn	2	
Long, Amelia	3	
Perez, Andrea	3	
Sullivan, Matteo	3	
Barnes, Lauren	4	4-5 minutes, 1-2 days
Knopp, Ava	4	
Barnet, Jenae	4	
Perez, Miguel	4	
Horner, Kelsey	4	
Marcus, Damian	4	
Bartley, Baxter	5	none
Napier, Stephon	5	
Parker, Ethan	5	
Robertson, Chandler	5	

Additional Resources

- [Maximizing Small Group Reading Instruction](#), article from Reading Teacher (download for free)

- Melissa & Lori Love Literacy Podcast Episodes:
  - [#143 Maximizing Small Group Instruction](#)
  - [#142 Structured Literacy in Small Group Time](#)
  - [#175: Quick Q&A – What Does Research Say About Small Group Reading Instruction?](#)

Turn & Talk

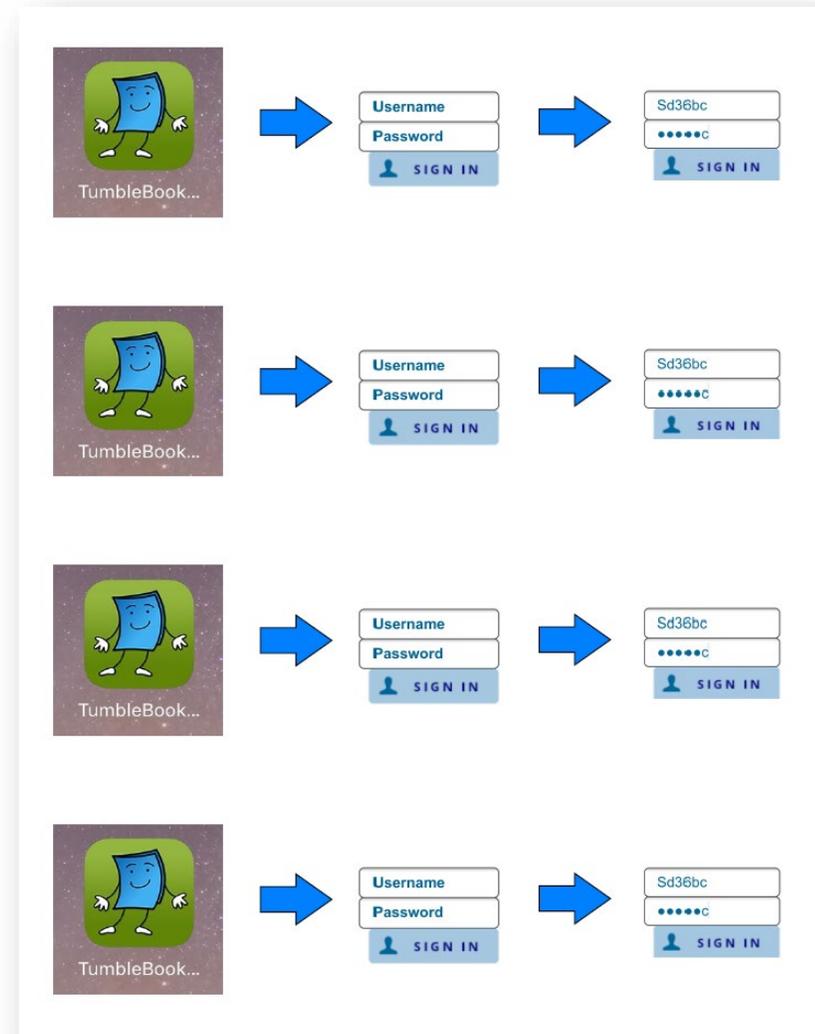- What is resonating with you?

- What might you like to try?

Using iPads as a Listening Center

PDF of Tumblebooks Sign In

Introducing Ipads & Tumblebooks

Today you will learn how to use iPads to listen to a story. Listening to a good reader read a story, helps you become a better reader too. It helps you to hear how smooth reading sounds and the expression you can use in your voice. As you practice reading, you will become better readers and you will sound this way too!

iPads

- Divide students into 'Tech Partners', assign 1 and 2. (Students sit side by side, facing projector, with enough room to have ipad on the ground or table in front of them.) Have students hold the number on their finger. *Partner 1 hold your finger up high. Partner 2 hold your fingers up high.* Practice turn taking: *Partner 1 ask your partner what their favourite colour is. Partner 2, ask your partner....*
- Ask Ss by show of hands how many have iPads, iPhones, tablets at home. *Some of what you will learn today you may already know, but we want to make sure that everyone knows the parts of the iPad and how to use them.*
- Find 'home' button, 2, 1
- Power button, 1, 2
- Home, home/slide, power, 2, 1
- Volume, 1,2
- Speakers, 2, 1
- Camera back and front, 1, 2
- Charging port 2,1
- Headphones, click, 1, 2
- Model how to clean up headphones (ie: in ziplog bag, leave part of bag open so air can escape)

Tumblebooks (username & password: sd36bc)

(model with iPad connected to projector, easiest with 2 people: one touching projection on screen, another pressing the same thing on iPad)

- Home, home/slide, find Tumblebooks app
- Show: Story Books tab, book choices (1,2,3... Award Winners), choose a story and listen together (words highlighted, pause, forward, back, close) *There are other things in this app, but our purpose is to listen to stories, so we will only be using the Story Books tab. If you press something else by mistake, no problem, just put up your hand and we will come and help you get back to Story Books. We need to follow these rules to use ipads, otherwise we will not be allowed to use them.*

Introducing Ipads and Tumblebooks

Downstairs iPads - App Folders

iPad App Organisation PDF

Free downloadable resources at
www.PracticeMakesPermanent.ca