

WHAT

of Slingerland Teaching

*Learn what literacy terms mean in everyday language
and why they matter in literacy development.*

The Slingerland Approach is multisensory (multimodal), meaning students learn through hearing, speaking, seeing, and writing at the same time. This allows students to develop their encoding and decoding skills with oral language as the basis of everything they do.

Three Skills that Reinforce Each Other

Oral Language Development

- **What does this mean?** Developing vocabulary, listening comprehension, speaking skills, and the ability to express and understand ideas.
- **Why does this matter?** Strong oral language provides the foundation for reading, writing, learning, and communicating with others.

Encoding

- **What does this mean?** Hearing a spoken sound and choosing the letters or letter patterns needed to write it correctly. (This includes sounds representing single letters, groups of letters, a single word, a phrase, and so on.)
- **Why does this matter?** Encoding is central to writing. Encoding helps students become accurate spellers and stronger writers.
 - Importantly, encoding reinforces the reading skills they use when decoding.

Decoding

- **What does this mean?** Looking at letters and letter patterns to identify the spoken sounds (then words) they represent.
- **Why does this matter?** Decoding is central to reading. Decoding helps students read unfamiliar words accurately, which builds both written and spoken vocabulary as well as reading confidence, fluency, and comprehension.
 - Importantly, decoding reinforces the reading skills they use when encoding.



Plain Language Definition of Literacy Skills

Phonemes

- **What does this mean?** The smallest individual sounds in spoken language. Words are made up of one or more phonemes.
- **Why does this matter?** Understanding phonemes helps students connect spoken sounds to written letters, making it easier to decode (read) and encode (spell) words.

Graphemes

- **What does this mean?** The letters and groups of letters that represent individual sounds in written language.
- **Why does this matter?** Recognizing graphemes helps students connect written letters to sounds, then to written words, supporting both reading and spelling.

Phonics

- **What does this mean?** Learning the relationship between sounds and the letter(s) that represent them.
- **Why does this matter?** Understanding letter-sound relationships helps students both encode words they hear, spell accurately, decode unfamiliar words, and become more confident writers and readers.

Morphemes

- **What does this mean?** The smallest meaningful parts of words, including prefixes, suffixes, bases, and roots.
- **Why does this matter?** Knowing morphemes helps students figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words, expand vocabulary, and improve spelling.

Syllable Patterns

- **What does this mean?** Common ways sounds and letters are organized into syllables within words.
- **Why does this matter?** Understanding syllable patterns helps students read longer words more accurately and spell them more confidently.

Vocabulary

- **What does this mean?** The collection of words a person understands and uses.
- **Why does this matter?** A strong vocabulary improves reading comprehension, speaking, writing, and overall communication.



Grammar

- **What does this mean?** The rules for using words correctly to create clear, meaningful sentences.
- **Why does this matter?** Understanding grammar helps students communicate clearly and improve both their speaking and writing.

Text Structure

- **What does this mean?** The ways written information is organized, such as titles, headings, paragraphs, captions, and other text features.
- **Why does this matter?** Recognizing text structure helps students find information, understand what they read, and organize their own writing.

Orthographic Conventions

- **What does this mean?** The accepted rules and patterns of written English, including spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and other writing conventions.
- **Why does this matter?** Understanding these conventions helps students write clearly and accurately while making their writing easier for others to read. It also aids in reading with proper phrasing, which supports comprehension.

Syntax

- **What does this mean?** The way words are arranged to form sentences.
- **Why does this matter?** Understanding sentence structure helps students express their ideas more clearly in writing and speech and improves reading comprehension.

Semantics

- **What does this mean?** Understanding the meanings of words, phrases, and sentences.
- **Why does this matter?** Understanding meaning is essential for reading comprehension, following directions, and communicating effectively.
 - Semantics answers: “What does this word/phrase/sentence mean?”

Pragmatics

- **What does this mean?** Using language appropriately in different situations and with different audiences.
- **Why does this matter?** Strong pragmatic skills help students participate in conversations, build relationships, and communicate effectively in school and everyday life.
 - Pragmatics answers: “How should I use or interpret language in this situation?”



Connecting Background Knowledge

- **What does this mean?** Using what a student already knows and has experienced to make sense of new information.
- **Why does this matter?** Making connections between new learning and prior knowledge helps students understand, remember, and apply what they learn.

Critical Thinking

- **What does this mean?** Carefully analyzing information, asking questions, making connections, and drawing thoughtful conclusions.
- **Why does this matter?** Critical thinking helps students understand what they read, solve problems, evaluate information, and become independent learners.

Children learn language (oral and written) through three main pathways:

- **Seeing** (visual)
- **Hearing** (auditory)
- **Doing** (writing and speaking—sometimes called kinesthetic or kinesthetic-motor)

The **Slingerland® Approach** teaches through all three pathways at the same time—seeing, hearing, speaking, and writing—so stronger pathways can support weaker ones. This multisensory approach helps students make clearer connections, build confidence, and use language more successfully.

Research in the **Science of Reading** shows that structured, explicit approaches like the Slingerland® Approach are effective and efficient for teaching literacy skills. Because instruction is systematic and cumulative, students are supported as skills build over time.

Our goal is to train teachers to provide a structured, supportive environment where students can experience success, build confidence, and feel good about themselves as learners. We are proud to train dedicated educators who carry these skills back to classrooms and students across the country.



**More resources
for families and
caregivers**



**Slingerland®
Literacy Institute**

The Slingerland Literacy Institute (SLI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that seeks to transform education through the Slingerland Approach, which turns the science of reading into practical classroom strategies.



www.slingerland.org



mail@slingerland.org



(425) 453-1190