



## Glossary

**Alphabetic Principle** A writing system design principle that associates units from the limited set of phonemes of oral languages with units from the limited set of letters of the alphabet, yielding a highly productive alphabetic writing system. Knowledge of the alphabetic principle is awareness that written words are composed of letters that are intentionally and conventionally related to phonemic segments of the words of oral language.

**Background Knowledge** The knowledge that students have acquired, either formally in the classroom or informally through life experiences.

**Big Books** Oversized books that offer opportunity to share the print and illustrations with a group of children in ways that one might share a standard sized book with just a few.

**Code Switching** The practice of switching between one or more languages or dialects, depending on the context or setting.

**Comprehension** Understanding: listening comprehension refers to spoken language, reading comprehension refers to written language.

**Decoding Skills** Skills in translating symbols (e.g., alphabet letters) into recognizable syllables and words.

**Dialect** A regional or social variety of a language distinguished by pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary, especially a variety of speech differing from the standard literary language or speech pattern of the culture in which it exists.

**Emergent Literary** A range of activities and behaviors related to written language including those undertaken by very young children who depend on the cooperation of others and/or on creative play to deal with the material; reading and writing related activities and behaviors that change over time culminating in conventional literacy during middle childhood.



**Expressive Language Capacity** Accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness in producing language.

**Literacy** This includes reading, writing, and the creative and analytical acts involved in producing and comprehending texts.

**Phonological Awareness** Knowing that oral language has structure that is separate from meaning; attending to the sub-lexical structure (i.e., structure within words) of oral language, e.g., “beg” has one syllable and three phonemes, “egg” has one syllable and two phonemes.

**Primary Language** The primary (or *dominant*) language is the one in which bilingual students are the most fluent. This is not necessarily the same as the language spoken at home.

**Receptive Language Capacity** Accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness in understanding language.

**Scaffolding** The idea that specialized instructional supports (such as making links to students’ prior background knowledge) need to be in place in order to best facilitate learning when children are just introduced to a new subject.

**Word Decoding** An aspect of reading that involves deriving a pronunciation for a printed sequence of letters based on knowledge of spelling-sound correspondences.

**Word Recognition** In reading, identifying as known words those that have been decoded or processed as whole words and associating the known words with their meaning and use in language being read.