

READ ACT LITERACY NEWSLETTER

A Focus on Syntax

JANUARY 2026



Happy New Year 2026!

While the unseasonably warm weather in much of Colorado hasn't given off typical New Year vibes, that doesn't stop the calendar from rolling into January! After a much-needed break for students and teachers alike, we hope the return to school finds you refreshed, refocused and ready to roll into a new semester of learning.

For the January issue of our literacy newsletter, we [explore the topic of syntax, the grammatical structure of sentences](#). Although it is rarely at the forefront of literacy discussions, or even research, syntax plays a critical role in supporting comprehension at all levels of learning. When we as educators better understand the complexities of how language works, we are better equipped to support all our students to become

proficient readers and writers. This petite collection of resources can be a starting point in the new year to engage with learning more about this topic.

Enjoy!

LISTEN

LINGUISTICS HQ

[The grammar blueprint: an introduction to syntax- Linguistics HQ - Apple Podcasts](#) 16 MIN

This short but informative podcast from Linguistics HQ is a perfect introduction to syntax if its something that still feels a bit nebulous; and, at only 16 minutes, this is a great one to catch on that quick run to the store or in the school pick up line.

THE SCIENCE OF READING THE PODCAST - AMPLIFY

[Episode 7: Syntax and comprehension, with Julie Van Dyke, Ph.D. | Amplify](#) 49 MIN

Could explicit syntax instruction be the key to improving comprehension? Listen to Dr. Julie Van Dyke and host Susan Lambert as they discuss the ins and outs of syntax, its importance in evidence based-literacy instruction, and why teaching it explicitly matters for student literacy outcomes.

READ

[What Teachers Need to Know about Sentence Comprehension | Reading Rockets](#)

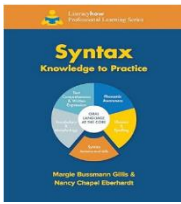
Dr Timothy Shanahan, Shanahan on Literacy (linked at Reading Rockets)

Dr. Timothy Shanahan often tackles hot literacy topics in his blog, Shanahan on Literacy, through his own viewpoint, but always backed by strong research. This post provides the supporting evidence for providing sentence level instruction focused on syntax to support comprehension. Dr. Shanahan's posts are always entertaining and informative!

[Perspectives on Language and Literacy: Summer 2013](#) Syntax: Its Role in Literacy

A Publication of the International Dyslexia Association; multiple authors

This edition of Perspectives on Language and Literacy compiles several articles about syntax that teachers may find helpful for working with all students, but which may be particularly helpful for supporting students who struggle with reading. Topics include syntax development in children, assessment of syntax, complex sentence knowledge, and more.



SYNTAX -KNOWLEDGE TO PRACTICE

Margie Bussman Gillis, Nancy Chapel Elberhardt

ISBN 9701981011902

Part of a complete professional learning series from Literacyhow, this book dedicated to syntax provides the knowledge educators need to understand how sentences work and the research behind the connection between syntax and comprehension. Additionally, teachers will find practical tools for supporting students in building sentence-level skills through oral and written language and lessons that are easily implemented for immediate classroom impact.

WATCH - WEBINARS

[PaTTAN Literacy Resource Hub - Writing](#)

As usual, PaTTAN delivers two excellent webinars related to syntax just waiting to be viewed in one handy link! After you click on the link, scroll down the webpage to find both presentations and related handouts:

- Dr. Margie B. Gillis presents *Grammar and Syntax: The Building Blocks of Comprehending and Writing Sentences*.
- The late William Van Cleave shares *Syntax Matters: The Link Between Sentence Writing and Sentence Comprehension*.

ENGAGE/IMPLEMENT

[Language Development | Virginia Literacy Partnerships](#)

The University of Virginia hosts this fantastic collection of instructional protocols for preK-3 educators. Browse the great protocols and other resources for all areas of literacy instruction, but pay special attention to the six practices under “language development.” These activities provide structured lessons for building syntactic awareness both orally and with text.

[Reading Universe | Syntax](#)

As usual, readinguniverse.org delivers a well-curated collection of lessons, resources, and practice activities to support teachers in planning and executing effective lessons. If you are unsure of where to start to improve students’ syntactical awareness, this site offers detailed professional learning as well as explicit lessons for the classroom.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Do you have a colleague with whom you would like to share these resources? Feel free to forward the newsletter, or have them [sign up to receive the newsletter here!](#)

If you have general questions or need assistance, find our contact information here:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/contactus>

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