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Key Questions
- What is the current state of literacy in Vermont?
- What can be done to strengthen and improve literacy in Vermont?

Overarching Points
- Literacy involves reading, writing, speaking, and listening
- Literacy skills are complex and interrelated (connections across areas)
- Approaches to literacy assessment, instruction, and intervention must address this complexity and these connections
- Literacy involves strategic application of skills in context
  - For example, not just pronouncing and spelling words, but constructing and conveying meaning
- Many initiatives focus only on smaller pieces of the puzzle, rather than integrated skills
  - For example, some programs address only or mostly reading, and/or only or mostly phonics
  - For an example of a more comprehensive model, see below (from McKenna & Stahl, 2015)
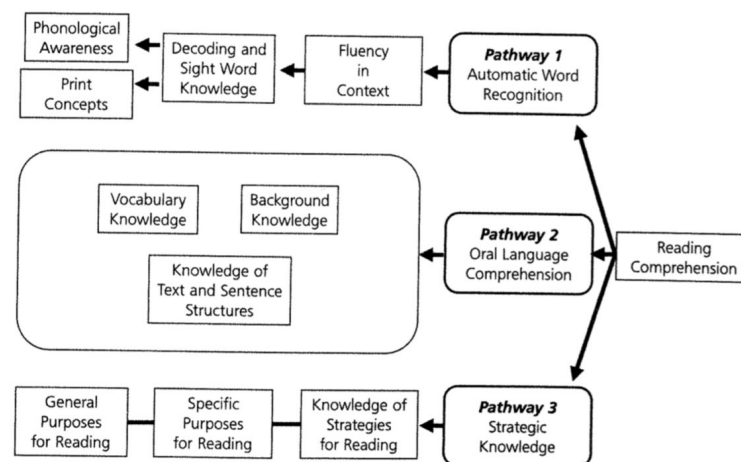

FIGURE 1.2. The Cognitive Model.

Developmental Considerations
- Tasks and texts shift in complexity across grade levels
  - For example, later grades typically involve more inferential comprehension and more informational text (reading and writing) than earlier grades

- Different sub-skills predict success at different stages
  - For example, letter and word level skills are important early, while vocabulary and background knowledge become more important later on
- The common notion of 'learning to read, then reading to learn' is oversimplified and/or misapplied
  - Students benefit from a focus on comprehension and knowledge building from early on (Neuman, Kaefer, & Pinkham, 2014)

Supporting all Students
- Students who struggle with literacy often struggle in different ways (Buly & Valencia, 2002)
  - These different skill profiles may be masked by standardized test scores
  - Interventions and supports should be tailored to address identified needs
- Some students have specialized needs that require specialized support (e.g., students with learning disabilities, English Learners)
- Instruction for all students should reflect the complexity of literacy learning
  - It's difficult to achieve complex results with simple solutions

Systems of Support
- Statewide literacy initiatives should be multi-faceted and multi-level (adapted from MI framework)
  - High-quality training and ongoing professional development for all educators
    - Classroom teachers, special educators, literacy specialists/interventionists, and paras
  - Research-based instructional practices in all classrooms, for all students
  - Comprehensive systems of assessment, used to inform instruction and intervention
  - Research-based supports and interventions for students who need additional support
  - Alignment among research, policy, resources, and policy
  - Effective literacy leadership at school, district/SU, and state levels

References

Buly, M. R., & Valencia, S. W. (2002). Below the bar: Profiles of students who fail state reading assessments. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *24*(3), 219- 239.

McKenna, M. C., & Stahl, K. A. D. (2015). *Assessment for reading instruction*. New York: Guilford Publications.

Neuman, S. B., Kaefer, T., & Pinkham, A. (2014). Building background knowledge. *The Reading Teacher, 68*(2), 145-148.