Typical vs. Structured Literacy

Typical Literacy
i.e., "Balanced Literacy"

- Phonemic awareness covered haphazardly or not at all.

- Full range of sound-letter correspondences assumed to be learned naturally; phonetic patterns covered un-systematically and in context.

- Memorization of Dolch/Fry (i.e., "sight") words, with little or no attention to their phonetic components.

- Focus on using first/last letters; heavy reliance on context clues, including pictures.

- Misread words ignored if they do not seriously interfere with comprehension.

- Use of repetitive and leveled readers that contain unlearned phonetic patterns and encourage guessing; guided reading groups.

- Little or no attention to fluency.

- Lots of class time devoted to independent reading.

Structured Literacy
i.e., Science of Reading

- Phonemic awareness emphasized as a pre-reading skill.

- Explicit, systematic instruction on the full range of sound-letter correspondences, beginning with simple patterns and proceeding to more complex ones.

- High-frequency words taught according to phonetic patterns; irregular words analyzed for their phonetic/non-phonetic elements.

- Focus on on all letters/sounds in a word; context clues used only to help identify highly irregular words or clarify meaning.

- Misread words promptly corrected, with explicit instruction on how to sound them out.

- Use of decodable readers that contain only vocabulary with already-learned phonetic patterns.

- Fluency consistently addressed.

- Very little class time devoted to independent reading.