

The Science of Literacy

Each of literacy's four modalities has a lowercase version and a capital one.
The mental model is the difference.

It's not unusual for a student to need to just get the answer right or practice a skill, and that is worthwhile. But we can't stop at discrete skills, or let them take up more than their share of the instructional time. What lifts each modality is **a sound, vivid, and durable mental model**. It's an integrated move in all four modalities, and it gives literacy **real power and joy**.

TAKING IN · "ON THE PAGE"

Reading

Decoding gets you the words, and that is real work. A student can answer every comprehension question and still just be getting through the passage. The act of **Reading** is building a world inside the text, and letting it change how you see.

SHARING OUT · "ON THE PAGE"

Writing

Transcription gets words onto the page, and it has to be taught. A student can fill the page, hit every line of the rubric, and still say nothing. The act of **Writing** is shaping a mental model into language another reader can rebuild.

TAKING IN · "OUT LOUD"

Listening

Hearing catches the sounds, that part is a given. A student can catch every word and still be only finishing the assignment, following the rules, playing the school game. The act of **Listening** is building meaning from what is said, and even letting a voice change your mind, including the voice we hear inside as we read.

SHARING OUT · "OUT LOUD"

Speaking

Articulation makes the words clear, and that is worth teaching. A student can say the right answer and play the school game without ever risking a real idea. The act of **Speaking** is turning a mental model into words a listener can build with, including the words we rehearse first in our own head.

The skill matters. **And** so does having a meaningful purpose.

(The most important word in that sentence is **And**.)