



Florida Literacy
and Reading Excellence

FLaRE Document

Balanced Reading Instruction in K-3 Classrooms

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Document # 1-001
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MISSION OF THE FLaRE CENTER

The mission of the Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence (FLaRE) Center is to support the Florida Department of Education in its statewide implementation of the Florida Reading Initiatives by functioning as a principal informational delivery mechanism for improving the early literacy and reading instruction to children and families across the state of Florida.

The Center will serve as...

- an information clearinghouse for scientifically based reading and family literacy research
- a lighthouse for disseminating information on successful projects
- a research/development center to document effective practices based on rigorous research methods
- a development center for preservice and inservice teacher training
- a linkage for school districts, IHEs, community organizations that have a vested interest in family literacy and reading excellence.

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Reading

Reading is essential to success in our society; it is the major avenue to learning, and it must be mastered in school. Because of the importance of reading, especially during the primary grades, difficulty in learning to read influences children's motivation to learn. Students must acquire the knowledge, skills, and strategies that will allow them to read, write, and think critically. In *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, Anderson, Heibert, Scott, and Wilkinson, (1985) stated, "Reading is a basic life skill. It is a cornerstone for a child's success in schools, and indeed, throughout life. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success will be lost" (p. 1).

In studying over 10,000 children over the past 15 years, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the United States Office of Education research have documented the following necessary components of effective beginning reading instruction:

- appreciation for the written word;
- awareness of printed language and the written system;
- knowledge of the alphabet;
- phonological awareness;
- knowledge of sounds and letters;
- spelling; and
- fluent, reflective reading.

The NICHD studies also told us that for 85 to 90 % of poor readers, prevention and early intervention programs that combine instruction in phoneme awareness, phonics, spelling, reading fluency and reading comprehension strategies—provided by skilled teachers—can increase reading skills to average reading levels. This research also indicated that if early intervention is delayed until 9 years of age—the time that most children with reading difficulties first receive assistance—approximately 75 % of these students will continue to have difficulties learning to read throughout high school and their adult years (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

We know how children learn to read. We also know that a combination of instructional methods and components of instruction are more effective in teaching children to read. We need to implement what we know and help all students become fluent and independent readers.

Because of the convergence of research and best practice, it is now abundantly clear what it will take to enable children to become skilled readers. All successful early reading programs must:

- base instruction on accurate diagnostic information;
- develop print concepts;
- develop knowledge of letter names and shapes;
- convey the understanding that spoken words are composed of sounds (phonemic awareness) and that letters correspond to these sounds;
- provide systematic and explicit instruction in sound/ symbol relationships (phonics);
- connect that instruction to practice in highly decodable text that contains the sounds and symbols taught; and

- make use of rich and varied literature and read to children regularly.

In addition, direct instruction and practice comprehending the meaning of text must start early and build through the grades. All of these skills must be taught as part of a comprehensive approach that includes varied and abundant printed materials, active learning, and the development of written and spoken language through highly engaging activities.

All children in kindergarten need experience with instructional programs that will help them to develop the prerequisite phonological, vocabulary, and early reading skills necessary for success in 1st grade. Kindergartners should acquire the skills needed to recognize and print both upper and lowercase letters with reasonable ease and accuracy. All children in kindergarten should develop familiarity with the basic purposes and mechanisms of reading and writing, and develop age-appropriate language comprehension skills.

Reading programs during the first three years should be designed so that adequate instructional time is devoted to the teaching of phonemic awareness skills, phonics skills, the development of spelling and orthographic skills, the development of reading fluency and automaticity and the development of reading comprehension strategies. Each of these components of reading instruction should be taught in an integrated context with ample practice provided in reading familiar material. This is imperative for those demonstrating difficulty in learning to read, but beneficial for all.

In 1998, the National Research Council of the National Academy of Science commissioned a blue ribbon panel report on Preventing Reading Difficulties (Snow et al., 1998) and the NICHD selected a group of experts to point educators and policymakers to the best research in reading instruction. The committee's report outlined the key elements all children need in order to become good readers:

- learning letters and sounds;
- reading for meaning; and
- practice reading with many types of books.

The report recommended that reading instruction in the earliest grades should promote reading comprehension by helping students to develop a rich vocabulary and the knowledge to use it. Curricula, the report told us, should include explicit instruction on summarizing the main idea, predicting events and outcomes, making inferences, questioning and clarifying what is unclear. The 17 member panel of the National Research Council also suggested in their two-year research report that from the earliest years students should engage in daily writing activities to gain comfort and familiarity with writing.

Recent research shows that for about 60% of our nation's children, learning to read is a frightening challenge, and for at least 20% to 30 % of these children, reading is one of the most difficult tasks that they will have to master throughout their educational experience. Reading is a complex process, and it is "inextricably embedded in educational, social, historical, cultural, and biological realities" (Snow et al., 1998, p. 33).

We, at the Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence (FLaRE) Center, view *reading* as an active and complex process of constructing meaning from written text in relation to the reader's experiences, knowledge, motivation, and the context of the reading situation. The terms "reading" and "literacy" are used synonymously

in this document. This usage reflects an understanding of the complex nature of our interactions with print as well as the acknowledgement of the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing.

Teaching children to read involves not just the knowledge about letters and sounds (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999). The American Federation of Teachers recently published a report, titled *Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science*, which examined the need for high-quality professional teacher development and reading instruction. In that report, research was cited that indicated effective reading instruction includes the following:

- direct instruction of decoding, comprehension, and literature appreciation; phoneme awareness instruction;
 - systematic and explicit instruction in the code system of written English;
 - daily exposure to a variety of texts, as well as incentives for children to read independently and with others;
 - vocabulary instruction that includes a variety of complementary methods designed to explore the relationships among words and the relationships among word structure, origin, and meaning;
 - comprehension strategies that include prediction of outcomes, summarizing, clarification, questioning, and visualization; and
 - frequent writing of prose to enable deeper understanding of what is read.
- (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 1999, pp. 7-8)

What Does Research Tells Us about Reading?

Over several decades, researchers have conducted studies in reading instruction that have generated a substantial knowledge base for teaching reading. Thousands of studies have been conducted and a wide variety of literature reviews have been written (e.g., Adams, 1990; Barr, Kamil, Mosenthal, & Pearson, 1991; Chall, 1967; Pearson, Barr, Kamil, & Mosenthal, 1984; Snow et al., 1998). The recent review by Snow et al. (1998) provided a current, comprehensive overview of research-based knowledge about teaching children to read.

As in the past, this recent report titled, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998), called for a *combined emphasis* on meaning and phonological processing. Snow et al. (1998) also stated that effective and powerful instruction from knowledgeable teachers is the key to successful early reading achievement. Balanced reading instruction (providing all children with opportunities to master concepts of print, learn the alphabetic principle, acquire word recognition skills, develop phonemic awareness, engage in and sustain interest in reading, and experience a variety of developmentally appropriate materials in the context of developmentally appropriate instruction) continues to be the major deterrent against reading failure (Adams, 1990; Hiebert, Pearson, Taylor, Richardson, & Paris, 1998; Snow et al., 1998).

The Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties also recommended that the number one priority for funding research should be to improve classroom-reading instruction in kindergarten and the primary grades. This report provided compelling evidence that children who do not learn to read fluently and independently in the early grades have few opportunities to catch up and virtually no chance to surpass their peers who are reading on grade level by the end of third grade. The findings about beginning reading that are reported by the Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow et al., 1998) are central to the present document.

Snow et al. (1998) stated that adequate reading requires that children:

- use reading to obtain meaning from text;
- have frequent and intensive opportunities to read;
- be exposed to frequent, regular spelling-sound relationships;
- learn about the nature of the alphabetic writing system; and
- understand the structure of spoken words. (p. 3)

Snow et al. (1998) also stated that initial reading instruction requires a focus on:

- use reading to obtain meaning from print;
- the sublexical structure of spoken words;
- the nature of the orthographic system;
- the specifics of frequent, regular spelling-sound relationships;
- frequent and intensive opportunities to read; and
- opportunities to write. (p. 314)

In addition, Snow et al. (1998) acknowledged that adequate progress in learning to read English (or any alphabetic language) beyond the initial level depends on:

- having a working understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically;
- sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of texts;
- sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary to render written texts meaningful and interesting; and
- control over procedures for monitoring comprehension and repairing misunderstandings; and
- continued interest and motivation to read for a variety of purposes. (pp. 3-4)

Snow et al. (1998) outlined that there are three obstacles to children's success in reading. The first obstacle is difficulty understanding and using the alphabetic principle—the idea that written spellings systematically represent spoken words. The second obstacle is a failure to transfer the comprehension skills to reading and to acquire new reading strategies. The third obstacle may appear as an absence or a loss of an initial motivation to read or failure to develop an appreciation of reading. The National Report on *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998) recommended that special attention should be given to (a) the characteristics of good primary reading instruction and (b) to ensuring high-quality preschool and kindergarten environments that will help provide children with the necessary linguistic, cognitive, and early literacy skills many children lack when they enter first grade. The preparation of teachers, their knowledge of effective reading instruction, and the support they receive also contribute to the development of preschool, kindergarten, and primary classroom environments.

Research has shown that effective primary reading teachers have a sophisticated understanding of literacy instruction (Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1988; Erickson & Smith, 1991; Hoffman, 1992; Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996). Morrow, Tracey, Woo, and Pressley (1999) examined the nature of exemplary early literacy instruction and concluded that the teachers who were identified as exemplary had a balanced perspective for literacy instruction. Students of exemplary teachers were exposed both to the direct, explicit instruction for skill development in the context of authentic literature and instruction integrated with writing and content area connections.

The Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties (Snow et al., 1998) strongly recommended that first through third grade curricula include the following components:

- Beginning readers need explicit instruction and practice that lead to an appreciation that spoken words are made up of smaller units of sounds, familiarity with spelling-sound correspondences and common spelling conventions and their use in identifying printed words, "sight" recognition of frequently used words, and independent reading, including reading aloud. Fluency should be promoted through practice with a wide variety of well written and engaging texts at the child's own comfortable reading level.
- Children who have started to read independently, typically second graders and above, should be encouraged to sound out and confirm the identities of visually unfamiliar words they encounter in the course of reading meaningful texts, recognizing words primarily through attention to their letter-sound relationships. Although context and pictures can be used as a tool to monitor word recognition, children should not be taught to use them to substitute for information provided by the letters in the word.
- Because the ability to obtain meaning from print depends so strongly on the development of word recognition accuracy and reading fluency, both of the latter should be regularly assessed in the classroom, permitting timely and effective instructional response when difficulty or delay is apparent.
- Beginning in the earliest grades, instruction should promote comprehension by actively building linguistic and conceptual knowledge in a rich variety of domains, as well as through direct instruction about comprehension strategies such as summarizing the main idea, predicting events and outcomes of upcoming text, drawing inferences, and monitoring for coherence and misunderstandings. This instruction can take place while adults read to students or when students read themselves.
- Once children learn some letters, they should be encouraged to write them, to use them to begin writing words or parts of words, and to use words to begin writing sentences. Instruction should be designed with the understanding that the use of invented spelling is not in conflict with teaching correct spelling. Beginning writing with invented spelling can be helpful for developing understanding of the identity and segmentation of speech sounds and sound-spelling relationships. Conventionally correct spelling should be developed through focused instruction and practice. Primary-grade children should be expected to spell previously studied words and spelling patterns correctly in their final writing products. Writing should take place regularly and frequently to encourage children to become more comfortable and familiar with it.
- Throughout the early grades, time, materials, and resources should be provided with two goals: (a) to support daily independent reading of texts selected to be of particular interest for the individual student, and beneath the individual student's frustration level, in order to consolidate the student's capacity for independent reading and (b) to support daily assisted or supported reading and rereading of texts that are slightly more difficult in wording or in linguistic, rhetorical, or conceptual structure in order to promote advances in the student's capabilities.
- Throughout the early grades, schools should promote independent reading outside school by such means as daily at-home reading assignments and expectations, summer reading lists, encouraging parent involvement, and by working with community groups, including public librarians, who share this goal. (pp. 7-8)

Snow et al. (1998) stated that:

it is clear from the research that the process of learning to read is a lengthy one that begins very early in life. Given the importance identified in the research literature of starting school motivated to read and with the prerequisite language and early literacy skills, the Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties

(Snow et al., 1998) recommends that all children, especially those at risk for reading difficulties, should have access to early childhood environments that promote language and literacy growth and that address a variety of skills that have been identified as predictors of later reading achievement. Preschools and other group care settings for young children often provide relatively impoverished language and literacy environments—in particular those available to families with limited economic resources.

As ever more young children are entering group care settings pursuant to expectations that their mothers will join the work force, it becomes critical that the preschool opportunities available to lower-income families be designed in ways that support language and literacy development.

Preschool programs, even those designed specifically as interventions for children at risk of reading difficulties, should be designed to provide optimal support for cognitive, language, and social development, within this broad focus. However, ample attention should be paid to skills that are known to predict future reading achievement, especially those for which a causal role has been demonstrated. Similarly, and for the same reasons, kindergarten instruction should be designed to stimulate verbal interaction; to enrich children's vocabularies; to encourage talk about books; to provide practice with the sound structure of words; to develop knowledge about print, including the production and recognition of letters; and to generate familiarity with the basic purposes and mechanisms of reading.

Children who will probably need additional support for early language and literacy development should receive it as early as possible. Pediatricians, social workers, speech-language therapists, and other preschool practitioners should receive research-based guidelines to assist them to be alert for signs that children are having difficulties acquiring early language and literacy skills. Parents, relatives, neighbors, and friends can also play a role in identifying children who need assistance. Through adult education programs, public service media, instructional videos provided by pediatricians, and other means, parents can be informed about what skills and knowledge children should be acquiring at young ages, and about what to do and where to turn if there is concern that a child's development may be lagging behind in some respects. (pp. 8-9)

In summary, Snow et al. (1998) found that for children to be good readers, they must be taught:

- phonemic awareness skills—the ability to manipulate the sounds that make up the spoken language;
- phonics skills—the understanding that there are relationships between letters and sounds;
- the ability to read fluently with accuracy, speed, and expression; and
- how to apply reading comprehension strategies to strengthen understanding and enjoyment of what they read.

Snow et al. (1998) recommend that in order for schools with large numbers of children at risk for reading difficulties to be effective they need to have manageable class sizes, student-teacher ratios, competent teachers, a well-designed reading program, high-quality instructional materials, good school libraries, ongoing professional development, and pleasant school environments.

What is Balanced Reading Instruction?

The term “balanced reading instruction” is not new. It has been used to describe literacy programs that balanced reading *to* children, reading *with* children, and reading *by* children (Holdaway, 1980). There is much disagreement as to the exact definition of balanced reading instruction. It has come to mean a lot of different things to different people (Reutzel, 1999). In general, a balanced reading program is one that includes reading, writing, spelling, phonics, and other skills-based instruction (Cassidy, & Cassidy, 1999/2000). Basal readers, direct instruction, workbooks, quality children’s literature, independent reading and writing can all be part of a balanced reading program (Cassidy, Brozo, & Cassidy, 2000).

Balanced literacy instruction is a multi-faceted process, which involves teachers planning assessment-based instruction that incorporates research-based practices. Reutzel and Cooter (2000) state that balanced literacy programs teach students skills in reading and writing based on their individual needs and within the context of appropriately leveled reading materials of interest to the learner. Many teachers feel that a balanced literacy approach enables them to do a better job of empowering students and teachers, accomplished in part by reading in real books, explicit instruction in skills and strategies, teaching composition skills through the writing process, and speaking and listening experiences.

A balanced approach to reading should be a flexible, multi-faceted approach to reading. Balance means different things for different children depending on their reading skills and needs. Balanced reading instruction *is not a one-size-fits-all* reading model. Allington and Walmsley (1995) point out that there is “no quick fix” and no one program to meet the needs of all children. Instead, teachers must be able to recognize different student learning styles and be able to select appropriate strategies to the individual needs of the child and to strive to find balance for every child (Speigel, 1994). Several studies have shown that effective primary-level teachers blend perspectives to strategically balance a variety of methods and contents (Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, & Duffy-Hester, 1998; Duffy, 1991; Wharton-MacDonald, Pressley, & Mistretta, 1997), rather than adhering to one perspective or another.

In planning balanced reading instruction, teachers must take into account the needs and diversity of their students. Some students enter school with minimal experiences with print. These students will need consistent opportunities to work with connected text and meaning-based activities as well as intensive instruction in word identification strategies (Adams, 1990; Braunger & Lewis, 1997; Chall, 1983; Cunningham & Allington, 1994; Snow et al., 1998). Other students enter school with many experiences with complex print and with well-developed reading and writing skills. These students will require less time with phonological processing activities (Adams, 1990). Planning balanced instruction for diversity requires that teachers are knowledgeable of the research and make informed decisions about their students’ needs and about reading instruction (Freppon & Dahl, 1998). Teaching reading effectively is complex. It requires a good knowledge of research and how to apply it, and it takes time and hard work to learn well (Freppon & Dahl, 1998).

Scholars at the Center for the Improvement of early Reading Achievement (CIERA) offer 10 principles for effective reading instruction. CIERA emphasizes the importance of well-balanced instructional programs that benefit all children to read and write. Such programs are generally characterized by intensive, systematic one-on-one or small-group instruction, a blend of meaning and code approaches, thoroughly individualized assessment and diagnosis, and extensive experiences with a wide range of texts (CIERA, 1998).

We, at the FLaRE Center, view “*balanced reading instruction*” as a multi-faceted approach designed and implemented by informed instructional decision-makers.

Research has shown that teachers and students in balanced literacy programs tend to perform better than in traditional programs (e.g., Wharton-MacDonald, Pressley, & Mistretta, 1997). In balanced reading instruction skilled and well-informed teachers teach students both the structure of language *and* how to construct meaning as they interact with various texts. Balanced instruction involves teachers in planning assessment-based instruction that incorporates research-based practices. The balance of instruction varies according to the individual student’s reading abilities and needs, and the teacher’s knowledge of research and an understanding of how to apply it (Freppon & Dahl, 1998).

Characteristics of Balanced Reading Instruction

In balanced reading instruction, students are taught—explicitly, systematically and consistently—how to understand and use the structure of language and how to construct meaning from various texts. Students read alone, are read to, and read with others daily. A variety of language experiences help students develop their language development and connect oral and written language.

Fitzgerald (1999) identified three principles of a balanced literacy approach. First, teachers develop students’ skills knowledge, including decoding skills, their strategy knowledge for comprehension and responding to literature, and their affective knowledge, including nurturing students’ love for reading. Second, instructional approaches that are inherently opposite such as, phonics instruction and reading workshop. Third, students read a variety of reading materials from trade books to leveled books with controlled vocabulary and basal reading textbooks. The goal of a balanced literacy program is to develop lifelong readers and writers (Baumann & Ivey, 1997; McIntyre & Pressley, 1996; Spiegel, 1998; Strickland, 1994/1995; Weaver, 1998).

A critical component of balanced reading instruction is *direct explicit instruction* in:

- phonemic and phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge in kindergarten and first grade;
- alphabetic knowledge, and blending in first grade and sound/symbol correspondence, structural analysis, contextual clues, and high frequency words;
- spelling;
- comprehension strategies in order to evaluate, synthesize, analyze, connect, infer, and inquire; and
- vocabulary instruction.

In addition, students read both orally and silently and are read to from a variety of high-quality increasingly complex fiction and non-fiction texts at both independent and instructional levels across the curriculum, including, as often as possible, texts in the students’ first language. Beginning readers practice fluency in predictable texts and decodable texts with phonetically regular patterns. Students read both teacher-assigned and self-selected literature and textbooks. In a balanced reading program, students write daily to support and extend their knowledge of the structure of language and construct meaning. Appropriate and adequate resources, including technology that is readily available for instruction to students, teachers, and parents can in the successful implementation of a balanced reading program. Formal and ongoing informal assessments allow teachers to intervene early with appropriate instruction to students who are not progressing and help teachers determine the students’ abilities, and needs,

as well as the effectiveness of reading instruction. A broad range of assessments helps inform teachers' instructional decisions.

All of these features need to be embedded in a literature-and-language-rich classroom environment in order for students to become skilled readers. Including the following at the "right dosage" for each student provides the "balance" in balanced reading instruction:

- basal readers;
- daily use of fiction and nonfiction trade books;
- direct instruction and practice in guided reading groups;
- oral reading by teachers and children;
- word identification strategies;
- independent reading of high-interest books;
- "process" writing and spelling instruction;
- ongoing strategic assessment;
- planned classrooms; and
- language-rich classroom environment.

An effective, balanced reading approach needs to support children's development and advancement from one phase to the next in the acquisition of early literacy (Liebling, 1998). Such approach involves a lot more than the explicit teaching of the skills and strategies of reading and writing. The purpose of such a program is to help children read and write well and also develop a lifelong interest in reading and writing.

Liebling (1998) summarized research that has identified five key elements that contribute to an enriched early literacy context:

- *Developmental appropriateness.* It can be found in the materials, activities, instruction, and overall classroom environment. Print-rich environments, significant exposure to books, meaningful interactions with adults, and building of such skills as phonemic awareness, have been shown to be excellent predictors of success in reading.
- *Meaningful reading and writing within varied social contexts.* Children benefit from different types of interactions with adults and peers in varied social contexts, and their success during the early literacy years is significantly influenced by the meaningful literacy activities we provide for children (Hiebert & Raphael, 1998, as cited in Liebling, 1998).
- *The constructive nature of reading and writing process.* Children should have daily opportunities to use their prior knowledge in acquiring new knowledge and skills (Anderson et al., 1985, as cited in Liebling, 1998). Adults can enhance children's understanding of reading and writing as constructive processes by modeling strategies as part of explicit teaching of strategies (Roehler & Duffy, 1991, as cited in Liebling, 1998).
- *Integrated spoken and written language.* Researchers have highlighted the close relationship between reading and writing (Hansen & Graves, 1991; Greene, 1995; Pearson & Tierney, 1984; Putnam, 1994, as cited in Liebling, 1998). Reading and writing are interrelated and interactive processes, and literacy instruction

should be based on this relationship (Heilman, Blair, & Rupley, 1998, as cited in Liebling, 1998). Inviting children to choose books they are interested in and discuss what they read will help the development of critical reading and writing.

The availability and incorporation of quality literature for young children is another important element. Providing children with daily opportunities to read to and with adults or read independently is an important feature of early literacy classrooms. Encouraging children to read daily with their families and parents to read daily to their children enhances children's exposure to different types of text. Reading aloud has a major impact on the development of children's fluency and overall reading development (Morrow, 1992; Sulzby & Teale, 1996, as cited in Liebling, 1998).

- *Explicit instruction in the skills and strategies of reading and writing.* A literacy-rich classroom environment accompanied by explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, word recognition, and comprehension strategies will help develop children's literacy acquisition. "Explicit instruction implies a clear and systematic approach in which teachers model skills and strategies, explain differences, establish and show purpose, and guide students in literacy acquisition." (Liebling, 1998, p. 17).

Liebling (1998) stated that **the instructional program for novice readers and writers** should be designed in such a way so that by the end of kindergarten, children would know:

- ◆ letter names;
- ◆ shapes;
- ◆ basic letter sounds;
- ◆ initial phonemic awareness concepts and skills;
- ◆ print concepts, and syntactic awareness;
- ◆ fundamental listening, discussion, telling and re-telling skills; and
- ◆ how to participate in group story writing.

Below is Liebling's (1998) summary of examples of appropriate research-based **best instructional practices for novice (ages 5-7) readers and writers**:

- *Classrooms organized as learning centers* that encourage embedding language and literacy within discovery and play activities.
- *A print-rich classroom environment* that is not over-stimulating but encourages associations of spoken words with signs in the classroom. An important component of a print-rich environment is a class library that contains a wide variety of texts: picture books, storybooks, poems, and informational texts, big books, patterned or predictable books, books on tape, computer-based reading, and children's magazines.
- *Oral language activities*, especially those involving drama and puppetry, to build receptive and expressive language and verbal reasoning.
- *Phonemic awareness activities* such as rhyming games, singing songs, and reciting poems. Explicit instruction in sound blending and segmentation tasks is also appropriate.
- *Print and syntactic awareness activities* to build purpose of reading, knowledge of words, letters, sentences, and paragraphs.
- *Independent reading* in which children have daily opportunities to read high quality books of their own

- choosing independently or with a peer.
- *Daily interactive storybook and nonfiction reading aloud* of high quality children’s literature by fluent readers. During reading aloud, the reading process is modeled and print concepts are developed.
- *Reading response discussion of books* read at home and at school to promote appreciation and text comprehension; story telling and re-telling. Teachers involve children in creating language experience stories or engaging in reading process activities: pre-reading predictions and setting the context for reading; during reading questioning and response conversation, and post-reading activities to encourage reflection on meaning.
- *Explicit instruction in letter recognition* using magnetic letters and blocks to name letters and identify letters by shapes.
- *Writing activities* including group story writing, language experience stories, writing to promote phonemic awareness and letter knowledge, and independent writing of stories encouraging the use of invented spelling. Even young children should be encouraged to use computers for writing along with daily opportunities to write and draw using paper and writing instruments. (pp. 18-19)

Liebling (1998) stated that **the instructional program for beginning readers and writers** should be designed in such a way so that children will be able to read age-appropriate texts successfully and independently by the end of grade 2. Liebling (1998) recommends that children should read 100-200 leveled books with 95% accuracy and comprehension. Honing (as cited in Liebling) summarized the following essential ingredients of an instructional program for beginning readers and writers:

- advanced phonemic awareness in sound blending and phonemic segmentation tasks;
- use of sound/symbol relationships;
- sound blending;
- syntactic awareness;
- knowledge of word families in decoding and encoding;
- recognition of high-frequency words and word families in reading connected text;
- use of such comprehension skills as summarizing the main idea, predicting and confirming meaning, drawing inferences, and self-monitoring;
- coordination of decoding and comprehension strategies in reading for meaning;
- writing and spelling words that children can read;
- writing meaningful stories and informational prose using a combination of invented and conventional spelling;
- picture and print concepts;
- conventional print concepts; and
- simple grammar skills and concepts. (1998, p. 19)

Liebling (1998) described the following **research-based best instructional practices for beginning (ages 6-8) readers and writers** in this way:

- *Learning centers* that encourage literacy skills embedded in play and discovery activities.
- *A print-rich classroom environment* that encourages association of print with signs in the classroom. A print-rich environment includes a class library that contains a wide variety of texts including picture books, storybooks, poems, and informational texts. Children have daily opportunities to choose books they want

to read or reread independently or with a friend.

- *Oral language activities* including signing and reciting verses, dramatizing stories and rhymes, and discussing word meaning, ideas, books, and experiences.
- *Phonemic awareness*: Phonemic awareness activities include identifying words that do not belong in a sequence; singing songs that involve play with phonemes or require substitution of words and word parts in rhyming patterns; and clapping, tapping, and body movements to indicate the number of syllables or patterns in songs, stories, or words. Children then advance to language word play; segmenting words into component sounds and blending sounds into real words; and changing the beginning, middle, or ending of words to create new words.
- *Alphabet recognition and writing*: Acquiring knowledge of all letter names by sorting letters or identifying prominent letters in words; learning to write letters; tracing letters in sand; making letters out of clay; playing with letter blocks, magnetic letters; recognizing and writing all upper and lower case letters.
- *Shared, interactive storybook reading* through daily reading aloud at home and at school. Fluent readers model the reading process, and children share in the reading.
- *Daily guided reading activities* involve explicit teaching of word recognition and comprehension strategies. Explicit instruction in comprehension strategies including making storyboards or other graphic organizers to show story structure elements such as setting, characters, and plot events and guided discussion using thinking strategies such as questioning and summarizing. Explicit instruction in word recognition strategies includes phonics, decoding by analogy, use of linguistic context to predict and confirm decoding and sight words. Children should be encouraged to self-correct mispronunciations and self-monitor text comprehension as it helps to build confidence in one's ability to read independently. They should also be encouraged to use other aspects of the linguistic context such as sentence structure, word boundaries, and capitalization and punctuation cues to predict and confirm the accuracy of decoding and comprehension. Language experience stories are also used to enhance connections between spoken and written language and between reading and writing.
- *Independent reading* through daily opportunities to read high-quality literature chosen by individual children. By the end of grade 2, children should be independently reading easy trade books with predictable and patterned language.
- *Shared writing activities* include instruction on the writing process. Formal spelling instruction should begin in the second half of grade 1. By the end of grade 2, children should be using advanced spelling words along with invented spelling.
- *Independent writing activities* include daily opportunities to write a variety of texts as part of play, learning center activities, labeling of art, and writing for a variety of communicative purposes. Writing is shared in conferences and "public" readings while sitting in the "author's chair." A classroom library of children's "published" stories is established. (pp. 20-21)

During grades 1-3, teachers should help children develop their overall literacy abilities and skills. During grades 2-3, children should practice reading as many fiction and non-fiction books as possible. Reading practice will help enhance their decoding abilities, comprehension abilities, and their overall confidence and motivation to read independently. Honig (as cited in Liebling, 1998) suggested that children in grades 2-3 should read between 25 and 35 age-appropriate books per year. As a result, children's vocabulary and comprehension will be expanded.

Liebling (1998) presented the following summary of research-based **best instructional practices for advanced beginning (ages 7-9) readers and writers**:

- *A print-rich classroom environment* that includes a class library containing a wide variety of texts including picture books, storybooks, poems, and informational texts. Children have daily opportunities to choose books they want to read and reread independently or with a friend.
- *Oral language speaking and listening activities* include choral reading for audience, presentations to the class and parents, dramatizations and puppet shows, and engaging in discussion to improve comprehension and thinking skills.
- *Advanced phonemic awareness activities* include phonemic segmentation and sound blending by changing or deleting the beginning, middle, and ending sounds of words to make new words.
- *Daily guided reading* provides explicit instruction in word recognition strategies. Decoding by analogy and structural analysis are emphasized in the decoding of multi-syllabic words, but there is a decreased emphasis on phonics. Becoming attentive to rhythm, pace, and intonation while reading aloud with a partner or listening to one's own tape recording helps to build fluency and automaticity. Explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies includes activities for self-monitoring by rereading, scanning, questioning, predicting/confirming, and summarizing.
- *Independent reading*: Children maintain reading logs of independent reading with a goal of reading at least 25 books per year that are increasingly of greater complexity. Create opportunities for children to participate in book club discussions builds motivation for reading books of interest.
- *Daily guided writing* provides explicit instruction in the writing process and the use of correct spelling, syntactic structure, and writing conventions. Children have opportunities to learn to write a variety of text types including creative stories and informational texts for a variety of audiences. Instruction in the writing of nonfiction includes access to informational sources including the library and the Internet, note taking, and organization of ideas by topic sentences and paragraphs. Word study to build vocabulary and spelling ability is a regular part of instruction. Provide children with opportunities to write a variety of texts for a variety of communicative purposes. Children are encouraged to use computers for writing as well as to use paper and writing implements.
- *Independent writing*: Children have daily writing opportunities to write stories, letters, and informational text. Opportunities to share writing with peers in conferences, writing clubs, and in the "Author's Chair" are encouraged. (pp. 21-22)

As a result of current research and reports on reading instruction, we, at the FLARE Center, have summarized eleven key features of a balanced reading approach for K-3rd grade:

- Phonological awareness
- Alphabetic knowledge
- Print awareness
- Orthographic awareness
- Word recognition
- Reading practice
- Writing practice
- Comprehension
- Assessment

- Attitudinal/Affective Domain
- Carefully planned, language-rich classrooms.

What Teachers Can Do

In its report, The National Committee on Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, concluded that our best arsenal against reading failure is quality classroom instruction in kindergarten and the primary grades reading (Snow et al., 1998). The Committee strongly recommended that our number one priority for funding research should be to improve classroom reading instruction in kindergarten and the primary grades.

Effective and powerful instruction from knowledgeable teachers *is* the key to early reading achievement (Fisher & Adler, 1999). Balanced reading instruction providing *all* children with opportunities to master the concepts of print, learn the alphabetic principle, develop word recognition skills and phonemic awareness, engage in and sustain an interest in reading, and experience a wide range of developmentally appropriate materials and instruction continue to be the major deterrents against reading failure (Adams, 1990; Hiebert, Pearson, Taylor, Richardson, & Paris, 1998; Snow et al., 1998).

All of these reviews provide significant evidence that children who do not learn to read fluently and independently in the early grades have few opportunities to catch up, and no chance to surpass their peers who are already on grade level by the end of third grade. It is important for educators to become more knowledgeable about the role of student characteristics, reading instruction, reading activities and materials, and classroom environments on reading development.

The challenge is to create an enriching and motivating core early literacy program in which children are reading and writing meaningful, connected text and integrating oral and written language while simultaneously engaged in clear, consistent, and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, word recognition and fluency, comprehension skills and strategies, writing process, and spelling (Snow et al., 1998).

Wharton-MacDonald et al. (1997) investigated characteristics of outstanding literacy instruction in first grade and identified eight characteristics of highly effective first-grade literacy teachers which can be summarized as follows:

- instructional balance of skills and high-quality reading and writing experiences;
- high instructional density;
- extensive use of scaffolding;
- encouragement of student self-regulation;
- thorough integration of reading and writing activities;
- high expectations for all students;
- masterful classroom management; and
- an awareness of purpose.

Wharton-MacDonald and her colleagues' research (1997) complemented other research (e.g., Pressley et al., 1996) conclusions that truly outstanding primary-level literacy instruction is a balanced integration of high-quality reading and writing experiences and explicit instruction in the basic literacy skills.

Wharton-MacDonald, Pressley, and Hampston (1998) in their most recent study examined the practices of effective teachers of early reading and concluded that those teachers demonstrated instructional balance, focusing both on skills and literature. They taught decoding skills explicitly and also provided students with many opportunities to engage in authentic, integrated reading and writing activities. The three most effective teachers used scaffolding extensively to help their students learn. They encouraged self-regulation by teaching students to monitor their learning, the quality of their work, and their work time. They encouraged self-regulation by teaching their students to effectively use strategies to be good readers. The teachers also had masterful management skills and high expectations for their students. Regarding word recognition, the most effective teachers implemented a more balanced approach and were the only group of teachers who went “beyond the call of duty” to help students apply the alphabetic principle to work in everyday reading tasks.

Wharton-MacDonald and her colleagues (1998) analyzed data collected from across classrooms and schools, in order to identify characteristics of effective schools. The following summary shows that in the most effective schools students:

- averaged 60 minutes of small, ability-grouped instruction;
- spent 27-18 minutes per day in independent reading;
- received structured comments, probing of incorrect responses, and scaffolded instruction;
- were taught decoding skills explicitly; and
- had many opportunities to engage in authentic reading.

In summary, Wharton-MacDonald et al. (1998) identified the following elements of effective instruction related to primary-grade reading achievement:

- awareness of purpose;
- enthusiasm;
- task orientation;
- high pupil engagement;
- short transitions;
- much time spent in reading/language arts activities;
- frequent instruction in skills and strategies;
- high success rate;
- masterful classroom management;
- positive classroom climate;
- high pupil expectations;
- redoubling of teaching efforts when students are having difficulty;
- effective use of praise;
- extensive content coverage, instructional density;
- explicit modeling and scaffolding;
- teaching skills in context;
- extra instruction for low readers;
- encouragement of self-regulation;

- instructional balance;
- much reading of connected text;
- much writing of connected text; and
- activities appropriate, meaningful, challenging. (p. 22)

Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole (1999) researched 14 U. S. schools in order to examine school and classroom factors and early reading achievement. They reported that statistically significant teacher factors included:

- home communication;
- student engagement;
- time spent in small group instruction;
- time spent in independent reading; and
- approaches to word recognition instruction.

Teachers in the most effective schools were much more likely to call home, send many notes and handouts home to keep parents informed about what was going on in school. The most effective teachers created classroom environments and activities that helped almost 96% of students to be on task and meaningfully engaged. Students of the most effective teachers received 48 minutes per day in small group instruction in reading. In the four most effective schools, students received 60 minutes of small group instruction and spent 28 minutes in independent reading per day. Finally, teachers in the most effective schools taught phonics in meaningful contexts—and not in isolation—a variety of word recognition strategies, and coaching.

Juel and Minden-Cupp (2000) studied four first-grade classrooms in order to identify specific instructional practices that appear to foster learning to read words. The results of their study showed that children who entered first grade with the weakest reading skills seemed to have greatest success with the following four classroom practices:

- Teachers modeled word recognition strategies by: (a) chunking of words into component units such as syllables, onset/rimes, or finding little words in big ones; (b) sounding and blending individual phonemes; (c) considering known letter-sounds and what makes contextual sense.
- Children were encouraged to finger point to words as text was read.
- Children used manipulable materials to actively compare and contrast words (e.g., pocket charts for sorting picture cards by sound and word cards by spelling pattern).
- Instruction groups were small with lesson plans designed to meet the specific needs of each child within that group. (p. 334)

The International Reading Association (IRA), in its new position statement *Excellent Reading Teachers* (2000), acknowledged that effective teachers of reading have a good understanding of children's reading and writing development, assess children's individual progress and relate reading instruction to a child's previous experiences, know a multiplicity of ways to teach reading, use a variety of materials and texts for children to read, and help children read strategically.

What Principals/Schools Can Do

The teacher plays a significant role in the development of students' reading abilities, and specific efforts should be made to provide all teachers with adequate knowledge about reading and reading instruction (Snow et al., 1998). Preschool teachers' knowledge and expertise, as well as the support provided to the teacher, are central to achieving the goal of primary prevention of reading difficulties. Teachers need to be knowledgeable about the research foundations of reading and the role of instruction in maximizing literacy development. Snow et al. (1998) recommend that professional development should not be seen as something that happens only in inservice activities, but rather, as ongoing support from the school, colleagues and specialists, as well as regular self-examination and reflection.

Hoffman (1991) in his review of research on effective schools and reading achievement identified eight attributes of effective schools, which can be summarized as follows:

- a clear school mission;
- effective instructional leadership and practices;
- high expectations;
- a safe, orderly, and positive environment;
- ongoing curriculum improvement;
- maximum use of instructional time;
- frequent monitoring of student progress; and
- positive home-school relationships.

Significant time must be dedicated to reading instruction and reading practice. A block of time for grades K-3 is recommended each morning for reading instruction, and additional assistance may be provided through tutorials for students needing individualized instruction.

Taylor et al. (1999) in their investigation of school and classroom factors related to primary-level reading achievement found that statistically significant school factors included:

- building communication with parents;
- systematic assessment of student progress;
- research-based early reading interventions;
- ongoing professional development;
- school organization and reading instruction; and
- reaching out to parents.

Taylor et al. (1999) found that in the most effective schools reading was clearly a priority at both the school and classroom level. Peer coaching, teaming, and program consistency created collaboration and school success. All effective schools had a systematic plan for ongoing assessment of students' progress. Assessment data guided school and instructional decisions. Early reading interventions were another reason for school success. In effective schools, there were innovative and systematic formats for professional development. Special education and regular classroom teachers collaborated and worked together to provide small group instruction. Lastly, in the most effective schools there were focus groups, active parent organizations,

and written or phone surveys to help reach out to parents.

The successful implementation of balanced reading instruction requires quality professional preparation and continuous professional growth. Administrators, teachers, supervisors, and other educational decision-makers should have adequate preparation for the implementation of a balanced reading program. Professional development for all stakeholders should be based on research, focused on improving reading instruction, and provide ongoing follow-up support. Professional development opportunities should be collaboratively developed and aligned with student performance and school goals and needs.

The following guidelines can support schools in planning effective balanced reading instruction:

- Balanced instruction may look very different in different schools.
- All instruction should be based on student characteristics, research, and ongoing assessment.
- Teachers are critical decision-makers.
- Instructional decisions must be based on research and reflection.
- Administrators play a significant role in creating a supportive school environment
- Special care should be given to ensure a complete balanced approach.

In addition, the IRA, in its new position statement *Excellent Reading Teachers* (2000), presented the following recommendations for developing excellence in education:

- Teachers should view themselves as lifelong learners and continually strive to improve their practice.
- Administrators should support teachers' efforts to improve reading instruction.
- Teacher educators should provide both a solid knowledge base and extensive supervised practice to prepare excellent beginning reading teachers.
- Legislators and policy-makers must understand the complete role of the teacher in providing reading instruction and must not impose one-size-fits-all mandates.
- Parents, community members, and teachers must work in partnership to assure that all children value reading and have many opportunities to read in their lives outside of school.

What Parents Can Do

Learning takes place at a very early stage in life, and the interaction between parents/ caregivers and their children can make a significant impact on a child's future academic career. Parents need to be informed about balanced reading instruction and the role they can play. Children who engage in daily discussions about what they read are more likely to become critical readers and writers. Parents are encouraged to read aloud to their children daily. Children become readers when their parents read to them. Parents are also encouraged to talk to their children, help them read on their own and see that reading is important, set up a reading area in their home, and provide their children with a variety of reading and writing materials and experiences.

Parents can also ask their children to describe events in their lives and discuss what they are reading and learning, listen to their children read, and become actively involved in their children's learning. Schools and teachers through regular communications should support this home-school connection with parents about classroom activities and expectations. Materials should be sent home for parents to read with their children.

Summary

This document presents a summary of current research in balanced reading instruction. Our understanding of the reading process, of reading research, of student characteristics and needs, of learning environments, of teacher knowledge, and teacher preparation is central to reading instruction and to children's reading development. The complexities of reading and reading instruction need to be addressed and examined.

We, at the FLaRE Center:

- **view “*balanced reading instruction*” as a multi-faceted approach designed and implemented by informed instructional decision-makers;**
- **believe that teaching children to read involves a lot more than just imparting knowledge about letters and sounds;**
- **believe that—effective—decoding is not the only concern of reading instruction;**
- **do not equate word-level processing, or decoding, with reading;**
- **believe that programs do not teach—teachers do;**
- **believe that effective and powerful reading instruction from knowledgeable teachers is the key to early reading achievement;**

Balanced instruction that provides all students with opportunities to master the concepts of print, learn the alphabetic principle, develop effective recognition skills, develop phonemic awareness, engage in and maintain an interest in reading, and experience a wide range of materials in the context of meaningful and developmentally appropriate instruction to be major deterrents against reading failure (Fisher & Adler, 1999; Taylor, Anderson, Au, & Raphael, 1999).

Bond and Dykstra (1967) in their report on the First-grade Studies issued the following call:

Future research might well center on the teacher and learning situation characteristics rather than method and materials. The tremendous range among classrooms within any method points out the importance of elements in the learning situation over and over and above the methods employed. To improve reading instruction, it is necessary to train better teachers of reading rather than to expect a panacea in the form of materials. (p. 123)

The research we have examined in this document confirms that the teaching of reading requires systematic, explicit skill instruction—including phonics and phonemic awareness—to facilitate the development of reading skills, embedded in meaningful and enjoyable reading and writing experiences with whole texts to facilitate the construction of meaning.

We agree with the IRA's position statement *The Role of Phonics in Reading Instruction* (1997). Research has shown that: (a) the teaching of phonics is an important aspect of beginning instruction, (b) effective classroom teachers in the primary grades value and teach phonics as part of their reading programs, and (c) in order for phonics instruction to be effective in promoting independence in reading, it must be embedded in the context of a total reading/language arts program.

Schools can help all children become independent readers and writers through a balanced literacy program. We know from research that phonics and phonemic awareness are not ends in themselves. Instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness facilitates letter recognition, word recognition, and reading comprehension, but systematic phonics instruction is *only one* component of a reading program.

Effective reading instruction involves much more than phonics, even though it is an important element early in the reading process. Systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction in phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension to create a comprehensive reading program. The development of phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, word reading accuracy and fluency, reading vocabulary and active reading comprehension strategies are all necessary, but not sufficient in themselves to produce healthy reading skills. All of these elements need to be integrated through informed instruction and practice. Schools must give thoughtful consideration to the elements of a balanced literacy curriculum, reading instruction, assessment, and professional development. Effective and powerful instruction from professionally trained and experienced teacher is the key to achieving reading success.

The National Education Association's (NEA) Task Force on Reading (2000) recommendations are:

- there is no one way to teach reading that works for all children all the time;
- the teacher, not the method, makes the real difference in reading success; and
- teachers cannot do the job without the support of the community and good policy. (p. 7)

The ability to read and write does not develop naturally, without careful planning and systematic instruction. In the current joint position statement of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NEYC), it is stated that "Learning to read and write is a complex, multifaceted process that requires a wide variety of instructional approaches" (1998, p. 206). Children need regular meaningful and active experiences with print so they can understand from an early age that reading and writing are valuable life-tools. In the IRA's position statement *Making a Difference Means Making it Different: Honoring Children's Rights to Excellent reading Instruction* (2000) it is reported that:

No single method or single combination of methods can successfully teach a child to read. Instead, each child must be helped to develop the skills and understandings he or she needs to become a reader. These include the following:

- a motivation to read,
- appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from text,
- sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension,
- the ability to decode unfamiliar words,
- the ability to read fluently, and
- an understanding of how speech sounds (phonemes) are connected to print.

Because children learn differently, teachers must be familiar with a wide range of

proven methods for helping children gain these skills. They also must have thorough knowledge of the children they teach, so they can provide the appropriate balance of methods needed for every child. (p. 3)

There is no single approach or method that is likely to be the most effective for all children (Strickland, 1994). The IRA and NEYC in their joint position statement (1998) stressed the following:

Ensuring that all young children reach their potentials as readers and writers is the shared responsibility of teachers, administrators, families, and communities. Educators have a special responsibility to teach every child and not to blame children, families, or each other when the task is difficult. All responsible adults need to work together to help children become competent readers and writers. (p. 211)

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Balanced Reading Glossary

Alphabetic Knowledge — Knowledge of the writing system that uses symbols to represent sounds.

Alphabetic Principle — The understanding that letters in words represent the phonemes in spoken words and that spoken words are represented by text.

Balanced Literacy Instruction — A multi-faceted approach designed and implemented by informed instructional decision-makers.

Comprehension — The process of constructing meaning from text.

Daily Guided Reading Activities — Explicit teaching of word recognition and comprehension strategies, done on a daily bases. Examples might be phonics, decoding by analogy, use of linguistic context to predict and confirm decoding and sight words for word recognition. Comprehension strategies may include making storyboards or other graphic organizers to show story structure elements, and guided discussion using thinking strategies such as questioning and summarizing.

Decoding — Translating the alphabet letters into words and sounds.

Direct/Explicit Instruction — Teaching involving systematic modeling and demonstrating of material with emphasis on the student's understanding and taking responsibility for their learning.

Independent Reading — Where children have daily opportunities to read high quality books of their own choosing independently or with a peer.

Independent Writing — Students write stories, books, poems, and other works using the writing process as a guide.

Guided Reading — Teacher works with small, homgeneous reading group, guiding them through instructional-level books.

Language-rich Classroom (Print Rich)— An environment which contains print in all shapes and forms that encourages associations of spoken words. Usually contains a class library that contains a wide variety of texts: picture books, storybooks, poems, and informational texts, big books, patterned or predictable books, books on tape, computer-based reading, and children’s magazines.

Multi-syllabic Words— Words that contain many syllables.

Oral Language Activities— Activities such as singing, choral reading, and reading aloud that help promote oral language.

Orthographic Awareness— Knowledge of the writing system of language, specifically, the correct sequence of letters, characters, or symbols; knowledge of spelling patterns.

Ongoing Assessment— Continuous evaluation involving formal, informal, and diagnostic/corrective-type methods.

Phonemic Awareness— Part of phonological awareness; the understanding that words are comprised of individual sounds (phonemes).

Phonemic Awareness Skills—The ability to manipulate the sounds that make up the spoken language.

Phonics or Phonics Instruction— Refers to using letter-sound relationships and other rules to identify words.

Phonics Skills—The understanding that there are relationships between letters and sounds.

Phonological Awareness— An awareness of all levels of the speech sound system, including word boundaries, stress patterns, syllables, onset-rime units, and phonemes.

Print Awareness— The ability to attend to the conventions and formats of print.

Readiness— To be prepared for instruction.

Reading— An active and complex process of constructing meaning from written text in relation to the reader’s experiences, knowledge, motivation, and the context of the reading situation.

Reading Interventions — Programs that address and work with students who have reading problems, who may be at-risk for reading failure.

Shared Writing — Teacher and students create text together with the teacher doing most of the writing and the student helping with the spelling of words.

Scaffolding — Support provided by the teacher to help students bridge gaps that may occur when their abilities fall short of the goal.

Sight Words — Words that the reader knows and can identify instantly. There are approximately 220 words in the English language that are considered under this category.

Syntactic Awareness — The understanding that word arrangement and grammar of words in a sentence can help provide meaning.

Trade Books — Chapter and picture books often located in libraries and bookstores.

Word Recognition — The procedure of identifying a word's pronunciation when given the printed letters or graphemes.