

**Research-Based Curriculum**

**Focused  
Reading  
Intervention**

**Complete Supplemental Program**

**Based on Respected Research**

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# Research on Reading Intervention

Reading is the cornerstone of success in education today. The proficient reader, either consciously or instinctively, engages in active thinking strategies throughout the reading process in order to increase comprehension. Yet, many students still struggle to read. An effective intervention program with research-based strategies, exceptional resources, and quality reading materials can address struggling readers' needs in order to help them become proficient readers. But what does an effective reading intervention program include? Researchers have focused their efforts in recent years on identifying the essential elements of effective reading interventions which includes direct and guided instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (National Reading Panel 2000).

## The Need for Intervention

Today's reading classrooms are filled with students of varying backgrounds, reading abilities, levels of English proficiency, and learning styles. Furthermore, teaching reading is not about merely passing on a set of skills that can be memorized or replicated by students. "Learning to read is a complex process. Most children learn to read and continue to grow in their mastery of this process. However, there continues to be a group of children for whom learning to read is a struggle" (Quatroche 1999).

Since the landmark report "Becoming a Nation of Readers" was published in 1984, schools have placed extensive focus on the need to develop better reading skills in our students. In this report, the Commission on Reading identified several characteristics of struggling readers, asserting that struggling readers "do not consistently see relationships between what they are reading and what they already know" (National Academy of Education 1984, 55).

More recent research (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001) found that there should be distinct differences between the type of instruction provided to all students and those identified as needing extra support.

Additionally, some struggling students make gains during the school year but don't retain that learning over the summer. Researcher Richard Allington cites summer reading loss as a key barrier for some children in developing reading skills (2006). His research and research conducted by others show that while students from wealthier homes start the year slightly ahead of where they ended the previous year, children from economically disadvantaged homes start the school year with a three-month gap in their reading skills (Allington 2006, 23). Thus, struggling readers from economically disadvantaged homes who don't attend robust and rigorous summer school programs start off the year much further behind than their struggling reader peers from more affluent homes who attend enrichment summer camps or summer school programs that focus on the skills they need to achieve. These findings highlight the need for effective intervention programs to ensure that all students succeed.

**"Specifically, instruction for children who have difficulties learning to read must be more *explicit and comprehensive*, more *intensive*, and more *supportive* than the instruction required by the majority of children."**

**—Foorman & Torgesen 2001, 20**

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## Response to Intervention in English Language Arts

In 2004, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) included language that allows a school to first determine whether a student can respond to “scientific, research-based” classroom instruction to alleviate reading difficulties before more intensive intervention and possibly evaluation for a learning disability is warranted (International Reading Association 2010). Although the term “Response to Intervention” (RTI) was not formally written into the law, this term is what has been coined to address the levels of intervention that must occur before a more formal identification is determined. Response to Intervention takes a “tiered” approach to intervention. Depending on the levels of difficulty students are having with the reading curriculum, they are classified as Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3. Specific definitions of these tiers differ from state to state, but the following are general descriptions:

### Tier 1

**Tier 1 students** are generally making good progress toward the standards but may be experiencing temporary or minor difficulties. These students may struggle in only a few of the overall areas of reading concepts. They usually benefit from peer work and parental involvement. They also benefit from confidence boosters when they are succeeding. Any problems that do arise should be diagnosed and addressed quickly in order to ensure that these students continue to succeed.

#### Research to Practice

##### Tier 1

Use *Focused Reading Intervention* as a supplement to the core curriculum. The focused lessons provide explicit instruction in key skills that students need, with options for differentiating instruction including reinforcing instruction for on-level learners and extending learning for students who have shown mastery of the skill. Students who are not making progress at this level should move to Tier 2.

### Tier 2

**Tier 2 students** may be one or two standard deviations below the mean on standardized tests. These students are struggling in various areas, which affect their overall success in the reading classroom. These students can usually respond to in-class differentiation strategies with focused, small-group instruction. This focused intervention may alleviate the need for further assessment for a specific learning disability.

#### Research to Practice

##### Tier 2

After administering the Pretest, teachers may work with a small group of students that need focused instruction in a particular area of need. Teachers can monitor their progress using the Quick Checks and informal assessment opportunities embedded in each lesson. Students who do not respond to intervention should move to Tier 3.

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### Tier 3

**Tier 3 students** are seriously at risk of failing to meet the standards as indicated by their extremely and chronically low performance on multiple measures of reading and language arts assessment. These students are often the ones who are being analyzed by some type of in-house student assistance team in order to look for overall interventions and solutions. In the classroom, these students are having difficulties with the assignments and failing most of the assessments. Previous tiers of intervention have proven ineffective.

#### Research to Practice

##### Tier 3

Teachers can use the Pretest to determine students' specific area(s) of need and use the lessons to work one-on-one with students. At Tier 3, extra time for each component of the lesson being used is appropriate, as well as extra opportunities for practice and review. If a student needs to focus on a specific component, such as fluency, focus on this section of the lesson. Teachers may also use various level kits.

## Components of Effective Reading Interventions

### Opportunities to Read

Researchers agree that students need to read extensively in order to improve their ability to read (Kempe, Eriksson-Gustavsson, and Samuelsson 2011; Stanovich 1986). The more students are exposed to high-quality texts, the better. Studies about the reading volume of advanced and struggling readers showed that 5th-grade students achieving in the 10th percentile on reading achievement tests read an average of just 1.6 minutes per day, but students achieving in the 90th percentile read 40.4 minutes (Nagy and Anderson 1984). Hence, students need the opportunity for wide reading to provide the chance to develop strong reading habits.

#### Research to Practice

##### Opportunities to Read

*Focused Reading Intervention* lessons provide the following:

- opportunities for students to read engaging, high-quality literature and informational texts
- focused instruction on key foundational skills such as phonics and word recognition (Levels K–5)
- active and rigorous application of word study skills including, but not limited to, Greek and Latin roots
- multiple opportunities to read and engage with the text
- repeated readings of the text to build fluency
- reinforcement of key literacy skills through cooperative literacy games

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## **Direct, Sequential, and Gradually Released Instruction**

Direct skill instruction is also essential for students to become successful readers (Allington 2006; National Reading Panel 2000; Snow, Griffin, and Burns 2005). Many students think of reading as a passive activity, especially if they struggle with gaining meaning from text while reading. However, reading should be an active process, and good readers are very active when they read (Pressley 2001). Pearson and Gallagher (1983), in a report by the Center for the Study of Reading, demonstrated how reading comprehension is best taught through a gradual release model:

- First, teachers explicitly tell students how to use a particular skill.
- Then, teachers model what good readers do to comprehend.
- Next, teachers guide students through the lesson, giving them more responsibility along the way.
- Finally, teachers release responsibility over application of the skill to students (providing additional support as needed).



### **Research to Practice**

#### **Direct, Sequential, and Gradually Released Instruction**

Every *Focused Reading Intervention* lesson utilizes the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model:

- teaches students how to be active readers through explicit instruction of comprehension strategies
- provides students with support to ensure the successful transfer of reading skills from guided practice to independent application
- follows the I Do, We Do, You Do Gradual Release of Responsibility Model.

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## High-Yield Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement

Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) have identified nine “high-yield” strategies for improving instruction and student achievement: identifying similarities and differences, summarizing and note taking, reinforcing effort and providing recognition, homework and practice, nonlinguistic representations, cooperative learning, setting objectives and providing feedback, generating and testing hypotheses and questions, cues, and advanced organizers. These nine strategies have the greatest measurable positive effect on all student achievement, regardless of grade level or subject matter. The work of these researchers was incorporated into the development of *Focused Reading Intervention*.

Additionally, Marzano and Kendall (2007) developed a new taxonomy of educational objectives, updating the classic Bloom’s Taxonomy, which has also been incorporated into *Focused Reading Intervention*. Here, instruction is organized into categories, allowing it to be more efficient while, at the same time, encouraging the development of cognitive processes:

**Level 6:** Self-System Thinking

**Level 5:** Metacognition

**Level 4:** Knowledge Utilization

**Level 3:** Analysis

**Level 2:** Comprehension

**Level 1:** Retrieval



### Research to Practice

#### High-Yield Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement

The *Focused Reading Intervention* series incorporates the nine high-yield strategies identified by:

**In every lesson:**

- setting objectives, reinforcing efforts, and providing recognition
- providing practice opportunities
- encouraging cooperative learning through literacy games

**Throughout the series:**

- identifying similarities and differences
- summarizing and note-taking
- questioning and recognizing meaning and context cues
- using nonlinguistic representations
- generating and testing hypotheses

Each level of *Focused Reading Intervention* addresses the six levels of Marzano and Kendall’s New Taxonomy:

- **Level 6:** guided through the reading of high-interest passages and the developmentally appropriate lesson structure
- **Level 5:** developed through the assessments as well as the lesson plans which encourage students to express and refine their thoughts as they read
- **Levels 4, 3, and 2:** reinforced throughout the guided practice portion of each lesson as well as the *Student Guided Practice Book* activities
- **Level 1:** addressed in the *Student Guided Practice Book* activities

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## The Reading/Writing Connection

Reading and writing are interactive processes that use similar strategies. They generate communication and reinforce each set of skills, which improves comprehension. Thinking is a critical part of the process, and teachers who promote higher-level thinking with both reading and writing processes will help develop better thinkers.

Readers and writers engage in similar processes. “Composition and comprehension both involve planning, composing, and revising” (Roe, Smith, and Burns 2009, 255). Students can be explicitly shown how the two processes are connected.

Readers	Writers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• have a purpose for reading (before, during, and after reading)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• have a purpose for writing (pre-writing, revising, and editing)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• use prior knowledge to make connections to a particular topic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• use prior knowledge when writing about a topic</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• make predictions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• provide foreshadowing</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• interpret the writer’s meaning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• construct meaning</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• change comprehension strategies while reading</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• change and develop meaning while writing</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• reread to clarify meaning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• rewrite to clarify</li></ul>

After students write in class, other students can read their work, linking the reading and writing experience. Writers can also read their stories aloud to the class, furthering reading practice and providing an authentic purpose for writing. Writers can reread their own work to edit and revise, and they often read to gather information before writing. When writing, students need to think about grammar, phonics, spelling, and vocabulary, in addition to other text structure skills. This reinforces important reading skills. If students are shown the connection between reading and writing, they can become better at both.



### Research to Practice

#### The Reading/Writing Connection

Lessons in *Focused Reading Intervention* provide opportunities for students to do the following:

- strengthen their reading comprehension through writing
- maintain focus on a critical reading element from each passage and respond through the Written Response activity
- use writing to activate background knowledge by creating graphic organizers, recording predictions and reactions to reading, taking notes, and/or creating story charts

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## Using Technology to Improve Literacy

Within the last decade there has been a shift in the ways students think and process information. Unlike their predecessors, students in today's classroom have been deemed "digital natives." They were born into a digital world and have developed thinking patterns that are different from those of previous generations (Pressley 2001). This pedagogical shift has been recognized in the flux of digital technologies offered in today's classroom. Moreover, according to focal points of 21st Century learning, technology should be used widely and responsibly in the classroom—with the goal of enriching students' learning of language.

Extensive research has been conducted over the years to determine how effective technology is in improving student performance. The following positive effects have been observed:

- increased student achievement
- improved higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving abilities
- enhanced student motivation and engagement
- improved abilities to work collaboratively

Educators are challenged with preparing all students for a more technologically advanced world (Harwood and Asal 2007).



### Research to Practice

#### Using Technology to Improve Literacy

Each level of *Focused Reading Intervention* features a variety of digital resources that allow teachers to weave technology into literacy instruction:

**Audio Resources:** Use the Audio CD as a model of fluent reading, to provide additional support for English language learners, and to build fluency. The Audio CD includes professional recordings of all the passages in each kit.

**Digital Resources:** Each kit includes:

- Users Guide
- PDFs of all student pages and assessments
- Teacher resources in multiple file formats
- PDFs of all Literacy Game Sets
- Digital Literacy Games

**Electronic Assessments:** Electronic versions of the Pretest and Posttest and reporting tools are included on the Digital Resources USB Device.

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## Using Games to Motivate Struggling Readers

Games are a proven source of motivation. They are a fun way for students to develop, maintain, and reinforce mastery of basic skills. Games eliminate the tedium of most reading skill drills. If students are motivated, they attend to instruction, strive for meaning, and persevere when difficulties arise (Cathcart et al. 2000). And, according to Camille Blachowicz and Peter Fisher, “word play is motivating and an important component of the word-rich classroom” (2004, 220).

Games are fun and collaborative, which means that more students have opportunities for success. Attitudes are also an important part of success. Students who feel good about a subject and their ability to do well in it will be motivated to learn. It is important to provide a positive learning environment where students are under minimal stress; meaning and understanding (rather than rote memorization) are emphasized; real-world concepts are related; and students work in well-organized groups.

Students have multiple opportunities to practice playing the games, depending on the number of weeks that comprise the *Focused Reading Intervention* implementation. Specific instructions for playing the games and managing the game portion of the instructional period are provided on pages 30–34.

In classrooms where competitive games may pose a problem, rules can always be modified so that harmony is achieved. Most of the games in this program are considered learning games and are not designed to be competitive in nature. However, fair and friendly competition can generate excitement, determination, motivation, independence, and challenge.



### Research to Practice

#### Using Games to Motivate Struggling Readers

Each kit in *Focused Reading Intervention* includes six literacy games: three Literacy Game Sets and three Digital Literacy Games. Each game provides:

- reinforcement of reading skills in a game format
- engaging and age-appropriate art and themes
- opportunities for individual and group play
- immediate feedback through sound effects (digital games)

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## The Importance of Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of good instruction and should be conducted regularly. “Assessment is the collection of data such as test scores and informal records to measure student achievement, and evaluation is the interpretation and the analysis of this data. Evaluating student progress is important because it enables the teacher to discover each student’s strengths and weaknesses, to plan instruction accordingly, to communicate student progress to parents, and to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies” (Burns, Roe, and Ross 1999).

Many different types of assessment tools are available for teachers, including but not limited to standardized tests, reading records, anecdotal records, informal reading inventories, portfolios, etc. While each type of assessment serves a different purpose, the true purpose of assessment is to help teachers make good decisions about the kind of instruction students need in the classroom.

In this *Assessment Guide*, the tools provided are formative (or placement) assessments, progress-monitoring assessments, and summative (or cumulative) assessments for measuring student progress.

## The Importance of Text Variety

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) establish the expectation for students to build knowledge, broaden their perspectives, explore possibilities, and gain insights through reading. Students are expected to be able to read challenging informational texts in a range of subjects as well as an array of classical and contemporary literature.

### Reading Informational Text

When assessing student reading development, it is important to be aware of the specific features of informational reading materials. Some of these features include the following:

- specialized vocabulary
- the partnership between texts and visuals
- a variety of text structures, including sequence, cause and effect, and detailed descriptions
- organizational features, including tables of contents, subheadings, and indexes
- supplementary visuals, including photographs, maps, and illustrative icons
- graphic organizers, including tables, charts, and diagrams
- labels and captions

### Reading Literature

Likewise, assessment of student reading development involving literature also covers specific elements. Stories are used to pass on important information and entertain audiences. They can make difficult content more accessible by engaging readers both intellectually and emotionally. Stories can also prepare readers for new life experiences and introduce them to new people, places, and ideas. Some features specific to fiction include:

- elaborations and descriptions
- facts and exaggerations
- the use of imagination

Engaging stories encourage the repeated readings that help young learners build literacy skills while they enjoy the oral discussion prompted by interactive reading of the stories and guided instruction.

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## Types of Assessment

“Monitoring and record keeping provide the critical information needed to make decisions about the student’s future instruction” (National Center for Learning Disabilities 2006, 5). The ability to properly diagnose and monitor students’ reading progress is imperative in reading intervention programs. Teachers must be able to provide instruction that is tailored to the needs of each student. “Teachers can build in many opportunities to assess how students are learning, and then use this information to make beneficial changes in instruction” (Boston 2002).

### Formative Assessments

**Formative assessments** may be used to help drive instruction to meet students’ needs (Honig, Diamond, Gutlohn, and Mahler, 2000).

Noted researcher Yetta Goodman found that listening to a recording of oral reading with a student and discussing the student’s errors with him or her is a good way to confirm the teacher’s inferences about a student’s skills and make the student aware of strategies the student may be using (Goodman 1996). Hoffman and Rasinski (2004) also found that short oral reading assessments can be used to develop fluency. They state that students and teachers can make observations, reflect on, and respond to the text during oral reading.

Teachers use formative assessments to help them make good decisions about the kind of instruction their students need (Honig et al. 2000). Formative assessment is usually an ongoing process. The Pretest offered at each level can be used to determine which concepts have already been mastered and which still need to be addressed. It is available on pages 18–27 as well as on the Digital Resources USB Device.

### Progress-Monitoring Assessments

**Progress-monitoring assessments** can be administered in formal and informal ways. Methods such as informal observations, classroom participation, activity sheets, and student responses (Airasian 2005) allow teachers the opportunity to pinpoint each student’s specific strengths, weaknesses, and misconceptions and to create a more complete and balanced depiction of students’ needs. This can also help teachers plan to maximize instructional time.

“When teachers know how students are progressing and where they are having trouble, they can use this information to make necessary adjustments to instructional approaches, or offer more opportunities for practice. These activities can lead to improved student success” (Boston 2002).

Progress-monitoring assessments can be administered in both formal and informal ways.

**Formal assessment** methods, such as unit and chapter tests, provide teachers with information needed to make administrative decisions about grouping, promoting, and placing students, in addition to suggesting any accommodations needed (Airasian 2005).

The Oral Reading Records and multiple-choice Quick Checks provide opportunities for teachers to formally monitor students’ progress in oral reading and comprehension.

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**Informal assessment** methods, such as informal observation, classroom participation, activity sheets, and student questions (Airasian 2005), allow teachers to pinpoint each student’s specific strengths, weaknesses, and misconceptions. These methods can also help teachers get a detailed picture of the instructional needs of the class as a whole. This knowledge eliminates guesswork and enriches instructional time because teachers avoid spending time going over things that students already know. Multiple measures of learning are the most reliable and helpful for planning instruction. This type of evaluation produces multifaceted information and a more complete and balanced picture than a B+ or an 86 percent. The assessments in this kit provide teachers with the important information needed to evaluate students in a meaningful and effective way.

Each lesson in the *Student Guided Practice Book* features multiple opportunities for informal assessment. Several assessment checkpoints are embedded throughout the instructional sequence, giving teachers cues about what behaviors to look for to help guide instruction. The *Student Guided Practice Book* activity sheets also provide options for a quick assessment of student learning.

### **Summative Assessments**

**Summative assessments** judge the success of a process at its completion. They provide students the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of concepts taught, which in turn also helps guide teachers’ instructional planning. This type of assessment shows growth over time and helps set instructional goals to address students’ needs. It also helps to re-evaluate earlier strategies or steps that will therefore influence what follows on a student’s instructional path (Airasian 2005).

According to Airasian, the purpose of summative assessment is “to judge the success of a process at its completion” (2005). It provides students the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of concepts taught, which in turn also helps guide teachers’ instructional planning. This type of assessment shows growth over time and helps set instructional goals to address students’ needs. It also helps to determine how to re-evaluate earlier strategies or steps that will, therefore, influence what follows on a student’s academic or instructional path. The Posttest offered at each level can be administered to measure student progress toward mastery of the comprehension skills addressed in the kit. It is available on pages 28–37 as well as on the Digital Resources USB Device.

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 **Research to Practice****Assessment**

Each level of *Focused Reading Intervention* provides teachers with numerous opportunities for accurate assessment.

**Formative Assessment:** The Pretest provides teachers with the information necessary to develop a customized program of instruction for students. This assessment can guide and inform future instructional goals. Teachers can use the Pretest to determine which lessons to teach based upon the students' skill levels.

**Progress Monitoring:** Each lesson in the *Student Guided Practice Book* includes a Quick Check that can be used for ongoing progress monitoring.

The Oral Reading Record provided for each passage enables teachers to glean a detailed picture of students' oral reading strengths and weaknesses. This benefits students by giving them the information to set goals for fluency and offers teachers useful information to make instructional decisions.

Informal assessment opportunities are embedded throughout the lessons to identify optimal times for teachers to observe students' reading behaviors and skills. This data can guide future instructional decisions. Moreover, pacing plans help teachers implement the program over the course of several weeks or an entire school year.

**Summative Assessment:** The Posttest assessment can measure students' progress once all the selected lessons have been completed. This test provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the concepts taught and helps teachers reevaluate earlier strategies or steps that will influence what follows on a student's academic or instructional path.

**Note:** The Pretest, Posttest, and oral reading records can be found in the *Assessment Guide*. The progress monitoring Quick Checks can be found in the *Student Guided Practice Book*. All of these assessments can also be found on the Digital Resources USB Device.

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## Word Recognition

Word recognition is one essential component in cultivating proficient readers. As students are introduced to and manipulate sounds and words, they gain confidence and mastery with language. Within word recognition, there are subsections of skills: automaticity with reading high-frequency words, explicit teaching of language conventions and patterns, and vocabulary development.

“Rich instruction in word recognition provide[s] an opportunity to teach children that there are systematic relationships between letters and sounds, that written words are composed of letter patterns that represent the sounds of spoken words, and that recognizing words quickly and accurately is a way of obtaining meaning from what is read” (Linan-Thompson and Vaughn 2007, 34).

### High-Frequency Words

High-frequency words are just that, words that occur in text with high frequency. The 100 most common words make up about 50 percent of the words in all written material. The complete list of 1,000 words makes up 90 percent of all written material (Fry, Kress, and Fountoukidis 1993). If students can master these, they are well on their way to being successful readers. Sight words are the words that good readers can easily recognize without having to spend time decoding them. Each reader’s sight-word bank will differ and may or may not include high-frequency words. However, just as in mathematics, where students need to learn their math facts with automaticity, high-frequency words should also be instantly recognizable. Many of these words are not spelled like they sound, and many of these words, such as *the*, *was*, and *what*, do not carry contextual meaning. This means that students need to have multiple opportunities to read and practice high-frequency words so that they can read with ease when they encounter the words in text. Early reading instruction and reading intervention instruction should focus on the words that students encounter most frequently in print.



### Research to Practice

#### High-Frequency Words

Each lesson in *Focused Reading Intervention* begins with a Warm-Up Activity that introduces the high-frequency words. It is recommended that teachers post the words in the room once they have been introduced. A word wall is an effective way to do this. Students will benefit from having time each day to practice finding, writing, and reciting the words on the word wall.

The Warm-up Activity uses Dr. Edward Fry’s list of 1,000 Instant Words, which are the most common words in English ranked in frequency order. Most lessons introduce five words, so that at the end of 30 lessons students will have learned roughly 150 words. At the upper levels of *Focused Reading Intervention*, there is some review of words taught in previous lessons, because the words from 600–1,000 are encountered with less frequency and have more difficult spelling patterns for students to master.

### Word Study

Word study, the integration of phonics, spelling, and vocabulary instruction is an essential component in developing readers. Through actively exploring orthographic patterns and origins of words, students learn the regularities, patterns, and connections of words needed to read and spell. In addition, word study increases students specific knowledge of words and vocabulary development (Bear, Templeton, Invernizzi, et al. 2007).

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## Research to Practice

### Word Study

*Focused Reading Intervention* lessons support word study:

- engaging word-building activities to promote word-recognition skills
- instruction for phonics and foundational literacy skills (K–5)
- opportunities for students to discover the patterns of language through word-study activities
- activities to support the development of students’ orthographic knowledge of words
- instruction for syllabication and identification of Greek and Latin roots

### Close Reading

According to Catherine Snow and Catherine O’Connor, close reading is “an approach to teaching comprehension that insists students extract meaning from text by examining carefully how language is used in the passage itself” (2013, 2). The goal is to produce proficient readers who can extract meaning from complex, college-level and career-relevant texts, independently. What is unique about close reading is that it focuses exclusively on the text at-hand and eliminates the background knowledge, which many say will level the academic playing field and close the achievement gap between various learning and language/literacy groups (Snow and O’Connor 2013). This is not to say that close reading should replace other comprehension and reading approaches. Ideally, close reading will be one avenue to purposefully engage students in reading complex texts.

## Research to Practice

### Close Reading

*Focused Reading Intervention* lessons include the following:

- opportunities for students to engage in close reading of both literature and informational texts
- independent-reading opportunities:
  - The 10 lowest leveled passages are presented as independent first reads.
  - The remaining passages offer a myriad of paths to read the text, including partially independent, guided, and modeled.

# Comprehension Strategies for Informational Texts and Literature

Each *Focused Reading Intervention* lesson focuses on a single comprehension strategy. These effective research-based strategies serve as a resource for strengthening student comprehension of informational text and literature. Teachers may use these strategies before, during, and/or after reading.

## Using Text Features

In addition to reading the main body of a text, good readers use headings, captions, diagrams, and other text features to fully comprehend and navigate the text. Referencing these features throughout the reading process helps students make predictions, understand, remember, and comprehend the content.

Informational Texts	Literature
Students use the table of contents, chapters, glossary, index, titles, headings, labels, captions, photographs, sketches, diagrams, charts, graphs, maps, tables, figures, time lines, cross-sections, insets, sidebars, bold words and graphic organizers to increase comprehension of nonfiction texts.	Students reference the title, cover illustration, back-cover copy summarizing the book, table of contents, chapter titles, illustrations, and captions to understand a novel, poem, or drama.

## Understanding Text Structure

Students need to be aware of the way text structure influences meaning and how authors use the structure of a text to evoke a desired effect in the reader. Students should understand how ideas in a text relate to one another and how information is organized. Readers who understand the structure of a text can use this knowledge to make predictions and understand the author's purpose more easily.

Informational Texts	Literature
Students recognize a variety of nonfiction text types such as instructional, compare and contrast, cause and effect, and problem and solution. Students understand how each part of a text contributes to the whole.	Students identify the genre and structure of a literary text, noting whether a piece is a mystery, poem, drama, etc. Students analyze how components of a text such as paragraphs, chapters, scenes, and stanzas relate to each other.

## Using Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers provide students with concrete ways to visualize information found in a text. Organizers come in a wide variety of formats. They can, for example, help students capture the sequence of events, compare and contrast, summarize, make connections, and identify areas of confusion.

Informational Texts	Literature
Students use graphic organizers to analyze arguments, summarize data, and show the relationship between key details in the text.	Students use graphic organizers to summarize character traits, review plot points, and analyze themes and other literary elements.

**Asking Questions**

Students who ask questions throughout the reading process are engaged and actively reading. Allowing students to form their own questions provides an authentic purpose for reading. Model how to ask inferential questions, and let students practice forming their own *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* questions. Encourage students to use evidence in the text to answer their questions.

<b>Informational Texts</b>	<b>Literature</b>
<p>Students use text features such as headings, captions, graphs, and visuals to inspire questions about the main ideas of a text. Questions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “What information is explained in the text?”</li> <li>• “What is the author saying about the main subject?”</li> <li>• “What evidence does the author present to persuade the reader?”</li> <li>• “Am I convinced by the author’s argument?”</li> </ul>	<p>Students ask questions regarding characters, plot, text structures, symbols, metaphors, and word choice. Questions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Who is telling the story?”</li> <li>• “Who is the main character and what is he or she like?”</li> <li>• “What is the author’s central message?”</li> <li>• “How does the author use elements of fiction to express his or her message?”</li> </ul>

**Paraphrasing and Summarizing**

When students know how to paraphrase and summarize, their overall comprehension improves. Paraphrasing involves reading the material and creating a shorter version of the text in one’s own words. Summarizing requires distilling the main ideas and important details from the overall text, and then putting them in a logical order. Encourage readers to summarize both during and after reading.

<b>Informational Texts</b>	<b>Literature</b>
<p>Students use text features such as titles, chapter titles, bold words, captions, and diagrams to identify the main ideas and key details of a text. Summaries should reflect the structure of the text. For example, if the text is a compare/contrast text, then the summary should follow the same format, but be condensed.</p>	<p>Students review the title; chapter titles; illustrations; main events in the beginning, middle, and end; central characters; key details; the tone; and the structure of the text to summarize the main idea and key details.</p>

**Using Prior Knowledge**

Good readers use their prior knowledge and experiences to help them understand new information they encounter during reading. They think about their own experiences (comparing text to self), other texts they have read (comparing text to text), or the world around them (making text to world connections). Teachers can encourage this practice through discussions, bringing in realia, paging through the text to look for connections, or by providing a hands-on experience.

**Informational Texts**

Students reference prior experiences and information from other texts to understand new concepts, relate to distant time periods, and access technical information.

**Literature**

Students draw on prior knowledge to understand new characters, foreign settings, or unfamiliar words.

**Monitoring Comprehension**

To avoid gaps in comprehension, good readers monitor their progress during the reading process. Encourage students to ask themselves, “What words or ideas are difficult to understand?” and revisit those concepts. Strategies such as word-level decoding; looking at the root word; nearby words or context clues; rereading; reading on; asking a friend; or looking up a word or concept in a dictionary or encyclopedia can also clarify meaning.

**Informational Texts**

Students pause to reflect upon and clarify how key concepts relate to each other, rereading or reviewing when needed.

**Literature**

Students pause to reflect upon and clarify key plot points, actions taken by characters, dialogue, and themes.

**Using Mental Images**

Making mental images, or a “mind movie,” during reading enhances the reading experience. Mental “images” include visuals, as well as sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings. Encourage students to make reading a complete sensory experience. Discuss sensory clues provided explicitly in a text, as well as the details that can be inferred based on setting, characters, and context clues.

**Informational Texts**

Students use maps, photographs, and diagrams to clarify or confirm geographical relationships, procedures, and other data explained in the text.

**Literature**

Students use sensory clues provided explicitly in a text, as well as the sensory details that can be inferred based on setting, characters, and context clues.

**Establishing a Purpose** Determining an authentic purpose for reading increases student engagement and comprehension. Before students read, encourage them to think about their reasons for reading each text. What do they want to know? What are the main ideas they want to understand?

<b>Informational Texts</b>	<b>Literature</b>
Students set a purpose for reading, such as learning more about a particular topic, acquiring information that can be presented to others, or answering questions the reader has about the text.	Students set a purpose for reading, such as learning more about a topic, understanding an author’s point of view, or using one’s imagination to escape into a great book.

**Previewing Text** Previewing the text is often referred to as a “text walk.” Before reading, the reader may go through the text to glance at the text features, understand the text structure or genre, and gather some information about the big ideas in the text. This is the reader’s chance to browse through the book.

<b>Informational Texts</b>	<b>Literature</b>
Students page through to preview the diagrams, headings, bold words, topic sentences, main ideas, and organization of a text.	Students skim the cover, illustrations, chapter headings, and select sentences within the text of a book.

**Making Predictions** Throughout the reading process, good readers make predictions about what will happen next. Before reading, students can make predictions based on the cover art, back-cover copy, chapter headers, and interior illustrations. During reading, predicting what will happen helps students stay interested in the text. After reading, students should confirm or update their predictions.

<b>Informational Texts</b>	<b>Literature</b>
Students make specific predictions about the information they will learn in the text and how reliable it will be based on the chapter titles, headings, illustrations, captions, and other text features.	Students make predictions about plot, characters, and themes based on the title, chapter titles, cover, illustrations, captions, and key details in the text.

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## Differentiating by Specific Needs

Today's classrooms are filled with students of varying backgrounds, reading abilities, levels of English proficiency, and learning styles. A teacher's ability to differentiate instruction and respond effectively to the needs of a variety of learners is critical to the success of any program (Henry and Pianta 2011, 311). Two factors influence a teacher's ability to use a program: having instructional options that meet the needs of various students within the program, and having the confidence and skill to modify the instruction based on those needs. *Focused Reading Intervention* takes these issues into account. Each lesson plan includes a variety of instructional strategies to reach students who are not yet achieving their potential, those who are performing on level, those who are learning English, and those who have mastered the standards.

### Below-Grade-Level Students

“Developing readers cannot be expected to simply ‘pick up’ substantial vocabulary knowledge exclusively through reading exposure without guidance. Specifically, teachers must design tasks that will increase the effectiveness of vocabulary learning through reading practice” (Feldman and Kinsella 2005, 3). Without making adjustments in instruction, struggling readers quickly disengage and do not actively participate in the reading process. Struggling readers need teachers who can make in-process instruction adjustments while continually analyzing student learning (Kibby and Klenk 2000). Below-grade-level students need concepts to be made more concrete for them. They typically need extra support with vocabulary and writing activities. Without making adjustments in instruction, struggling readers quickly disengage and do not actively participate in the reading process.



### Research to Practice

#### Below-Grade-Level Students

Every lesson in *Focused Reading Intervention* provides rich support for below-grade-level students by reteaching key concepts and skills. These activities are designed to encourage active involvement in the reading process and provide repeated practice without losing engagement. Each lesson has differentiation built into it through engaging games, targeted skills instruction, and access to multiple learning modalities. At this level students are supported through partner work, open-ended questions that enable students with limited literacy experiences to respond within their comfort or experiential level, kinesthetic (hands-on) activities, and active involvement in the reading process.

### English Language Learners

Intervention programs must support the literacy development of English language learners, and meeting their needs can be more complex than meeting the needs of native-language struggling readers. Intervention for English language learners should engage students in meaningful activities, as well as cognitively demanding content, while scaffolding the content to ensure that students will learn successfully (Diaz-Rico and Weed 2002). Scaffolding in lessons, modeling effective strategies for learners to use, and vocabulary development instruction are vital for English language learners. It is important to preteach the words that are critical to understanding the text so that students are provided with a variety of ways to learn, remember, and use the words (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short 2004). It is not enough to simply expose English language learners to language-rich classrooms; they need “intensive instruction of academic vocabulary, and related grammatical knowledge must be carefully orchestrated across the subject areas for language minority students to attain rigorous content standards” (Feldman and Kinsella 2005).

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In addition to direct, explicit instruction, interactive teaching that uses techniques such as modeling and guided practice helps students master requisite skills more effectively (Goldenberg 2010, 27–29).

### Research to Practice

#### English Language Learners

Each lesson in *Focused Reading Intervention* begins with a language objective in addition to the focus objectives. The instruction in high-frequency words, academic language related to the story, and elaborations on vocabulary in the before reading portion of each lesson is particularly suited to English language learners. During the reading and rereading instruction, activities such as paired reading can be added for more practice in developing oral fluency. The open-ended questions provide opportunities to relate to students from varying backgrounds. Additionally, each lesson includes a specific language support component. The Audio CD includes professional recordings of the books, which provide a powerful model for fluency.

#### Extending Learning

“The ultimate goal of teaching is the development of a self-regulated learner—a student with the capacity to guide and monitor his own learning on different tasks for different purposes” (Dorn and Soffos 2005). Further, above-grade-level readers can use this foundation for reading increasingly complex narratives and informational text. Providing rich resources for reading helps inspire students to utilize and stretch their reading skills. Students performing above grade level have the metacognitive ability to apply new concepts and vocabulary to independent work quickly and effectively; however, they sometimes face the risk of boredom in the classroom if not challenged. Research has shown that students need to be pushed just beyond their independent levels for real learning to take place (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

### Research to Practice

#### Extending Learning

The lessons in *Focused Reading Intervention* provide the foundation for rich vocabulary development, writing experiences, and extended learning opportunities. The various patterned stories are ideal for budding writers to create, read, and share new or elaborated stories. The before, during, and after reading portions of each lesson provide opportunities to think critically about the author’s and illustrator’s roles in story development. Teachers may use the activities in this section to challenge students while reinforcing the skills taught in the lesson.

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# Pacing Plans

When planning the pacing of a curriculum program, analyze student data to determine standards on which to focus. Once a pacing plan is selected or created based on known needs of the students and/or the results of the Pretest, teachers can focus on the lessons that correlate with the items for which students did not demonstrate mastery. The Pretest is designed to determine which concepts students have already mastered and which concepts need to be mastered. Teachers can use this information to choose which lessons to cover and which lessons to skip. Even after making these data-driven decisions, teachers may still have to accelerate or decelerate the curriculum in order to meet the needs of the students in their classes. The following are a few easy ways to change the pace of the curriculum within a whole-class setting.

## Ways to Accelerate the Curriculum:

- Certain skills may come more easily to some students. If this is the case, allow less time for the practice and application of those skills and move on to the next lesson in the program.
- Skip those lessons or concepts for which students have demonstrated mastery on the Pretest.
- Reduce the number of activities that students complete in the *Student Guided Practice Book*.

## Ways to Decelerate the Curriculum:

- If the concepts in a particular lesson are very challenging to the students, allow more time for each component of the lesson—modeling, guided practice, independent practice, and application games and activities.
- Use more pair or group activities to allow students to learn from one another while reinforcing their understanding of the concepts.
- Review all the Quick Check pages with students and have them resolve the incorrect items.

The following pacing plans show three options for using this complete kit. Teachers should customize these pacing plans according to their students' needs.

Option	Instructional Time	Frequency	Material	Notes
Option 1	6 weeks (2 hours/day)	Daily small-group reading instruction	30 passages	All lessons covered
Option 2	4 weeks (2 hours/day)	Daily small-group reading instruction	20 passages	20 key lessons covered
Option 3	24 weeks (60 min./day)	Twice a week	24 passages	24 key lessons covered

**Note:** To further adapt the program to instructional time frames, it is highly recommended that teachers give the Pretest (*Assessment Guide*, pages 18–27) to determine which skills students have not mastered. Teachers can then use the Pretest Item Analysis (*Assessment Guide*, page 7) to analyze their students' results and select lessons to target.

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