

## Setting the Stage-Reading

Match the concept with the appropriate definition

KWL Chart	A. Reading at a level where support is needed and teachers provide assistance as students read
TEKS	B. Reading at a level independently with little or no instructional support
Comprehension	C. Reading at a level where extensive support is needed and instruction is provided by the teacher during one-on-one instruction
Phonemes	D. The ability to do things automatically with little thought
Instructional Reading Level	E. A graphic organizer that is used to prepare, make predictions and connect prior knowledge to new knowledge
Fluency	F. Text is broken up into chunks and students are responsible for reading certain chunks of the text. Least effective reading strategy
Decoding	G. As a group, students read a long with the teacher
TAKS	H. Students read with a partner taking turns reading parts of the text and asking and answering questions about the text
Prefix	I. The understanding that our language is composed of words and our words are composed of units of sounds
Independent Reading Level	J. Teacher models reading the text first, and then students read the same text
Phonemic Awareness	K. The ability to read text quickly, accurately and with proper expression
Suffix	L. The ultimate goal of reading
Alphabetic principle	M. A graphic organizer that helps students organize what they read, which leads to improved comprehension. It also helps students identify the main ideas and summarize text
Automaticity	N. Smallest units of sound in spoken language
Round Robin Reading	O. The beginning segment of a word
Frustrational Reading Level	P. The ending segment of a word
Choral Reading	Q. Translating symbols on the printed page into spoken words
Content Word Web	R. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills
Echo Reading	S. Understanding that sounds in a spoken word are represented by letters in a left to right sequence in a written word
Partner Reading	T. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

**ASSESSMENT OF PARAPROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY  
STUDY GUIDE**

**READING**

**Phonemic Awareness:**

In learning to read, a young child must first understand that our language is made up of sounds. This is the concept of phonemic awareness. Because of this, it is very important for very young children to be given opportunities to develop oral language. Parents and teachers can accomplish this by reading aloud to children, reciting nursery and other rhymes, and helping children listen for the sounds in our language. Before they begin to associate print with sounds, children must develop phonemic awareness. The first step in developing phonemic awareness is listening for rhyming sounds. This is why nursery rhymes are so important in the development of oral language in children. Children will learn what makes words rhyme by listening for the same sound patterns. They will also be able to distinguish rhyming words from words that do not rhyme when listening to a list of words. For example, give a child the following words and ask him which ones are rhyming words:

bat    mat    boy    hat

The child who has mastered an understanding of what makes words rhyme will be able to select *boy* as the non-rhyming word.

Once the child is able to differentiate the rhyming from non-rhyming words, the task should become more complex. A more advanced list might include the following:

ring    sing    thing    song

Selecting *song* as the non-rhyming word is more complex here because the beginning and ending sounds are the same, it is the middle (vowel) sound this is different. The child might also associate *song* with *sing* because they are similar in meaning.

In the oral language development of phonemic awareness, after rhyming sounds, a child should learn how to match words with the same beginning sound. This is known as alliteration. Tongue twisters are a good way to teach children to listen for the same beginning (initial) sound in words. An example might be:

*Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers*

As children advance in phonemic awareness, they should be able to hear the number of phonemes, or units of sounds, in given words. This could be modeled and practiced by pointing out to a child that the word *mom* has 3 phonemes—"mm", "ah" "mm." At this stage of pre-reading skills we are still associating word patterns with only sounds, not letters.

### **Alphabetic Principle:**

As children come to understand the sounds of our language, we begin to associate the written word with the sounds. This is known as the alphabetic principle. Understanding the alphabetic principle leads to instruction in phonics or decoding. Young children learn the alphabet song by watching *Sesame Street* or hearing adults sing it to them. It is when the child associates the various sounds that these letters make with their letter names, that they begin to understand the alphabetic principle. Reading aloud to children from a word chart or big book and pointing out the words helps them understand the words are made up of letters that represent sounds. *Word Walls* are very good ways for a teacher to reinforce the alphabetic principle with children. The words are left on the classroom wall all year and new words are added as appropriate. Children should be taught to use the word wall in their writing and when they are trying to decode words in reading. These words become familiar to children if the *Word Wall* is used effectively.

Having children dictate a short story is another effective way to reinforce the alphabetic principle. As young children tell you about something with which they are familiar, they will see their words written on a chart or sentence strip. They will associate their oral language with the written language.

In addition to knowing that the word “mom” has 3 phonemes (sound units), the child will also learn that this word has three letters. Learning the sounds of letters in the English language is very complex because so many of our sounds are spelled in many different ways. Take for instance the sound of “a.” This sound is the same in the following words but with different spellings:

may, weigh, wait, late, grey

This is just one reason that learning to read is so complex. It is not one skill, but many skills combined.

A child who is beginning to understand the alphabetic principle should be able to substitute letters and sounds in words to make new words. For instance, using magnetic letters, the paraprofessional might show a child the word “lake” and take off the “l” and substitute the letter “m”. If a child has an understanding of the letters and sounds, she will be able to read the new word, “make.” She would also be able to read the word “hat” with the final sound or letter removed as “hă.” Making nonsense words is a good method for children to practice and understand phonics or the alphabetic principle. This is also known as “decoding” or “sounding out” words. The nonsense words should begin as very simple “consonant, vowel, consonant” (cvc) patterns such as *dap, ped, tib, bot,* and *dus*. More complex patterns should be used as the child becomes more proficient at manipulating letters and sounds.

## **Text Selection and Fluency:**

As children begin to use their pre-reading skills to read simple books, the paraprofessional can assist them in selecting appropriate books to reinforce their reading skills. The paraprofessional should understand that there are basically three levels of reading used with a child in school:

- *Independent Level*—This is the level at which a child can read with limited or no assistance from an adult and will be able to understand what has been read. Children should be guided to select library books at their independent level, especially if the paraprofessional knows that the child is not likely to have someone to read with him at home. It is especially important for a struggling reader to select a book at his independent level so that he will be able to build his reading confidence. An easy way to show a child how to select a book that is not too difficult is to use the “five finger exercise.” This method has the child open the book to a random page and begin reading. Each time the child finds a word he is unable to read, he puts up one finger. He continues to do this until all five fingers of one hand are up. If all five fingers are up before the page is finished, the book is probably not at the child’s independent level. The paraprofessional should assist the child in selecting a book that is of interest to him, but with a more controlled vocabulary of easily decodable words.
- *Instructional Level*—This is the level at which a child should be instructed within the classroom. The text should be somewhat familiar to the child, but will have words that are challenging. The teacher’s reading lesson should include skills that will help the child be able to read and understand the text in a teacher-directed reading situation.  
In most cases, books selected for independent reading by the child should not be at the instructional level.
- *Frustration Level*—This level is too difficult for the child to read independently or instructionally and should not be used. If a teacher or paraprofessional determines that the text is far too difficult for the child to read even with assistance, the book should be replaced with an easier one. The name of this level is what we do not want to do to children who are learning to read, i.e., “frustrate.”

## **Fluency:**

Fluency is the rate at which a child reads with accuracy. It is not necessarily “speed” if meaning is lost in the reading. Modeling good reading is a good way to improve a child’s fluency. Another method is the practice of re-reading familiar text at the child’s independent level. When a child is able to read aloud with accuracy and at an appropriate rate, her comprehension will improve. Often in the primary grades, a teacher may have children “partner read” with a classmate or an older student to improve fluency. In the upper elementary and intermediate grades, this practice would most likely not be

effective because of peer pressure. These students would benefit more by reading to an adult from material that is familiar to them. They should be encouraged to select a book that they know they can read and practice re-reading with improved fluency. Be sure to pay attention to accuracy as fluency improves. Remember, comprehension is the ultimate goal in reading.

When listening to a child read aloud, a paraprofessional should encourage the child to use strategies that will help her become a more independent reader. Below are some prompts the paraprofessional might use to help the child use her skills to “figure out the word”:

- Are there any pictures that might help you with the word?
- Does that make sense?
- Do you see any part of the word (a syllable or chunk) that you know?

When a child uses these strategies to “figure out “ a word or to self-correct a mispronounced word, it is a good idea to have the child re-read the sentence in which the difficult word is contained to ensure that no meaning was lost in the process. Very young and struggling readers should be praised for using strategies to become more independent with their reading.

**Automaticity** occurs when a child has learned to use his reading strategies to such an extent that he will use them “automatically” without being prompted and will be able to read fluently with little or no assistance. This takes time and practice and begins with repeatedly reading familiar words from flash cards or sentence strips. This is why it is important to select “familiar text” for young readers so that they will develop automaticity in their reading.

**Strategies for Comprehension:**

As stated earlier, the ultimate goal of reading is to enable students to comprehend what they read. It is a lengthy, complicated process that begins in early childhood. The development of early oral language skills, leading to the understanding that our language is made up of sounds, and recognizing that these sounds are represented by letters are all steps in the process of reading and understanding text.

Teachers use many strategies to assist students in better understanding what they read. Graphic organizers are often used to help students organize material before and/or after it is read. A common graphic organizer is the K-W-L chart. This method encourages students to write down what they already know about a topic (K), and what they want to learn about it (W). Upon completion of the reading or research, the child will complete the last segment of the chart with “what I learned’ (L). This may be used as a motivation to reading a particular story or as a tool for writing. It helps children use information they already have and connect it to new information to organize their thoughts and writing.

K	W	L

Other graphic organizers such a story maps help the student put events in order and identify story elements such as setting, characters, plot, etc. Graphic organizers are being used frequently in state assessments.

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### ANSWERS

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Phonemes	<b>N</b>	D. The ability to do things automatically with little thought
Instructional Reading Level	<b>A</b>	E. A graphic organizer that is used to prepare, make predictions and connect prior knowledge to new knowledge
Fluency	<b>K</b>	F. Text is broken up into chunks and students are responsible for reading certain chunks of the text. Least effective reading strategy
Decoding	<b>Q</b>	G. As a group, students read a long with the teacher
TAKS	<b>T</b>	H. Students read with a partner taking turns reading parts of the text and asking and answering questions about the text
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Independent Reading Level	<b>B</b>	J. Teacher models reading the text first, and then students read the same text
Phonemic Awareness	<b>I</b>	K. The ability to read text quickly, accurately and with proper expression
Suffix	<b>P</b>	L. The ultimate goal of reading
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Round Robin Reading	<b>F</b>	O. The beginning segment of a word
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## **Classroom Organizers**

This strategy is designed for group instruction and can be used with either whole classes or smaller groups. It can be used in all curricular areas and at most grade levels where students are reading expository material.

### **Procedures**

#### *Step 1: Preparation*

To use this strategy effectively, the teacher must prepare by reading the material, determining a key content that can elicit the most pertinent knowledge about the topic, and then producing the student worksheet. See following Example A and B.

#### *Step 2: Group Instruction*

The initial group portion of this strategy involves three basic components. First, the teacher engages students in a *discussion of what they as a group already know about the concept the teacher has selected to introduce the lesson*. The teacher then lists all the students think they know on the board. When disagreements and questions emerge, the teacher notes them and suggests that student may want to include them on the center column as questions they want to have answered.

Second, after students have volunteered all that they can think of about the concept, they should be asked to *categorize the information they have generated*. The teacher may need to identify one general category that incorporates two or more pieces of information on the board to model the building of chunks or categories of information.

Third, after the students are somewhat familiar with this process, they should be asked to *anticipate the categories of information they would expect to have included in an article on this topic*. For example, if the class is reading American history and the chapter is on Andrew Jackson's presidency, they should be able to anticipate that there will be information about his election, major issues of the time, how Jackson resolves those issues, who his opponents were, and some evaluation of his accomplishments. These same categories should be useful in future reading about other presidents and should help students summarize and retain information as well as compare and contrast different presidents.

#### *Step 3: Individual Reflection*

After the group introduction to the topic, students should be asked individually to *write on their own worksheet what they feel confident they KNOW about the concept*. They can also write down the categories they think are most likely to be included. At this time, the teacher should help students raise those questions that have emerged during the discussion or that come from thinking of the major categories of information they expect to find. Each student should be able to *think of at least three questions or issues that they WANT to learn about as they read and should write those on their individual worksheets*.



#### *Step 4: Reading*

Students should be directed to read the text once they have focused both on what they know and what they want to find out from reading. Depending on the length and difficulty of the text and the class composition, the text can either be read as a unit or can be broken into sections for reading and discussion. As they read, students should use their worksheet, jotting down information they learn as well as new questions that emerge.

#### *Step 5: Assessment of Learning*

The final step in the process is to engage the students in a *discussion of what they have learned from reading*. Their questions should be reviewed to determine how they were resolved. If some have not been answered satisfactorily, student should be encouraged to continue their search for information.

The following worksheet from a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student just beginning to learn the process illustrates how students respond when reading the “Insect-Eaters of the Plant World” article.

#### **Modifications**

This basic strategy can be modified in a variety of ways. The essential elements are that students first activate their own knowledge of the topic as fully as is useful for learning, that they formulate their own questions to motivate and focus their reading, that they read actively, attending to the information that is new to them as they read, and that they summarize and evaluate their accomplishments when finished.

#### **Pre-Reading**

Modification of the first (pre-reading) part can lead to the creation of semantic maps of what is already known about the topic. IN this way, both the content and important categories are identified and laid out graphically. This helps students develop an idea of how information can be ordered.

If younger or low-achieving students have not experienced asking questions prior to reading, two modifications are useful. One involves having them work in pairs to determine some questions to guide reading. However, if they are reluctant to do even this, some teachers have begun by providing their own questions and listing several on the board. Students can then be asked to select three of those that are most interested in having answered and to look for those topics as they read.

#### **After Reading**

At the secondary level, successful modifications have focused on what students do to extend their learning. Instead of filling in a column with “What I Learned,” students can be asked to create their own semantic maps of the content. After creating the mps, they write review questions on what they consider important information. Finally, using the maps as a guide, they write summaries of the information.

The semantic map, summary, and questions included in Figure 1 and 2 are the results of one 7<sup>th</sup> grade student's effort related to science chapter on clouds. He had asked KWL just four times: his teacher noted that prior to this new strategy training, he could not summarize or develop questions to study for tests. It is important to note that he is a low-achieving student.

### **Evaluation**

To evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy, four activities are particularly effective:

1. Keep copies of students' first worksheets and compare with those produced after several uses of KWL.
2. Prior to introducing KWL informally, interview a few of your students about how they study for content material. After using the procedures for a few weeks, interview them again to see if they have a better grasp of their own possible strategies.
3. Keep records of student test results. If you teach two sections of the same course, use KWL in one section and not in the other. Compare the scores.
4. At the end of a set period of time, have students reflect on what they remember from their reading to learn. Compare materials learned using KWL and those learned with other instructional strategies.

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## KNOW — WHAT TO KNOW — LEARNED (K.W.L.)

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- Brings out students' prior knowledge.
- Gives students ownership of a purpose for learning.
- Helps students integrate what they know with what they have learned.
- Provides a way for students to verify what they know and to correct misconceptions.

### **KWL Plus**

Adds to the KWL strategy by *organizing* the learned information in a graphic organizer and then *summarizing*.

### **KWL Group Instruction Strategy**

KWL is a strategy that models the active thinking needed when reading expository text. The letters K, W, and L stand for three activities students engage in when reading to learn: recalling what they KNOW, determining what they WANT to learn, and identifying what they LEARN as they read. A worksheet given to every student includes columns for each of these activities.

### **What is the Purpose of KWL?**

This strategy is designed to help students develop a more active approach to reading expository material. Teachers first model and stimulate the kinds of thinking needed for learning and then give students individual opportunities to write out what they know, what questions they want answered, and what they have learned from reading the text. In this way, the benefits of group instruction are combined with individual student commitment and responsibility. After learning the strategy, students should apply the process when reading a variety of content materials.

More recently C. Anderson and Smith (1984), working with science concepts, have demonstrated that teachers and texts must directly address the schemata or prior "folk" assumptions about those concepts if students are to change their understanding.

In classroom testing, KWL has been shown to be an effective tool to help students become more active thinkers and to help them remember better what they read (ogle 1986). It has also been useful in helping teachers better communicate the active nature of reading in group settings.

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## K.W.L. STRATEGY SHEETS

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What I Know	What I Want To Find Out	What I Learned

What We Know	What We Want To Find Out	What We Learned, Still Need to Know

### Categories of Information We Expect to Use

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

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## READING VOCABULARY

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**Grapheme:** letters that represent speech sounds.

**Morpheme:** smallest unit of meaning.

**Morphology:** the study of meaningful parts (morphemes) that are combined in compounds and affixed forms. Root words may be combined with prefixes, suffixes to form new words.

**Phonology/Phonological Awareness:** phonology is the study of sounds (phonemes) and how their environment influences them.

**Phoneme:** the smallest unit of sound that can be recognized as being distinct from other sounds in a given language. Different combinations of just 44 phonemes produce every word in the English language. The word cat consists of 3 phonemes, “kuh”, “aah”, and “tuh”.

**Phonological Awareness:** the understanding of the internal linguistic structure of words.

**Phonics:** matching letters symbols with speech sounds

**Syntax:** the arrangement of words and inflectional endings signal word relationships with a sentence. Skillful readers use syntactic features along with other clues to help them identify unfamiliar words and understand text. Teaching and Assessing phonics, Chall & Popp, 1966.

**Semantics (Comprehension):** semantics is the aspect of language concerned with meaning.

**Syllable Instruction:** syllable structure and word parts are taught for reading, spelling, meaning, and usage.

**Multisensory Instruction:** Teaching that uses visual, auditory, kinesthetic/tactile strategies in order to enhance learning and memory.

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## STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CONSIDERATIONS

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In a traditional special education setting, such as a Resource Room or a Special Day Class, it is common to observe systematic explicit phonics instruction taking place. It is also common to have included among those children receiving services in these programs, many who experience what is known as *auditory processing deficits*. For those learners in particular, phonics is particularly difficult because it requires an ability to make associations between sounds and symbols, and symbols and sounds. When a child's *auditory memory* is deficient, accurate recollection and association is impaired.

In effective programs, which include these learners, a variety of approaches are utilized, and a context in which those skills can be placed is customarily provided. Activities should include multisensory opportunities for developing sound-symbol relationships in particular.

### **Initial Letter Activities:**

*Tongue Twisters:* Remember, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers" and "Rubber baby buggy bumpers"? Tongue twisters are not only lots of fun, but they also over-emphasize the initial consonant, and therefore reinforce in a highly motivating way the sound-symbol correspondences. Having children make up their own is a wonderful way to engage their creativity, enthusiasm and auditory memory! Of course, they should always be accompanied by a written form, such as in a Tongue Twister Journal, or as posters around the room.

*Jump rope Songs and Alphabet Games:* Many traditional jump rope songs also reinforce initial letter-sound correspondences.

"Alphabet Jump rope" — Perhaps you recall "T my name is Toni; my husband's name is Tom. We come from Tennessee and we sell tomatoes!" This particular game offers the added benefit of learning geographical locations, and jump rope rhythmic rope swinging and jumping skills. Include your students' names in this, and local towns and cities! Begin at the beginning of the alphabet and include the vowels, too! ("A my name is Alice...")

"Going on a Picnic" — Pass around some flashcards (1 or 2 per child) with the letters of the alphabet (in sequence, or later, out of sequence) and an empty picnic basket. As each child receives the basket, their job is to recall everything that has been "put" into the basket, and then to add their own items, which begin with the letters they have on their flashcards (one at a time, their second turn comes when the basket has made another complete circle.)

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## PHONEMIC AWARENESS INCLUDES...

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- Rhymes
- Alliteration – words that have repetition of initial consonants
  - Tongue Twisters Tie Texans
- Assonance – repetition of vowels within words
  - The fat cat sat on the mat
- Isolated speech sounds
  - Sounds may be associated with an object, animal, or action /s/ = hissing sound a snake makes
- Segmenting words into parts
  - What two words do you hear in “fire truck”?
- Blending sounds to make a word
  - /a/-/ti/= at
- Counting phonemes in words
  - How many sounds are in “is”?
- Identifying the beginning, middle, and final sounds
- Letter-sound association
- Substituting one phoneme for another
  - Change the /h/ in “hot” to /p/ =pot
- Deleting phonemes from words
  - Omit /c/ from “cat” = at
- Invented spelling-words are spelled with the sounds the child hears

As each child takes his turn, he says, "When I went on a picnic, I brought (apples, bananas, carrots, doughnuts, and (his contribution)!" He then passes the picnic basket to the next child.

*Picnic Variations* – Variations on this would be to use other containers, and items that are appropriate to those containers. For examples, a toolbox, a suitcase, a toybox. Of course, you can't always pass those things around, so pretending to pass a (toybox) is acceptable!

*My First Dictionary* — Personal dictionaries and journals can be very effective if maintained regularly, and used. A teacher may decide to create the pages for the students, or have the students create them for themselves. Often the first dictionary only has the single letters of the alphabet, and not, for example, consonant digraphs. Another personal preference might be to have the uppercase letter on the left-hand side, and the corresponding lowercase letter on the right-hand side. The idea is to have the children capture important words in stories, words posted around the room, names of classmates, family and friends, and words of their choosing to include in their dictionaries. A regular recitation of words beginning with given letters (prompted by new tongue twisters, random teacher choice or other) will reinforce decoding and letter-sound skills.

*Creating Alphabet Books* – There are so many wonderful examples of ABC books available commercially, that most children come to school having heard or read several of them. However, it is often not until they have created their own, or a class book has been created, that their confidence in reading emerges.

There are many relevant topics for ABC books in every classroom. For example, use the current theme, a common experience, vacation adventures, etc. The teacher may act as scribe in the early primary grades. Keeping in mind the child with special needs, the teacher may be able to solicit through a conversation particular class book contributions of that child who may otherwise have difficulty when challenged to create a page for a particular letter. For example, the child may share that he has recently gone to Disneyland. The teacher would then assign the "D" page to that child.

#### **Other Decoding and Word Attack Activities:**

*Cloze* – Using common songs, rhymes and poems, stories, etc., the teacher can develop sentence strips, poetry/rhyme charts or other written text opportunities in which the children are given a prompt for a missing word (blank space). Children may then fill in these blanks with an oral or written response. Post-its are a convenient way to mask a word or letters in this procedure. This can be used for initial or final consonants, letter clusters, letter patterns whole words, phrases, etc. It is commonly used for initial letters first. For example:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a w \_\_\_\_.

Humpty Dumpty had a great f \_\_\_\_.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a \_\_\_\_ all.

Humpty Dumpty had a great \_\_\_\_ all.



*Segments of Words* – Use manipulatives, such as blocks, chips or cards to demonstrate to children how some words can be separated into separate sounds. Those sounds then can be blended together to create words. Again, keep in mind that children with auditory processing difficulties have a particularly difficult time sound blending. It is actually preferred for them and teaching using the whole word approach or the chunking approach is more effective. These children are also more successful with onsets and rimes, wherein only the initial consonant stands alone.

Note: Remember to always balance your teaching of approaches to decoding, so that children learn to rely on this approach as one possible way to decode words, and not the only way.

*Model-Practice-Then Practice Some More!* – Some people might affectionately refer to this as “Drill and Kill”, but for children who may need additional practice (and additional time) in order to master these skills, practice is precisely what is called for. What form the practice takes often determines how well and how quickly that mastery takes place.

The rule of thumb here is: VARIETY. When children only do commercially prepared worksheets or workbooks day after day, there is little dynamic interaction with the learning, and therefore, little long-term retention. Children need variety, and all effective teachers know that. Show them, tell them, sing to them, act it out for them, write it, read it, put it to rap or poem, sign it, signal it, draw it in the sand and on each other’s backs, form it in the air, dance it, cut it out of paper, glue and glitter it on flashcards, whisper it and shout it! Letter names, sounds, parts of words, whole words and phrases — whatever part of the whole you’re teaching, understand how each student learns best, where his or her strengths and weaknesses are, and then provide a wide variety of approaches and activities so that every child is included in the fun of learning to read in your class!

*Prompts* – Words in context provide children with a greater opportunity for successful decoding than words on random lists. In fact, asking, “What word would make sense there?” when children come to an unknown word while reading is another fine example of how to improve reading skills. This strategy encourages reading comprehension, too. As children begin to rely on “What word makes sense?” as a strategy to name new words, they also are monitoring auditorily as they read and listen to others read aloud.

Other useful prompts are asking the child, “Have you ever seen this word before?” or “Did you see that word before on the page?” Also ask the child if he recognizes any of the letters, and if he remembers what those letters “say.”

*Word Lists* – You will also see this listed as a non-example below, because it is important to emphasize that contextualizing words is key to reading success. There are many sight words which children must know to become proficient readers. They may be articles, such as */the, a, an/*. Or they may be forms of the verb */to be/*, or prepositions, and so on. The more experiences children have with these words, the more likely they will recall them when reading a text.

Providing word lists to practice words is one way to accompany their other reading and writing opportunities. Most teachers are familiar with the Dolch lists. There are also lists of emergency words, such as */poison/* and */danger/*, common street signs and labels, and environmental words such as */boys room/* and */exit/*, which are essential for all children to know. These “lists” of words can also be incorporated well into games, such as Bingo-format games, or into field trips around the school or community to further reinforce their acquisition.

There is an outstanding web site to visit, which is sponsored by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) called "Learning to Read: Reading to Learn." You will find a page there called "Tips for Teachers," which has additional ideas for you to use in your classroom when working with children with special needs. The address is: [ericec.org/ericec/readlist.htm](http://ericec.org/ericec/readlist.htm)

Another web site that addresses the reading difficulties of children with learning disabilities, and specifically dyslexia, is: <http://www.cec.sped.org/digests/e539.htm>

### **Non-Examples:**

Some things are worth repeating:

#### *"Sound of the Week" method:*

Again, this somewhat traditional approach which is used in many primary classrooms for the purpose of teaching students sound-symbol and symbol-sound correspondences of the consonants and vowels of the English alphabet is both time inefficient and too segmented to effectively promote long-term memory for many children with special needs. At one letter per week, this method presumes that a minimum of twenty-six weeks would be needed for instruction. For children with special learning needs, in general, the level of interest in such an approach, and the choice of this over other approaches previously described, have not proven worth the risk.

#### *"Letter Books"*

A letter being taught remains in the realm of the abstract, and for ALL young children for whom phonemic awareness is just emerging, more relevant, concrete opportunities make more sense. Therefore, "Letter Books" that attempt to exaggerate letter sounds without providing a real context lack appeal, and they certainly do not excite very many young learners about reading! Keeping word lists in "dictionaries" is preferred, and then including words in those dictionaries that are relevant to the child's experiences is further preferred.

'The fat cat who sits on mat' still *isn't* where it's at!

While it may be true that children who feel success in reading are likely to build on that success and sustain an interest in reading, we can do better than 'Fat Cat' books! Yes, children will feel great pride when they can read "cat" and "dog." Again, consider having them create their own books with words they know.

### **Word Lists (see also above under "Examples")**

By themselves – NEVER! When accompanying a context –YES!

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## ALPHABETIC PRINCIPLE

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The Alphabetic Principle is the concept that

- Speech can be turned into print
- Print can be turned into speech
- Letters represent sounds in the language

Creating a print rich environment in your classroom is one way of providing students the necessary understanding of the relationship between speech and writing.

Teaching the alphabet can be most effectively done through a multisensory approach using art, music, movement and creative drama.

Activity: (Sing the “Alphabet Song”)

The understanding that the sequence of letters in written words represents the sequence of sounds (or phonemes) in spoken words.

### **Letter Recognition Goals**

- Recognize, name, and produce the letters of the alphabet
- Identify and distinguish upper and lowercase letters of the alphabet

### **Letter Recognition Activities Goal**

To rapidly and accurately identify letters of the alphabet both sequentially and randomly

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## CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT

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Concepts about print begins at home, when parents read to their children, and the children begin to “see” a relationship between what the parents are saying, and the words on the printed page. Young children will often follow along with their fingers, and will memorize the story and ask “Can I read this to you?” long before they can actually identify the letters and symbol/sound relationship. Teachers will continue these concepts by reading to the students everyday.

The importance of establishing a print rich environment can facilitate the understanding of how letters, words and sentences are represented in written language. It also helps the student to understand that the written word is speech written down.

### **Study Group Activity Articles**

Read the articles on “Concepts about Print” and “Students with Special Needs.” Brainstorm with your group 5 additional ideas for your classroom to develop Concepts about Print. Write your ideas on chart paper or overhead and share with the entire group.

### **Concepts about Print**

Concepts about print refers to an understanding of how letters, words, and sentences are represented in written language, and these concepts play a critical role in students learning to read. Students need to understand that ideas can be represented in print forms and that print forms may have unique characteristics that differ from oral representations of those same ideas. That is, children need to understand the alphabetic principle if they are learning to read in a language governed by an alphabet.

Teachers need to know that if a student does not demonstrate understanding of concepts about print and the written language system, then these concepts must be explicitly taught.

Instructional progression. The beginning teacher should know the instructional progression of concepts about print (e.g., sentence, word, and letter representation; directionality; tracking of print; understanding that print carries meaning). The teacher should be able to select appropriate materials and activities and to provide effective instruction in these concepts.

Assessing concepts about print. The beginning teacher should be able to assess students understanding of concepts about print and know how to use assessment results to plan appropriate instruction in this area.

Letter recognition. The beginning teacher should know the importance of teaching upper- and lower-case letter recognition and be able to select, design, and use engaging materials and activities, including multisensory techniques (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile), to help students recognize letter shapes and learn the names of letters.

Some commercially made charts have accompanying activities that can be fun and reinforcing. Check them out!

### **Singing or Reciting the ABCs while Using Alphabet Charts**

Merely having them on display is not enough. For children to develop the concept of print, they will need to actively engage visually with the print. Using the charts, therefore, in frequent activities to develop symbol-sound correspondence, is essential. All children benefit from these activities, and the frequent repetition of them specifically accommodates children with special learning needs, children who are English learners, and children who may be otherwise at risk for learning to read and write. One of the most common uses of the alphabet chart is to accompany an alphabet song. Teachers will often point to, or have students point to the letters as they are being sung. While there is a traditional ABC song, in today's classrooms many teachers are creating or singing alternative ABC songs, too. It is good to hear that some of these newer versions clearly and unhurriedly move through that LMNOP section! And the end of the alphabet has become XYZ, instead of YNZ. The choice is yours, of course. Remember: Just because it has always been done one way doesn't mean that there is no other (and perhaps, better) way. Change can be a very good thing for many of our students.

### **Alphabet Desk Strips**

These are often available in the writing style taught in your school district. They adhere to the student's desks, and they are very useful as referents when children begin writing. They allow children to privately practice their recitations of the alphabet while making a one-to-one correspondence with the letters. The strip enables them to find a letter and how it is formed more rapidly than scanning the class alphabet chart. (Remember, some children have a difficult time copying things that are set at a distance from them, especially children with learning disabilities in visual processing.) They can also trace over the letters with their fingers to feel the form of the letters. Some teachers modify the alphabet strips so that they are more tactile. This can be done with sand and glue, for example. While it may be an ambitious undertaking to make approximately 20 of these strips three-dimensional each year, the added tactile experience can be very valuable for students who need multisensory input to reinforce their learning. Even those students, who don't need that to learn, enjoy that experience, too.

### **Letter Books**

These were mentioned as a non-exemplar in the decoding section of this portfolio. They are included here as an example because they do, through frequent visual repetition, provide opportunities to, and therefore reinforce the formation of given letters that children are learning. If the objective is for a student to learn how to form the letter /m/, and to associate the sound that letter makes with words that are printed on the pages of the alphabet book, then this is somewhat useful as an approach. However, the lack of a real context remains a weakness of this approach, and it should only be used when accompanied by personal dictionaries and books with richer contexts. Personal Dictionaries: As children begin to develop the concept of print, a form of tangible evidence of the growth of this new skill is the personal dictionary. Each page of the dictionary is labeled with an upper or lower-case letter (52 pages in all). It is advisable to explicitly teach as early as possible the different uses of the upper and lower-case letters, so that the children are including, for example, their own name on

the page with an Upper-case letter, and common nouns and other appropriate word on the pages with lower-case letters. Having these same-letter pages as opposing papers in the dictionary is advised. In other words, the left-hand side has the upper case /A/, and the right-hand side has the lower-case /a/.

### **Flash Cards**

Again, flash cards may not be the most dynamic way to master skills, but they are useful as a means for children to independently practice, practice with a classmate, practice at home, and be individually assessed regarding their ability to name and state the sounds made by letters shown to them. Children sometimes enjoy drawing something on the back (or same side) of letter cards that represents the initial sound of the given letter in a word, such as a dog for the letter /d/. Flash cards can be used in games, such as Concentration, which mixes two sets of cards: One with the letter, and one with the picture. Having two decks of letter flashcards also enables children to play a version of Go Fish. Pairing upper and lower case letters is another idea. The possibilities are endless. For most children, including children with special needs, ownership of a set of cards can be rewarding. Having children make their own cards (and then having them checked for accuracy by the teacher? very important to do) is an idea worth considering.

### **Songs, Jingles, Chants And Rhymes**

There are numerous books, tapes, CDs, and videos that include alphabet songs, jingles, chants and rhymes. Some of these include body movements to accompany the words, and for children with special learning needs, these are usually the most enjoyable, and therefore, the most effective. When these materials are accompanied by visuals, the concept of print is reinforced again. One such program described in the Phonemic Awareness section of the Portfolio, is Zoophonics<sup>®</sup>. In this integrated daily program, children have the opportunity to learn songs that are accompanied by body movements that represent animals. For each letter of the alphabet there is an animal (whose picture is overlaid onto a lower-case letter on the alphabet chart, and on the individual flashcards for the program). The songs are on audiotape, and children very quickly learn them when they are accompanied by the visual aids of the program. There are also games and practice books that reinforce the development of the concepts of print.

### **Focused Attention to Print**

Included in every effective teachers repertoire of strategies to teach concepts of print must be direct and incidental teaching that helps children learn that letters and other written symbols have meaning. Effective teachers constantly call their students attention to signs (“This says, “Exit.”); they point out emergency warnings (“See that mark? (!) This sign says, DANGER! That mark (!) tells you that they REALLY MEAN IT!”). Children need to learn to recognize the various signs on lavatories. They need to recognize their own names on their classroom cubbies. They need to read the number or letter on the side of their school bus. Most children can do this independently quickly when they begin school. Some of them cannot, and focused attention to print, frequent repetition and direct instruction needs to remain part of every teacher’s routine for these students.

### **Print Rich Activity**

As a group, brainstorm and list on the overhead or chart paper the materials, books, multi-media you will have in your classroom to develop a print rich environment and facilitate students’ concepts about print.

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## COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE READING INSTRUCTION

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- **Language-rich program:** use of age appropriate literature, experiences for thoughtful discussions, songs, poems.
- **Phonemic awareness:** the understanding that our language is composed of words and our words are composed of sequences of individual sounds. This is an oral skill. Phonemic awareness is the best predictor of learning to read.
- **Word-identification:** knowledge of the sounds that letters and letter combinations make; separating words into meaningful units, such as root words, prefixes, suffixes; separating words into syllables; understanding semantic cues or the relationships of words or groups of words to decode a word.
- **Vocabulary development:** increasing word knowledge and improving the use of content clues to determine word meanings.
- **Fluency:** develop oral reading rate and accuracy
- **Comprehension:** teaching strategies to increase understanding. Comprehension is improved by developing meaningful ideas, drawing inferences, and relating current reading to prior knowledge.

the importance of making decoding and spelling instruction active. Calfee encourages “word work”, 10-20 minutes of daily word play during which small groups of students construct words. Such interactive lessons treat students as “budding cryptographers” and problem solvers and integrate decoding with spelling (Calfee and Moran, 1993).

Finally, Professor Adams indicates that in addition to the skills for decoding, children need to explore the language of books, hear texts read aloud, and read a large number of books.

*David Pearson, Ph. D., Professor, Michigan State University*

David Pearson focuses on the need to systematically develop students’ comprehension skills. His comments are directed at helping students with *text* meaning, which requires teaching students to be good thinkers when they read by instructing them in metacognitive strategies, providing opportunities for in-depth discussions, encouraging extensive authentic reading and writing activities, and immersing them in literature. Professor Pearson finds that in many classrooms, students spend little time actually reading texts. Much of their instructional time is spent on workbook-type assignments. The skill/time ratio is typically the highest for children of the lowest reading ability (Allington, 1983). Furthermore, the research indicates that teachers are spending inadequate amounts of time on direct comprehension instruction. A study completed in 1979 (Durkin) concluded that teachers used either workbooks or textbook questions to determine a student’s understanding of content, but rarely taught students “how to comprehend.” In 1987, Dr. Pearson (and Dole) described the importance of “explicit instruction” for teaching comprehension.

Such instruction involves four phases:

- teacher modeling and explanation
- guided practice during which teachers “guide” students to assume greater responsibility for task completion
- independent practice accompanied by feedback
- application of the strategies in real reading situations

Dr. Pearson emphasizes that comprehension instruction must be embedded in texts rather than taught in isolation through workbook pages.

Dr. Pearson describes what good comprehension instruction should include:

- **ample time for text reading** in order to have regular practice, acquire new knowledge and concepts, and build vocabulary
- **teacher-directed instruction in comprehension that includes both modeling and guided practice** of such strategies as summarizing, predicting, and using the structural elements of text
- **opportunities for discussing what’s read with the teacher and peers to enable** students to learn to defend opinions based on their readings, thus deepening their understanding of the texts and their ability to use a whole range of responses from literal to critical and evaluative



## **Recommendations for Schools and Classrooms**

Given the extensive research into effective reading practices, schools will need all of the components described below to have comprehensive, balanced programs.

### **Early Literacy Program**

Beginning in pre-school and continuing through the primary grades, schools must include language activities that develop listening and expressive skills. Such activities include:

- listening to stories, poems and expository text
- telling and retelling stories and nursery rhymes
- singing and chanting (including the alphabet song)
- discussing word meanings, ideas, books and experiences
- making predictions about words and stories

These activities develop understanding of vocabulary, syntax, and story structure in all children. They are especially important for English language learners and for children who do not come from homes where literacy is nurtured.

Schools must build activities, which teach children concepts about print and foster a love of reading. Children should be read to daily, using books with predictable patterns, repetition, and rhyme. The classroom needs to be full of print that is varied and meaningful to the children. This includes:

- labeling children's cubbies and work areas
- listing birthdays, chores, and daily activities
- teaching page arrangement, directionality and story structure through repeated readings and repetitive texts (big books are especially useful for these purposes)
- noting words that begin or end with the same sound, words with the same pattern, and punctuation cues
- Sharing wonderful stories and informational literature
- creating and posting student-generated stories

These activities support developing readers.

Starting in pre-school and continuing in kindergarten, phonemic awareness should be developed in linguistically-rich environments where children are encouraged to play with the sounds of language through developmentally appropriate activities. Phonemic awareness may include:

- a general awareness (that some words are longer than others, for example)
  - rhyming
  - blending
  - segmentation
  - initial sound
  - final sound
  - medial sound

Activities that capitalize on children's natural curiosity and sense of playfulness would include (Yopp):

- sharing books that play with language
- reading and reciting nursery rhymes
- singing songs that play with sounds
- engaging in games that encourage word play
- sharing riddles and rhymes that focus on songs
- activities that allow for phoneme substitution

All of the activities above start through oral development. Children "hear" the words and see pictures of the objects (e.g. a milk bottle, a top, a man, a cup). These activities should be dynamic, not done through drills and rote memorization.

Schools should assess students' phonemic awareness development and should intensify experiences for students who are not progressing.

- Begin assessment in mid-kindergarten
- Build phonemic awareness activities into instruction in letters and sounds

Research has shown that about twenty minutes a day, three to four times a week, will result in dramatic improvement for students who need further development in phonemic awareness. Both formal and informal assessments should be conducted that will allow teachers to assess which phonemic insights need continued development in order to help students progress in decoding. Again, the school needs to have in place intensified intervention in phonemic awareness for any student in the primary grades who has not developed this ability.

Starting in pre-school and kindergarten, schools should help students learn the names and shapes of letters. Schools should make use of various fun strategies to familiarize children with the names of the letters thus giving them a "peg to which their visual perceptions can be attached"

(Adams). Instruction in recognizing the shape that matches the letter name takes “time and practice and takes careful visual attention” (Adams). Research suggests important points to consider when teaching the alphabet:

- teach upper and lower case letters separately
- begin with upper case letters in pre-school (However, since the ability to read lower case letters is more important for reading text, it may be wiser to emphasize the lower case letters when working with first graders with little letter knowledge.)
- incorporate printing into instruction in letters as a powerful means of developing letter recognition
- use letter/keyword/picture displays when introducing letter-sound instruction (Marilyn Adams)

By learning letter names through playful and engaging repetition, students may be protected from confusing the sound of a letter with its name.

In late kindergarten and early first grade, schools must provide organized and systematic phonics instruction that is based on diagnostic information. Many children enter school with lots of prior print experience. For these children, the content of the phonics lessons will consist more of review and clarification than of new information, and sound/symbol lessons may proceed quite rapidly.

Other children, however, enter school with little prior print knowledge and will require more instruction. For these children, sufficient and repeated practice spread over time will be essential, along with frequent opportunities for evaluation. Instruction should be based on the following critical points:

Students must learn that the symbols of the alphabet are worth learning and discriminating because each stands for at least one of the sounds that occur in spoken words (the alphabetic principle).

Phonics instruction must be explicit and should include instruction in blending letter sounds. Explicit phonics provides children with the real relationships between letters and sounds, or at least the approximations of them (Juel).

Teachers need to provide instruction in word attack skills, including sounding out, syllabication, recognizing common letter patterns and generating alternative pronunciations that will enable children to start to read beginning materials independently.

Students need ample opportunities to practice in books they can read independently, and teachers need to reinforce phonics instruction as they share literature with students.

Without the right skills, children will over-rely on context rather than visually store words and letter patterns that will lead to automatic word recognition. Adams points out that a solid base of letter/sound correspondence knowledge supported by, rather than relying on, context will enable students to sound out and then identify any written word that is in their listening vocabulary (Adams).

The best instruction provides a strong relationship between what the children learn in phonics and the stories they read. There should be a “high proportion of the words in the earliest selections children read that conform to the phonics that they have already been taught” (*Becoming a Nation of Readers*). These selections also need enough high-frequency words so that the texts sound natural.

Reading predictable texts to children may help them develop syntactic awareness, semantic knowledge and vocabulary; however, predictable (when they are not decodable using grapho-phonetic cues) texts do not support children’s growing understanding of the alphabetic principles of English.

The best practice combines immersing children in rich language by reading to them and providing access to a variety of texts, while explicitly and systematically teaching them the sounds and their symbols and connecting these to decodable texts.

Phonics instruction need not be tedious. Instead, activities which promote play with words in hands-on ways will contribute to children’s growing understanding of the sound/symbol system. **When children are able to decode automatically, they can concentrate on the meaning of text.**

Although a formal spelling program need not begin until late first grade, schools should encourage and accept invented spelling as soon as children begin to write spontaneously. Invented spelling is a diagnostic tool that provides a window on children’s developing knowledge of speech sounds and orthography and frees children to experiment with print. Research has shown that writing can precede and support reading. Students should be given regular opportunities to express themselves on paper. Below are some examples of early writing activities:

- writing captions and stories for drawings
- creating lists
- writing notes and cards
- recording observations

Direct spelling instruction is also necessary. Recent research has shown that children progress faster in both spelling and reading if they are taught how to analyze speech sounds in words and taught how to spell them by using sound/symbol correspondence. Moreover, Adams points out that “the process of copying new words strengthens students’ memory for those words and does so rather enduringly” (Whittlesea, 1987).

A daily writing program beginning in kindergarten (for those who already have the necessary fine motor control) and in first grade is essential to help children learn phonics.

Encoding the sound/symbol correspondences in both directed and free writing sessions provides practice for the children and information for the teacher about how much each child knows about these correspondences.

Opportunities to write stories, letters, and reports, as well as instruction in mechanics, grammar and usage, should all be part of the writing program. Further, student-authored books contribute positively to a classroom library.

Schools should consider a number of different grouping strategies to reduce the span of skills so that instruction can be efficient and effective, and to avoid a lock-step curriculum that is too easy for some and too difficult for others. Some flexible grouping practices include:

- skills-organized groups
- every six to eight weeks based on assessment reconstituting primary grades into mixed-age classes, each with a specified curriculum for ninety minutes a day
- organizing (and reorganizing after assessment) five to six groups within the first grade based on what children are learning

Because of the critical nature of reading, sufficient time must be set aside for instruction. In kindergarten, it is recommended that at least one third of the day be devoted to language arts activities. In the early primary grades, at least two to three hours should be spent on language arts activities, including reading, writing, oral language and spelling. Language arts activities in general and reading in particular can and should also be linked to other areas of the curriculum.

### **Upper Elementary**

Instruction in writing continues through the grades.

Children should have opportunities to practice the process of writing as well as to fine-tune and edit writing. Writing instruction needs to develop fluency as well as correctness.

Children should learn complex sentence structure, paragraphing, organization, and more advanced grammar and usage both directly and indirectly through daily writing that encourages them to write across the curriculum.

Children should be writing for a variety of purposes and to a variety of audiences.

It is important to encourage oral reports, debates, and group discussions so that children continue to develop their oral skills. Learning to take turns and respond to questions should be part of this oral skill development.

Spelling lessons that are based on diagnostic information continue to be important. For those children who continue to struggle with the sound-symbol system, spelling lists organized by sound themes remain critical.

In addition, irregular words, homonyms and high-utility morphemes should be taught. Research suggests that immediate self-correction of tests is critical to progress in spelling.

Decoding skills should continue through the elementary school years as needed. Students should be taught more advanced skills, including how to make use of complex letter/sound correspondences, word roots, prefixes and suffixes, and syllabication.

Vocabulary development continues through extensive reading opportunities, during oral discussions and explanations, and through strategies such as synonym building and semantic trees.

Advanced strategic reading skills such as summarizing, predicting, questioning, and visualizing should be modeled and directly taught in the context of reading varied materials. This presupposes regular time for reading and discussion in groups as well as independently.

Activities to foster “deep discussions” about books should be built into the school day. Such discussions should focus on important questions and extend and deepen children’s understanding of texts.

### **All Grades**

Parents should be enlisted to support the development of their child’s reading skills by:

- reading to their child
- listening to their child read
- discussing what has been read

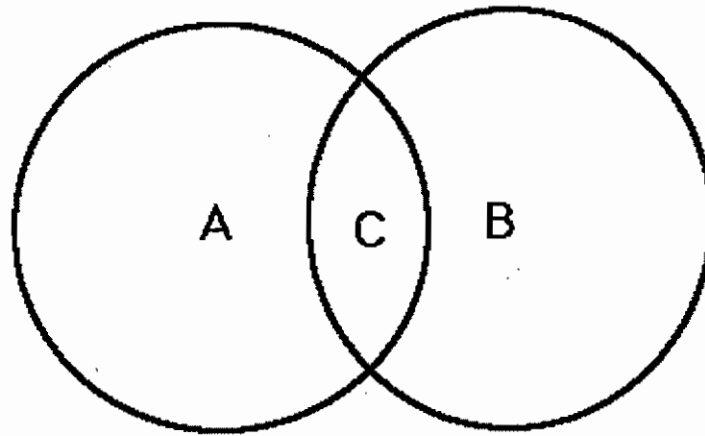
This home-school connection should be supported by schools and teachers through regular communications with parents about classroom activities and expectations. Materials should be sent home for parents to read with their children.

Because ongoing assessment is a critical part of successful reading programs, children who need more intense instruction should be identified beginning in mid-kindergarten. For these children, tutors should be made available on a daily basis. Children who transfer in to a school should be immediately assessed and provided tutoring assistance if the need is warranted.

- Classrooms need a variety of appropriate books to meet the needs of children at many different reading levels.
- Children must read material in which they can recognize at least 90% of the words if their reading time is to be effective.
- On the other hand, if they are reading books in which they recognize 98 to 100% of the words, they are not going to progress.

Students should be given ample opportunity to read in order to put their skills to use. Children should be reading twenty-five to thirty-five grade-appropriate books each year from accepted fiction and non-fiction lists. Teachers should:

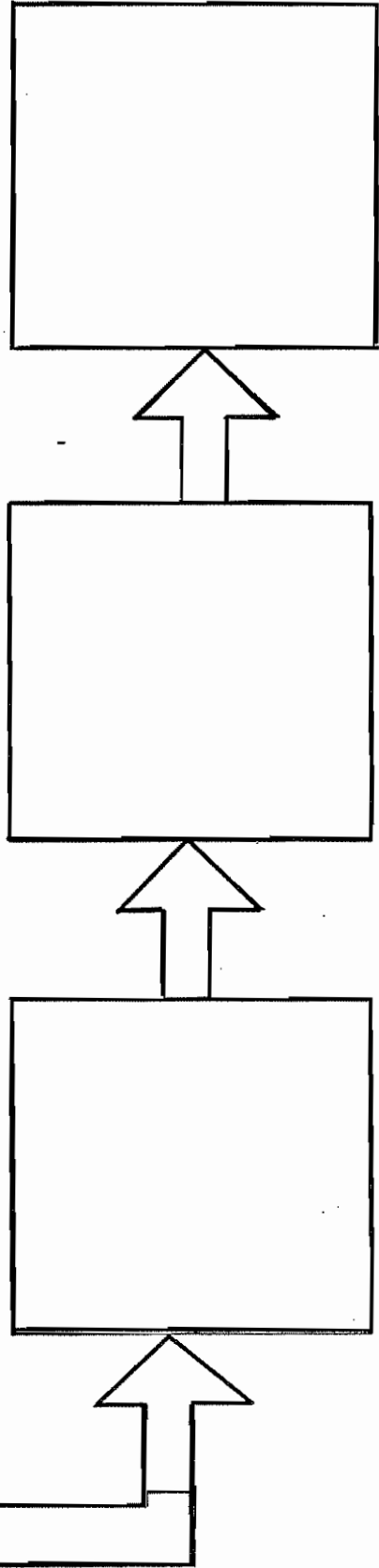
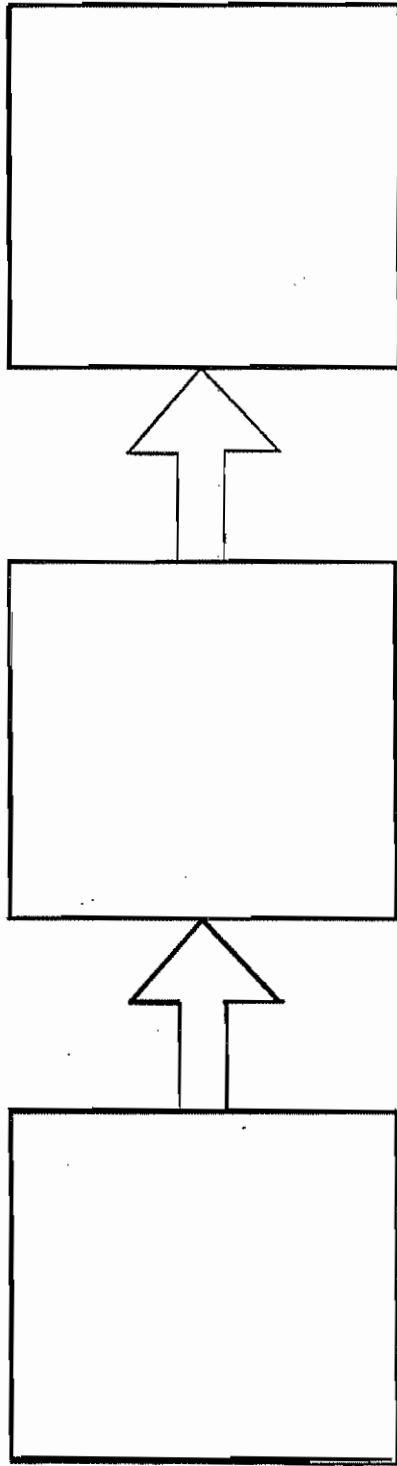
- conference regularly with children
- engage in in-depth discussions
- introduce children to a variety of genres
- require reading in different subject areas
- provide guided reading sessions
- read to children regularly



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Sequence Chain For



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Paraprofessional Training – Reading



# Simple Story Map

Story Title: \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>Beginning</b></p> <p>The story starts when _____</p>	<p>→</p>	<p><b>Middle</b></p> <p>After that _____</p>	<p>→</p>	<p><b>End</b></p> <p>The story ends _____</p>
--	----------	--	----------	---