

Florida Center for Reading Research

Language for Thinking

What is Language for Thinking?

Language for Thinking is a program for teaching children the basic language of instruction, concepts, and reasoning. It is designed for children in first and second grade classrooms whose language development is less than adequate, students in bilingual, Title 1, and special education programs, students in speech and language programs, and children who have completed (or are completing) *Language for Learning*, a companion program. *Language for Learning* and *Language for Thinking* are recently revised outgrowths of the Distar I and Distar II programs, and both ascribe to the direct instruction approach of teaching material to children. Lessons are scripted, signaling is used to elicit responses from students, and error feedback is given immediately as students learn the lessons to mastery.

The *Language for Thinking* curriculum is organized into 150 lessons. Skills taught in the program are organized into seven groups: review lessons; information and background knowledge; reasoning and critical thinking; vocabulary development; observing and describing; comprehension concepts; and interpreting graphic displays. Each group is comprised of a number of tracks, and any given lesson contains eight to ten exercises that represent different tracks from a variety of skill groups. Teachers instruct small groups of eight to twelve children, with a typical lesson lasting 25-30 minutes. Children receive an accompanying picture book and workbook that are part of daily instruction. Categories of tracks listed in the program's scope and sequence are actions, classification, word skills, reasoning skills, information, sentence skills, absurdity, directional skills, concept application, storytelling, and collecting information. Lessons are patterned, meaning that the basic structure of presentation of material to the children is repeated in the lessons, benefiting both the students and the teacher by reducing confusion about what to expect from instructional questions and responses. An additional feature of *Language for Thinking* lessons is that they regularly incorporate a review of material mastered in preceding lessons.



Is Language for Thinking aligned with Reading First?

Language for Thinking is not designed to be a comprehensive reading program that incorporates all five of the Reading First critical components (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). It does not teach phonemic awareness or phonics. It addresses extensively the area of vocabulary, and contributes to a child's comprehension and fluency as concepts, sentence patterns, and vocabulary are developed. Currently, there is no professional development offered with the program, though it is envisioned that a half-day training will be offered in the future for teachers of the curriculum. Teachers who are proficient at teaching *Language for Learning* do not need additional training, and are fully prepared to teach *Language for Thinking*.

Research Support for Language for Thinking



Language for Thinking was developed in 2001-2002, and does not yet have a research base developed. However, since the program incorporates instructional practices that have been extensively validated in research on direct instruction (see report for Language for Learning), and since many of its strands and instructional activities represent a relatively direct upward extension of the Language for Learning program (see report at this website), it is reasonable to expect equivalent levels of effectiveness for both programs. On the other hand, the program does address several new areas of language development in a somewhat more complex and demanding instructional environment (first and second grade classrooms) so that it should be subject to independent evaluation research.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Language for Thinking*:

- *Language for Thinking* explicitly develops concepts, reasoning skills, and language that are and will be important to a student's success in school. The content that it offers is critical and yet is not explicitly offered in many other reading or pre-reading programs.
- The program is well organized and sequenced, with built-in review of previously learned material.
- Scripted lessons are easy and time-efficient for students and teachers to use.
- Individual progress monitoring for each child is recorded on a skills profile folder.

Weaknesses of *Language for Thinking*:

- It may be difficult for some teachers and/or students to adapt to the repetitive nature of the patterned, scripted lesson formats.

Which Florida counties have schools that implement Language for Thinking?

Gadsden County	850-627-9651
Leon County	850-487-7147

For More Information

http://www.sra4kids.com/product_info/direct/standard.phtml?CoreProductID=24&navid=28e

References



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Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR.

For more information about FCRR go to: www.fcrr.org