

Guidelines to Review Reading Intervention Programs

Florida Center for Reading Research

Introduction

This document was developed to assist the Curriculum and Instruction Team at the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) as they review Reading Intervention Programs to determine alignment with current reading research. In Florida, a Reading Intervention Program is intended to be the instructional tool used to guide high quality immediate intensive intervention in *Reading First* K-3 classrooms. Curriculum and Instruction Team members who use these guidelines to navigate their review of a CCRP have extensive knowledge of current reading research and *Reading First*, have taught struggling readers to read, have taught reading methods courses at the undergraduate and graduate level, and have assisted in developing reading curriculum that is research validated.

Process of Using these Guidelines

When reviewing a reading program thoroughly, it is *not* sufficient to examine only a sample of lessons. In order to determine whether a program is aligned with current reading research, it is essential to review all the teacher and student materials. This document was developed to help navigate a reviewer through the lengthy but important process of reviewing a Reading Intervention Program. It was designed to be utilized in conjunction with the resources listed below. When using this document, place a check mark in either the yes or no column after each question. If the answer is not clear or not evident, write 'not evident' in the comments column and leave the yes/no columns blank. It is very important to use the comments column to detail specific examples, note questions, etc. When a question is marked 'no' or 'not evident', it is a concern that the program may not be consistent with current research on reading and reading instruction. That is, if a Reading Intervention Program is aligned with what research tells us about teaching reading, then 'yes' will be marked on all of the questions with evidence to support this assertion written in the comments column.

Educators who use this document to guide their own review of a Reading Intervention Program, will find the following resources helpful:

- Glossary of Reading Terms developed by FCRR
- Continuum of Phonological Awareness Skills developed by FCRR
- Continuum of word types
- Reviews of Reading Intervention Programs already posted at www.fcrr.org
- References listed at the back of this document

Overall Instructional Design and Pedagogy of the Intervention			
Characteristic	Yes	No	Comments (e.g., specific examples, strengths, concerns, questions)
Is there a clear 'road map' or 'blueprint' for teachers to get an overall picture of the program (e.g., scope and sequence)?			
Are goals and objectives clearly stated?			
Are there resources available to help the teacher understand the rationale for the instructional approach and strategies utilized in the intervention (e.g., articles, explanations in the teacher manuals, references, reliable websites)?			
Is instruction consistently explicit ?			
Is instruction consistently systematic ? Is there a prescribed order of introduction to specific skills such as sounds, letters, phonic elements, story difficulty?			
Is there a coherent instructional design (e.g., are the 5 components of reading clearly linked within as well as across each component)?			
Are all 5 components of reading included in the intervention? (Some interventions concentrate on one, two or a few of the components.)			
In addition to the 5 components of reading, are the dimensions of spelling, writing, oral language,			

and listening comprehension addressed?			
Are there consistent 'teacher friendly' instructional routines ? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher-led presentations ▪ Explanations ▪ Demonstrations ▪ Correction procedures ▪ Scaffolding 			
Are there frequent interactions between teacher and students?			
Are the lessons highly detailed to ensure implementation accuracy?			
Are student materials aligned with instruction?			
Is there a logical organization to the materials so that it's clear in what order the lesson proceeds? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are all of the necessary materials included? ▪ Is each day's lesson format the same? ▪ Are the components of reading addressed each day? 			
Are there ample student practice opportunities?			
Are all of the activities (e.g., centers) reading related?			
Do the activities in the lessons reflect their corresponding objectives?			
Are teachers encouraged to give immediate feedback ?			
Is scaffolding a prominent part of the lessons?			
Are there specific instructions for			

scaffolding?			
Is differentiated instruction prominent?			
Are there specific instructions for differentiating ?			
Are there guidelines and materials for flexible grouping ?			
Is the intervention comprehensive? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Could it stand alone? ▪ Does it accompany a core reading curriculum? (Should students receive instruction in both the core program and the intervention , or is the intervention sufficient?)			
Does the intervention specify for whom it is appropriate? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students slightly behind their peers? ▪ Students more than 1 grade level behind their peers? 			
Does the intervention provide instruction for students with limited English proficiency?			
Is the intervention taught by a reading specialist, special education teacher, general education teacher, paraprofessional, volunteer, or mentor?			
Is the intervention taught in a resource room, a computer lab or within the regular classroom?			
Is there empirical research on the efficacy of this program?			

Phonological Awareness Instruction			
With an intervention, the most useful PA activities that lead students to an understanding of the alphabetic principle should be prevalent (Phoneme segmentation, blending, manipulation).			
Characteristic	Yes	No	Comments (e.g., specific examples, strengths, concerns, questions)
Overall, does instruction progress from easier PA activities to more difficult PA activities? (This is essential for K)			ADD CONTINUUM TO GLOSSARY
Does PA start with larger units (words and syllables) and progress to smaller units (phonemes)?			
Does PA start with rhyming and progress to phoneme isolation, blending, segmenting and manipulation ?			
Does PA start with shorter words and progress to longer words?			
Is PA taught explicitly every day?			
Is PA only a small portion of the daily lesson (no more than 30 minutes a day)?			
Do activities follow the continuum of word types (beginning with short words that contain 2 or 3 phonemes)?			
Is there teacher modeling of PA as well as guided practice ?			
Does the program include a sound pronunciation guide ?			
Are there instructions to alert the teacher of student readiness pertaining to PA activities?			
Does the intervention describe what constitutes mastery?			

Does the intervention begin instruction using auditory PA activities (without use of letters)?			
Do PA activities eventually include the use of letters (placing letters in Elkonin boxes for example) to help students make the connection between sounds and print (the alphabetic principle)?			
Is it clear that the teacher should not begin including letters with PA activities until the student has acquired PA?			
Are there auditory rhyming activities (recognition and production)?			
Are there auditory alliteration activities?			
Do students count the number of words in spoken sentences?			
Are there activities that involve counting the number of syllables in a word (blending first and then segmenting)?			
Are there activities for students to blend onsets and rimes ?			
Is phoneme isolation in the following order: initial, final and medial?			
Is there phoneme blending ?			
Is there phoneme segmentation ?			
Is there phoneme manipulation ?			
Are there activities using Elkonin boxes , counters, tiles, fingers, auditory cues?			

Is PA instruction linked with phonics instruction?			
Are the words used in PA activities found in later word lists and text readings?			
Does each day's lesson focus on only 1 or 2 PA skills (as opposed to several types of skills)?			
Does the program help the teacher determine when oral language PA activities should drop out of the curriculum?			
If it is a computer program, are the sounds pronounced distinctly, correctly, without distortion?			
Does the program address sound pronunciation, distortion of stop sounds , holding out continuous sounds ?			
Phonics Instruction			
Characteristic	Yes	No	Comments (e.g., specific examples, strengths, concerns, questions)
Are letter-sounds introduced explicitly ?			
Are letters that are auditorily and visually similar separated?			
Are letter-sounds introduced systematically ?			
Are letter-sound correspondences taught to mastery and reviewed frequently?			
Is there immediate, corrective feedback and what is the procedure?			
Does the sequence of letter-sound introduction reduce confusion and emphasize utility? (For example,			

are auditorily and visually confusing letters and letter sounds separated (b/d; f/v)?			
Are useful letter-sounds taught first?			
Are the most common letter-sound correspondences introduced first?			
Are short vowels taught before long vowels?			
Does the program teach both consonants and vowels?			
Are several individual letter-sounds taught before digraphs (letter combinations, vowel pairs) ?			
Are digraphs taught as a unit of sound? /sh/, /ch/, /th/, /tch/, /ai/, /ea/			
Are spelling patterns (blends, phonograms, word families) taught later in the sequence, after individual letter-sounds and digraphs ?			
Are the individual sounds in a blend taught?			
Is an explicit strategy taught to decode words by their individual sounds?			
Once students have mastered a few letter-sounds, do they immediately apply this to reading words, sentences, and texts?			
Are there frequent and cumulative reviews of previously taught letter-sounds?			

Does instruction progress from the simple to more complex concepts?			
Are regular CVC words taught before more difficult word types, incorporating continuous and stop sounds and blends in an appropriate sequence?			
Initially, are words used that only include letters and sounds the students have already learned?			
Is there ample decodable text to provide students practice in applying their skills with phonic elements (word lists and connected text)?			
Is the symbol to sound association (decoding) and the sound to symbol association (spelling) taught explicitly?			
Is spelling taught during word learning so students are able to make the connection of how sounds map onto print?			
Does the program differentiate between the two different kinds of irregular words ?			
Does the program clarify that high frequency words can be both regular and irregular words ?			
Are difficult, irregular and high frequency words reviewed often and cumulatively?			
Does the program directly teach high frequency irregular words and encourage students to use decoding strategies for parts of irregular words that are			

decodable? (Do they point out the letters that do represent their most common sound as well as the irregularities of certain letters?)			
Are irregular words kept to a minimum in beginning instruction, using only high utility irregular words at first to prevent the student from being confused or overwhelmed?			
Are irregular words that look highly similar separated? (eg., where-were; of-off)			
Does the program preteach irregular words prior to reading text?			
Do beginning passages contain only irregular words that have been previously taught?			
Are the irregular words being taught evident in the text they are reading?			
Are phonic and structural analysis (advanced phonics skills) taught explicitly, first in isolation and then in words and connected text?			
Are students explicitly taught to analyze and blend one syllable words and multisyllabic words with larger phonic elements such as prefixes, suffixes, syllables ?			
Is there an emphasis on reading multisyllabic words fluently?			
Are similar looking affixes separated to limit confusion?			

As the students advance (late 2nd and 3 rd grade) are harder affixes and longer multisyllabic words introduced?			
Does the intervention provide teacher modeling of a think-aloud strategy to aid in multisyllabic word analysis?			
Does the program follow the phases of word learning by Ehri?			
Are students taught the strategy of chunking when trying to decode multisyllabic words ?			
Fluency Instruction			
Characteristic	Yes	No	Comments (e.g., specific examples, strengths, concerns, questions)
Is fluency practice introduced after students are proficient at reading words accurately (in word lists, sentences or passages)?			
Is fluency instruction integrated into each day's lesson?			
Does the intervention address all dimensions of fluency (speed, accuracy, expression)?			
Are research-based fluency strategies included (e.g., repeated readings, peer reading)?			
Does the intervention encourage the teacher to model prosody ?			
Does fluency practice involve the teacher giving feedback to students?			
Is there a guide to help teachers determine how to calculate			

fluency?			
Are reading rates assessed in wpm?			
Is a fluency goal of 41 words correct per minute by the end of first grade emphasized?			
Is a fluency goal of 91 words correct per minute by the end of second grade emphasized?			
Is a fluency goal of 111 words correct per minute by the end of third grade emphasized?			
Does the intervention accurately describe to the teacher how to determine independent, instructional, and frustrational reading levels for individual students?			
Are students reading text at their independent level or instructional level to help build fluency?			
Are letter-sounds taught to mastery and practiced frequently to promote automaticity ?			
Do fluency -building passages include a high percentage of regular words ?			
Is there an explicit strategy taught as students transition from reading words in lists to reading connected text ?			
Does fluency practice involve text the students can read with 95% accuracy?			
Are ample practice materials and opportunities at appropriate			

reading levels provided?			
Is the decoding strategy taught so that it becomes automatic?			
Are irregular words taught to be recognized by sight?			
When reading a word list, are the students asked to reread the list after an error correction?			
After error correction during sentence reading, are students asked to reread the word and then reread the sentence?			
During passage or story reading, are the students asked to reread the story?			
When a story or passage is read for the first time, do students read it orally so teachers hear whether or not they apply the skills they are learning?			
Is there guided oral reading instruction?			
Are timed readings used as a method to increase speed and motivation?			
Is reading fluency assessed?			
Are there fluency probes for progress monitoring ?			
Vocabulary Instruction			
Characteristic	Yes	No	Comments (e.g., specific examples, strengths, concerns, questions)
Is vocabulary instruction specifically addressed?			

Is vocabulary instruction explicit as opposed to implicit ?			
Does vocabulary instruction occur before, during, and after the story?			
Are listening, reading, speaking vocabulary addressed?			
Are useful words, important words, and difficult words chosen to be directly taught?			
Are students given multiple opportunities to work with the new words in reading sentences, paragraphs, or longer text?			
Are students given opportunities to use the new words in their writing?			
Are previously introduced words cumulatively reviewed?			
Are meanings of prefixes and suffixes taught before connecting them to words?			
Is a strategy taught to determine word meanings based on prefixes and suffixes ?			
Are the various aspects of word study included, either under vocabulary or word recognition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepts and word meanings • Multiple meanings • Morphemic analysis • Synonyms • Antonyms • Homonyms • Etymologies • Figurative meanings 			

Are various word learning strategies directly taught to develop word knowledge? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept definition mapping • Frayer model • Semantic feature analysis • Semantic mapping 			
Are strategies taught over time to ensure understanding of the strategy process?			
Comprehension Instruction			
Characteristic	Yes	No	Comments (e.g. specific examples, strengths, concerns, questions)
Is comprehension instruction specifically addressed?			
Is comprehension monitored?			
Are both narrative and expository texts (informational texts) used?			
Do texts contain familiar concepts and vocabulary, with simple sentences at an appropriate readability level ?			
Are main ideas and story grammar elements apparent initially in student text and do they gradually become more complex and inferential?			
Is comprehension instruction explicit (modeling, guided practice, multiple examples)?			
Is a strategy taught over time to ensure understanding of the strategy process?			
When a strategy is taught, is it applied frequently so students understand its usefulness?			

Are the strategies taught such that students can begin to monitor their own thinking processes?			
Are students taught when, where and why to use a strategy ?			
Are the strategies being taught matched to what a student is required to do in school?			
Are there any before reading strategies (story prediction, activating prior knowledge, setting a purpose)?			
Are there any during reading strategies (paired reading, main idea-paragraph shrinking, think alouds)?			
Are there any after reading strategies (story retell, story grammar , summarization)?			
Is there modeling and systematic review of main idea, retell, and summarization?			
Do teachers use effective questioning techniques to guide and monitor students' comprehension? (e.g., Bloom's taxonomy)			
Does instruction include students generating questions to improve engagement with and processing of text?			
Are students taught to use graphic organizers to illustrate interrelationships among concepts, ideas, and events in text? (semantic maps , concept maps)			

With informational text , are students taught how to locate and interpret graphs, maps, charts, diagrams?			
With both narrative and informational text , are students taught: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To compare and contrast • To locate facts and details • To identify titles, chapter headings, etc. 			

Assessment

Characteristic	Yes	No	Comments (e.g. specific examples, strengths, concerns, questions)
Are assessments included that teachers can use to guide student placement and movement through the program?			
Do the assessments measure progress in the five components of reading?			

Professional Development for the Intervention

Characteristic	Yes	No	Comments (e.g. specific examples, strengths, concerns, questions)
Is there adequate time offered for teachers to learn new concepts and practice what they have learned?			
Is there a plan for coaches, mentors, peers, or outside experts to provide feedback to teachers and follow up assistance as they put new concepts into practice?			
Are teachers taught how to administer and interpret assessments that accompany the			

program?			
Is PD for the program customized to meet the varying needs of the participants (e.g., first year teachers, coaches, principals)?			
Does the PD provide support (e.g., principal checklists, follow up in class modeling, a CD for teachers to view model lessons) to facilitate application of content?			

References

- *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, Kindergarten through Grade 3*- September 2001

This publication was developed by the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) and was funded by the National Institute for Literacy through the Educational Research and Development Center Program. To order this publication, call 1-877-4-ED-PUBS. Downloads can be obtained at <http://www.nifl.gov>.

- *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read* April 2000

The National Reading Panel Report outlines the most effective approaches to teaching children to read, the status of the research on reading, and reading instructional practices that are ready to be used by teachers in classrooms. Both the report and the congressional testimony are available on line and in hard copy. Call 1-800-228-8813 for more information, and reference publication number EX0114p.

- *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* December 1998

This landmark 1998 report of the National Research Council synthesizes the wealth of research on early reading development. It provides an integrated picture of how reading develops and how reading instruction should proceed. This book includes recommendations for practice and further research. Hardcover copies are available from the National Academy Press by calling 1-800-624-6242. Each book costs \$35.95 plus shipping and handling.

- *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success* 1998

This guide, developed by the National Research Council, explains how children learn to read and how adults can help them. It provides ideas for the prevention of reading difficulties in early childhood and the primary grades. Copies are available from the National Academy Press by calling 1-800-624-6242. Each book costs \$14.95 plus shipping and handling.

- *How Should Reading Be Taught?* By Keith Rayner, Barbara Foorman, Charles Perfetti, David Pesetsky, and Mark Seidenberg. Published in the March 2002 issue of *Scientific American*.

This brief article provides an excellent overview of the basic research that supports the *Reading First* initiative. It is written in a way that is accessible to nontechnical personnel.

- *Direct Instruction Reading*, 3rd Edition, by Douglas W. Carnine, Jerry Silbert & Edward Kameenui. Published in 1997 by Prentice-Hall, Inc.

- Carnine, D.W., Silbert, J., & Kameenui, E.J. (1997). *Direct instruction reading* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River NJ: Merrill-Prentice Hall.
- Adams, M. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT
- An Evaluation of Two Reading Interventions Derived From Diverse Models by Mathes, P.G., Denton, C.A., Fletcher, J.M., Anthony, J.L., Francis, D.J., & Schatschneider, C. In press by *Reading Research Quarterly*.
- The prevention of reading difficulties by Joseph Torgesen. Published in 2002 by the *Journal of School Psychology*. Volume 40, pages 7-26.

This article provides a description of the essential elements and rationale of a school wide plan to prevent reading difficulties in young children.
- *Teaching Reading is Rocket Science* By Louisa Moats. Published by American Federation of Teachers, Washington, D.C. Call 202-393-5684 and ask for item number 372.

This brochure describes the essential knowledge and skill required to teach reading to children who experience difficulties learning to read. It also describes many of the basic research findings on which the *Reading First* initiative is based.
- *A Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program Grades K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis*. College of Education, University of Oregon. Deborah C. Simmons, Ph.D. and Edward J. Kame'enui, Ph.D. This guide can be accessed at www.myflorida.com/jrf.

A critical review of reading programs requires objective and in-depth analysis. For these reasons, they offer the following recommendations and procedures for analyzing critical elements of programs. First, they address questions regarding the importance and process of a core program. Following, they specify the criteria for program evaluation organized by grade level and reading dimensions. Further, they offer guidelines regarding instructional time, differentiated instruction, and assessment.
- *Every Child Reading: A Professional Development Guide* (2002). This guide can be accessed at <http://www.learningfirst.org/readingguide.pdf>

This guide is a companion to Every Child Reading: An Action Plan and recommends criteria for high quality inservice professional development in reading.

- Learning First Alliance-Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation at <http://www.learningfirst.org/index.htm>

The Learning First Alliance represents an unprecedented, self-initiated commitment by its members to work in concert to improve student learning. The Alliance will strive to deliver a common message to all parts of the education system, align priorities, share and disseminate success stories, encourage collaboration at every level, and work toward long-term systemic change based on solid research evidence.