Catch Them Before They Fall

Early Identification and Intervention to Prevent Reading Failure for Young Children

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First Reader
By Billy Collins

I can see them standing politely on the wide pages that I was still learning to turn, Jane in a blue jumper, Dick with his crayon-brown hair, playing with a ball or exploring the cosmos of the backyard, unaware they are the first characters, the boy and girl who begin fiction.

Beyond the simple illustrations of their neighborhood, the other protagonists were waiting in a huddle: frightening Heathcliff, frightened Pip, Nick Adams carrying a fishing rod, Emma Bovary riding into Rouen.

But I would read about the perfect boy and his sister even before I would read about Adam and Eve, garden and gate, and before I heard the name Gutenberg, the type of their simple talk was moving into my focusing eyes.
It was always Saturday and he and she were always pointing at something and shouting, “Look!” pointing at the dog, the bicycle, or at their father as he pushed a hand mower over the lawn, waving at aproned mother framed in the kitchen doorway, pointing toward the sky, pointing at each other.

They wanted us to look but we had looked already and seen the shaded lawn, the wagon, the postman. We had seen the dog, walked, watered and fed the animal, and now it was time to discover the infinite, clicking permutations of the alphabet’s small and capital letters. Alphabetical ourselves in the rows of classroom desks, we were forgetting how to look, learning how to read.
Beginning with
the End in
Mind:
Our Ultimate
Goal for
Prevention of
Reading
Difficulties
To provide instruction and supports that will enable every child to:

Read text written at their grade level with good comprehension and fluency

Examples:

Pick up a piece of fiction and read it with enjoyment and good comprehension of plot, characters, and action

Read expository, or non-fiction text and grasp the main ideas as well as their connection to supporting details so that new concepts and information are understood and learned.
The essential elements for success

From the “science of reading”

Information about the individual components of instruction and assessment that are most effective in preventing reading difficulties.

Practices from Schools Making Significant Gains

Provides information about school and classroom systems that are effective in improving achievement.
The essential elements for success

From the “science of reading”

Information about the *individual* components of instruction and assessment that are most effective in preventing reading difficulties.

Part I:
The science of Reading and Reading Instruction
The top 5 discoveries

1. Skilled, fluent reading by third grade depends on the development of many thousands of highly specified orthographic representations for words.

The orthography of a language refers to the way the language is represented in print.

An orthographic representation is a representation of a word's spelling that is stored in memory.

A fully developed, or fully specified, orthographic representation contains information about all of the letters, and allows a word to be read accurately "at a single glance."
These are interesting and challenging times for anyone whose professional responsibilities are related in any way to literacy outcomes among school children. For, in spite of all our new knowledge about reading and reading instruction, there is a wide-spread concern that public education is not as effective as it should be in teaching all children to read.
The report of the National Research Council pointed out that these concerns about literacy derive not from declining levels of literacy in our schools but rather from recognition that the demands for high levels of literacy are rapidly accelerating in our society.
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Which is the real word?

- smoak  smoke
- circus  cercus
- wagon  wagun
- first  ferst
- traid  trade
The top 5 areas of discovery

1. Skilled, fluent reading by third grade depends on the development of many thousands of highly specified orthographic representations for words.

2. Early establishment of efficient phonemic decoding skills is critical to the development of later accurate and fluent reading.

3. Many children struggle in learning in acquiring phonics skills because they are slow to develop phonemic awareness.

4. Skilled reading by third grade also depends upon the development of extensive word knowledge (vocabulary)-this becomes particularly important to comprehension performance at about third grade.

5. Skilled reading by third grade also depends on skill in the use of a variety of comprehension strategies and thinking skills.
Effective early reading instruction must build reading skills in five important areas by providing instruction that is both engaging and motivating.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonics

Fluency

Vocabulary

Comprehension strategies

Taught by methods that are...

Identifying words accurately and fluently

Constructing meaning once words are identified

Engaging & motivating
The Many Strands that are Woven into Skilled Reading (Scarborough, 2001)

**Language Comprehension**
- Background Knowledge
- Vocabulary Knowledge
- Language Structures
- Verbal Reasoning
- Literacy Knowledge

**Word Recognition**
- Phon. Awareness
- Decoding (and Spelling)
- Sight Recognition

**Skilled Reading**
- Fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension.

**Language Comprehension**
- Increasingly strategic

**Word Recognition**
- Increasingly automatic

Reading is a multifaceted skill, gradually acquired over years of instruction and practice.
What we know from science about the growth of reading skills:

1. It is very important to get off to a strong start in learning to read during early elementary school.

2. It is critical that children acquire skill in use of the alphabetic principle to help accurately identify unknown words early in development of reading skill.

“From all these different perspectives, two inescapable conclusions emerge. The first is that mastering the alphabetic principle is essential to becoming proficient in the skill of reading....” (Rayner, et al., 2001)

Children vary enormously in their talent and preparation for acquiring proficient phonemic decoding skills.
The nature of the underlying difficulty for most children who struggle in learning to read words accurately and fluently

Weaknesses in the phonological area of language competence

inherent, or intrinsic, disability
lack of opportunities to learn in the pre-school environment

Expressed primarily by delays in the development of phonemic awareness and phonics skills
What is Phonemic Awareness?

Oral Language Skill
A functional definition of phonemic awareness:

it involves the ability to notice, think about, or manipulate, the individual sounds in words.

Words are composed of strings of phonemes. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word that makes a difference to its identity.
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When children acquire awareness of phonemes in words... It helps them understand how print is used to represent words.
Development of phonological sensitivity is influenced by preschool experiences related to socio-economic stratus

We compared the performance of 250 children from higher income families to 170 children from lower income families.

Children were between two- and five-years of age.
Why is it important for children to acquire good phonemic decoding skills (phonics) early in reading development?

Because learning to read involves everyday encounters with words the child has never before seen in print.

Phonemic analysis provides the most important single clue to the identity of unknown words in print.
The most efficient way to make an “accurate first attempt” at the identity of a new word is:

First, do phonemic analysis and try an approximate pronunciation

Then, close in on the exact right word by finding one containing the right sounds, that also makes sense in the sentence.

(chapter 10, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (2000)
The connection to reading fluency:

To be a fluent reader, a child must be able to recognize most of the words in a passage "by sight"
The Surprise Party

My dad had his fortieth birthday last month, so my mom planned a big surprise party for him. She said I could assist with the party but that I had to keep the party a secret. She said I couldn’t tell my dad because that would spoil the surprise.

I helped mom organize the guest list and write the invitations. I was responsible for making sure everyone was included. I also addressed all the envelopes and put stamps and return addresses on them.....
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The connection to reading fluency:

To be a fluent reader, a child must be able to recognize most of the words in a passage “by sight”.

Children must correctly identify words 3-8 times before they become “sight words”.

Children must make accurate first attempts when they encounter new words, or the growth of their “sight word vocabulary” will be delayed—they will not become fluent readers.
Words likely to be encountered for the first time in first grade:

- animal
- faster
- happy
- never
- time
- sleep
- rabbit
Words likely to be encountered for the first time in second grade

amaze
beach
comfortable
example
interesting
grease
stiff
sweep
In the middle, it was the _______ for a _______ to wear his full set of _______ whenever he _______ in _______ - even in times of_______! When a _______ believed he was _______ friends, he would _______ his _______. This _______ of ____________ showed that the _______ felt _______ and safe.
During the middle ages, it was the custom for a knight to wear his full set of armor whenever he appeared in public - even in times of peace! When a knight believed he was among friends, he would remove his helmet. This symbol of friendship showed that the knight felt welcome and safe.
What we know about the growth of reading skills:

1. It is very important to get off to a strong start in learning to read during early elementary school.

2. It is critical that children acquire skill in use of the alphabetic principle to help accurately identify unknown words early in development of reading skill.

3. Children who are delayed in the development of alphabetic understanding and skill struggle to become fluent readers.
Paths to poor reading fluency in 3rd grade

1. Children who do not learn phonemic decoding strategies are usually inaccurate readers, and they don’t read independently because there are too many words they can’t decode on their own.

2. Students who don’t learn to use phonemic decoding strategies until mid second or early third grade miss out on 1 or 2 years of productive reading practice.

3. Some students learn phonemic decoding skills early and well, but they don’t read very much text. Thus, they miss out on practice that can help them learn to recognize 1000’s of words at a single glance.
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3. Children who are delayed in the development of alphabetic understanding and skill struggle to become fluent readers.

4. Accurate and fluent word reading skills contribute importantly to the development of reading comprehension.
The very best teachers of children who struggle in learning to read are Relentless in their pursuit of every child.
The first commandment of Relentlessness

Let no child “escape” from first grade without being proficient in phonemic decoding skills
Making Sense of Phonics: The Hows and Whys
Isabel Beck: Guilford (2006)
The second commandment of Relentlessness

As children become accurate and independent readers, encourage, cajole, lead, beg, support, demand, reward them for reading as broadly and deeply as possible.

What we know about the growth of reading skills:

5. Oral language vocabulary and other forms of verbal and conceptual knowledge also contribute importantly to the development of reading comprehension.

6. Children must also develop and actively use a variety of comprehension monitoring and comprehension building strategies to reliably construct the meaning of text.

As students develop, reading comes more and more to be...

“Thinking guided by print”
The third commandment of Relentlessness

Beginning in Kindergarten, teach vocabulary and thinking skills as intensely, and robustly as possible
First-grade children from higher SES groups know about twice as many words as lower SES children.

Poor children, who enter school with vocabulary deficiencies have a particularly difficult time learning words from “context.”

Research has discovered much more powerful ways of teaching vocabulary than are typically used in classrooms – generalization to reading comprehension.

A “robust” approach to vocabulary instruction involves directly explaining the meanings of words along with thought-provoking, playful, interactive follow-up.
Four Critical Elements for More Robust Vocabulary Instruction

Select the right words to teach – Tier 2 words
  absurd  fortunate  ridiculous

Develop child-friendly definitions for these words

Engage children in interesting, challenging, playful activities in which they learn to access the meanings of words in multiple contexts

Find a way to devote more time during the day to vocabulary instruction
Summary of Part I:

What should comprehension instruction be the instruction of? - Mike Pressley

1. Teach decoding skills
2. Encourage the development of sight words
3. Teach students to use semantic context cues to evaluate whether decodings are accurate
4. Teach vocabulary meanings
5. Encourage extensive reading
6. Teach self-regulated use of comprehension strategies

A reason to be relentless...
Questions/ Discussion
Part II:
Applications of science in classrooms and schools

Practices from Schools Making Significant Gains

Provides information about the school and classroom systems that are effective in improving achievement.
How much difference does high quality implementation make?

Student outcomes in reading are influenced by two main variables:

- Student abilities and attitudes plus influences in the home and neighborhood.
- The quality and quantity of instruction they receive in school.
Relationship of “school challenge” to student performance

Level of School Challenge based on % of students qualifying for FR lunch

% of 1-3 Students Performing At Grade Level at the End of Year

Average % at GL

587 RF schools in Florida

Increasing Challenge

Decreasing Performance

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

237 RF schools in Florida

63 75 82 86 91 96

61 58 53 51

72 66 61 58 53 51
The Adult Learning and Performance Gap

Level of School Challenge based on % of students qualifying for FR lunch

Approx. 20%

Approx. 27%
The prevention of reading difficulties: three areas in which we must become stronger each year

1. Increase the quality, consistency, and reach of instruction in every K-3 classroom

2. Conduct timely and valid assessments of reading growth to identify struggling readers. Use this data to improve school level and instructional planning.

3. Provide more intensive interventions to help struggling readers “catch up” to grade level standards in each grade K-3.
Essential Practices in Successful, High Challenge Schools

1. Efforts to help increase the quality, consistency, and **reach** of instruction in every K-3 classroom
   a. Insuring teachers have excellent professional development, including appropriate materials to guide and support instruction
   b. Monitoring and supporting classroom instruction through leadership walkthroughs
The purpose of a classroom visit is to help teachers improve their instruction and identify the best teaching practices in your school. Observation visits reflect your interest in instruction and in your staff's professional growth. (Blase & Blase, 1998; Scholastic, 2005)
1. Efforts to help increase the quality, consistency, and reach of instruction in every K-3 classroom
   a. Insuring teachers have excellent professional development, including strong training in use of the core program to guide instruction
   b. Monitoring and supporting classroom instruction through principal walkthroughs

   Are teachers providing explicit, systematic, and motivating whole group instruction?
   Is small group instruction differentiated appropriately by student need?
Increasing the quality and power of teacher-led, small-group, differentiated instruction

Instruction should be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students in at least four ways

Frequency and duration of meeting in small groups – every day, three times per week, etc.

Size of instructional group – 3 students, 6 students, 8 students, etc.

Focus of instruction – work in phonemic awareness in phonics, work in fluency and comprehension, etc.

Lesson format – guided reading vs. skills focused lessons
Differentiated Reading Instruction: Small Group Alternative Lesson Structures for All Students

Marcia Kosanovich, Karen Ladinsky, Luanne Nelson, Joseph Torgesen
Four good books for instructional ideas

Making Sense of Phonics: The Hows and Whys
Isabel Beck: Guilford (2006)

Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction
Beck, McKeown, & Kucan: Guilford (2002)

Vocabulary Handbook
Consortium on Reading Excellence (2006)

Comprehension Process Instruction: Creating Success in Grades K-3
Block, Rogers, & Johnson (2004)
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Are teachers providing explicit, systematic, and motivating whole group instruction?

Is small group instruction differentiated appropriately by student need?

Are other students engaged in independent learning activities that are appropriate and engaging?
Organization of a classroom during small group instruction

Classroom teacher and group of 4

Resource teacher and group of 3

Are these students working productively on appropriate practice activities?

Something that might be helpful: FCRR has developed 240 ISA’s for K-2 and 170 for 2-3 –

Independent Learning Activity (4)

Independent Learning Activity (3)

Independent Learning Activity (4)

Independent Learning Activity (4)
A source for high quality independent student learning activities

To download up to 240 independent student learning activities for K-1 classrooms, and up to 170 activities for students in grades 2-3, go to http://www.fcrr.org/Curriculum/studentCenterActivities.htm

There is also a teacher resource manual providing directions for classroom management during small group instruction, and approximately 70 minutes of video training.
Essential Practices in Successful, High Challenge Schools

2. Be sure school-level assessment plan is working, and provide leadership in use of data to plan instruction at the school and classroom level.

- Beginning of the year screening tests
- Progress monitoring tests during the year
- Diagnostic tests
- End-of-year outcome tests
Guidance on how to establish a comprehensive assessment plan for grades K-3

Essential Practices in Successful, High Challenge Schools

2. Be sure school-level assessment plan is working, and provide leadership in use of data to plan instruction at the school and classroom level. 

Two important uses of student data:

1. School level planning involves identifying needs for materials, personnel, time – takes place in spring or early summer-has budget implications.
2. Be sure school-level assessment plan is working, and provide leadership in use of data to plan instruction at the school and classroom level.

Two important uses of student data:

1. School level planning involves identifying needs for materials, personnel, time –- takes place in spring or early summer--has budget implications.

2. Provide leadership for the use of data to make adjustments and increase power of instruction for those who need it –- attend important data meetings.
3. Provide powerful interventions to students who need them for as long as they need them

   A. Developing a school schedule that allows sufficient time for interventions
Example of Staggered Reading Blocks with "Walk and Read"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Science / SS</th>
<th>Special Area</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>8:45-10:30</td>
<td>10:30-11:30</td>
<td>1:35-2:35</td>
<td>12:15-12:50</td>
<td>12:50-1:35</td>
<td>11:30-12:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8:45-10:30</td>
<td>12-1</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>2-2:30</td>
<td>11:15-12</td>
<td>10:30-11:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10:30-12:15</td>
<td>9:45-10:30</td>
<td>8:45-9:45</td>
<td>1:15-1:40</td>
<td>1:40-2:25</td>
<td>12:30-1:15</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>10:30-12:15</td>
<td>9:30-10:30</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>2-2:30</td>
<td>8:45-9:30</td>
<td>12:15-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organization of a classroom during small group instruction

Classroom teacher and group of 4

Resource teacher and group of 3

Are these students working productively on appropriate practice activities?

Something that might be helpful: FCRR has developed 240 ISA’s for K-2 and 170 for 2-3 –
Essential Practices in Successful, High Challenge Schools

3. Provide powerful interventions to students who need them for as long as they need them
   A. Developing a school schedule that allows sufficient time for interventions
   B. Identifying or providing sufficient personnel to deliver the intervention instruction
   C. Providing appropriate programs and materials to support the intervention instruction
      Will need something for early reading accuracy—phonics
      Will need something for fluency growth
      Will also likely need a supplement for vocabulary
Essential Practices in Successful, High Challenge Schools

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A. Developing a school schedule that allows sufficient time for interventions

B. Identifying or providing sufficient personnel to deliver the intervention instruction

C. Providing appropriate programs and materials to support the intervention instruction

D. Oversight, energy, follow-up – use data meetings to ask about students, make decisions to increase support, etc.
Guidance on essential procedures for implementing effective interventions with young children

http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Principals%20guide%20to%20intervention.pdf
Obtain copy at:
http://www.fcrr.org/Interventions/pdf/teachingAllStudentsToReadComplete.pdf

Or,

Go to www.fcrr.org
Click on Interventions for struggling readers (in right column)
You will see the title of the document
Evidence from one school that we can do substantially better than ever before

School Characteristics:
70% Free and Reduced Lunch (going up each year)
65% minority (mostly African-American)

Elements of Curriculum Change:
Movement to a more balanced reading curriculum beginning in 1994-1995 school year (incomplete implementation) for K-2, then improved implementation in 1995-1996

Implementation in Fall of 1996 of screening and more intensive small group instruction for at-risk students
Proportion falling below the 25th percentile in word reading ability at the end of first grade

Average Percentile for entire grade (n=105)


Screening at beginning of first grade, with extra instruction for those in bottom 30-40%
Proportion falling below the 25th Percentile

1995: 31.8
1996: 20.4
1997: 10.9
1998: 6.7
1999: 3.7

Average Percentile
1995: 48.9
1996: 55.2
1997: 61.4
1998: 73.5
1999: 81.7

Hartsfield Elementary Progress over five years
A final concluding thought....

There is no question but that “leaving no child behind in reading” is going to be a significant challenge...

It will involve professional development for teachers, school reorganization, careful assessments, and a relentless focus on the individual needs of every child...

But, its not the most difficult thing we could be faced with...
Thank You

To obtain this powerpoint presentation, go to

www.fcrr.org

Science of reading section