Reading Programs

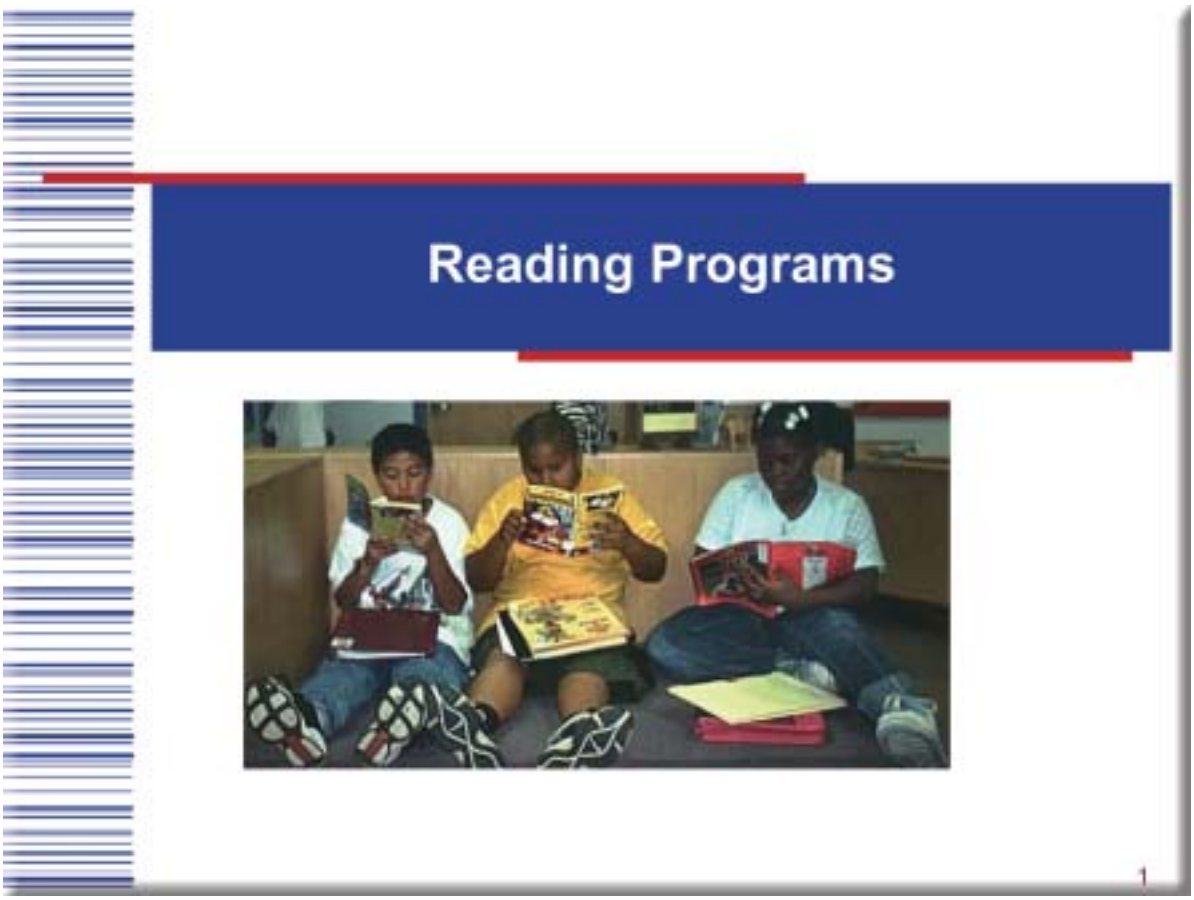
The materials in this section provide an overview of the historical background of reading instruction in America, the defining characteristics of scientifically based reading programs, and procedures for selecting reading programs for kindergarten through grade three. The materials also offer guidance on how to recognize quality programs by their inclusion of explicit instructional strategies, coordinated instructional sequences, ample practice opportunities, and aligned student materials.

This section of the Guidebook includes:

- A PowerPoint presentation about the history and quality of reading programs
- Textbook Evaluation and Adoption Practices: An Introductory Paper
- A Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program, Grades K-3
- References

A PowerPoint presentation about the history and quality of reading programs

Note: Several slides in the original presentation contained examples from reading programs to illustrate the presenters' main ideas about characteristics of effective instruction. Those slides have been removed here for copyright reasons.



Marcy Stein, Ph.D., Development Team Leader	University of Washington, Tacoma
Mo Anderson, M.Ed.	Washington State Reading Excellence Act
Joy Eichelberger, Ed.D.	Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network
Diane Kinder, Ph.D.	University of Washington, Tacoma
Jo Robinson, M.Ed.	Washington State Reading Excellence Act

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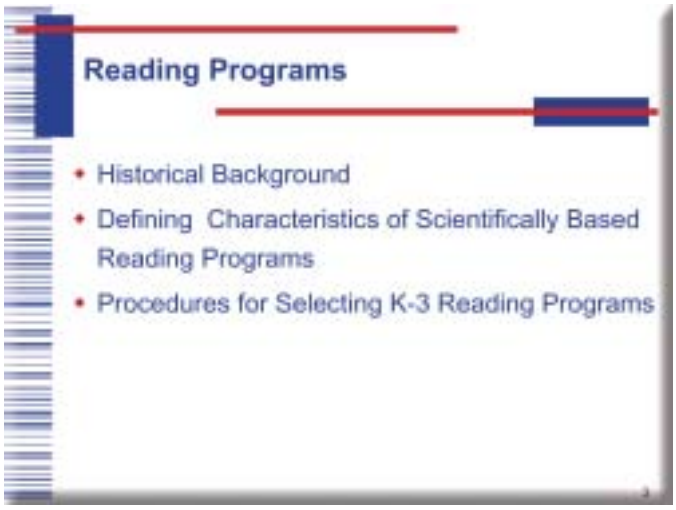

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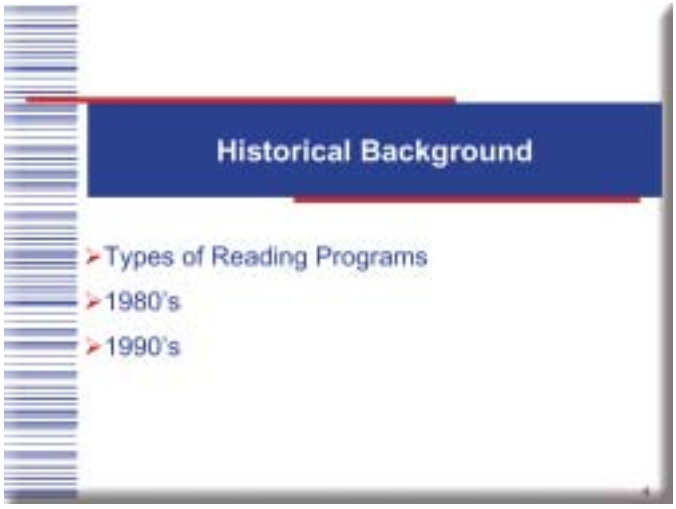

- The historical background section will include an overview of the types of reading programs that have been available to teachers during the last two decades.

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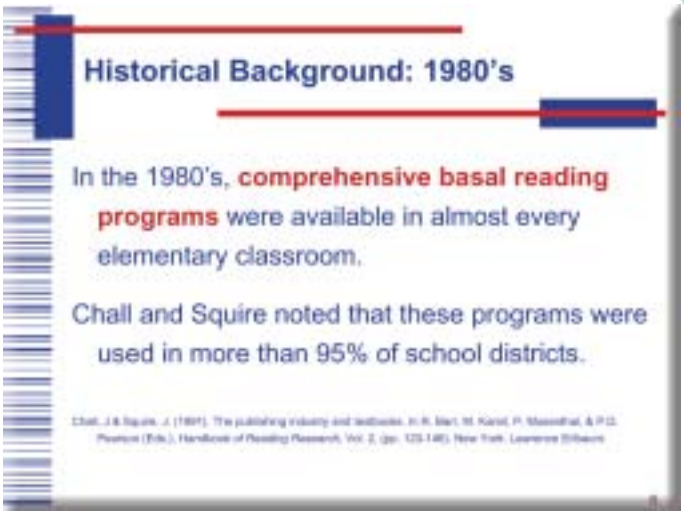
- Different types of reading programs have been developed throughout the years, including comprehensive basal reading programs, literature-based reading programs, supplemental, and intervention programs. In this section, we will discuss the use of comprehensive basal reading programs and literature-based reading programs only because these programs were predominant in the 80's and 90's. These programs were designed as the primary means of teaching reading in grades K-3. Later we will discuss supplemental and intervention programs in more detail.

- These programs are called comprehensive because their intent is to provide complete instructional programs for children learning to read and write.



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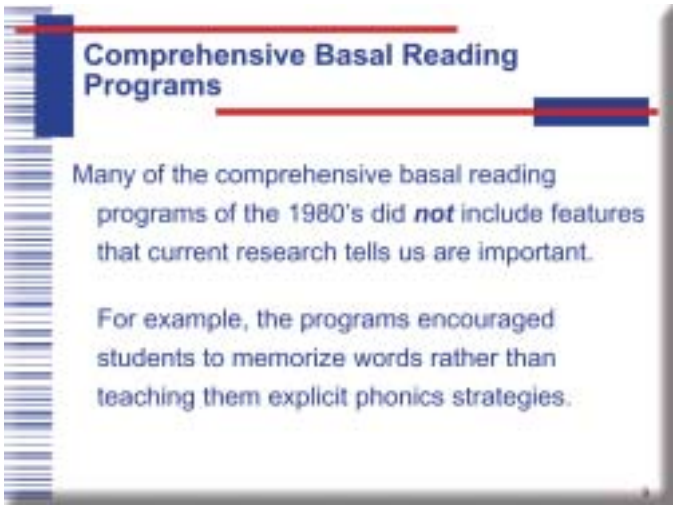

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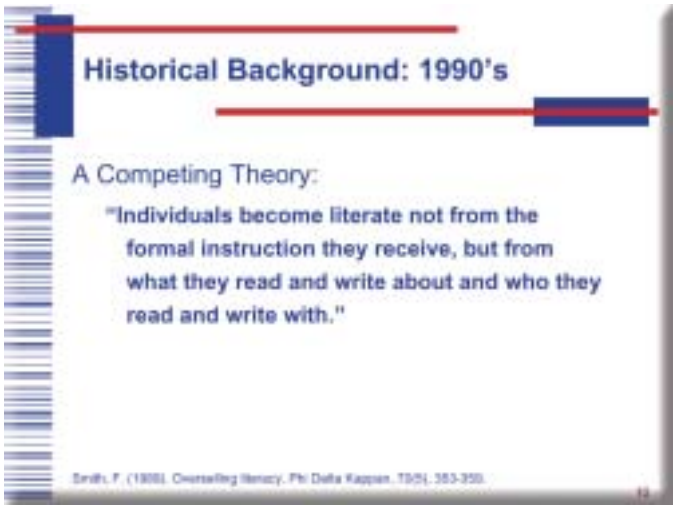

- A predominant theory of the early nineties is exemplified by this quote from Frank Smith. The theory proposed that children would learn to read as naturally as they learned to talk in environments that promoted literacy. Systematic instruction was considered unnecessary, if not harmful.

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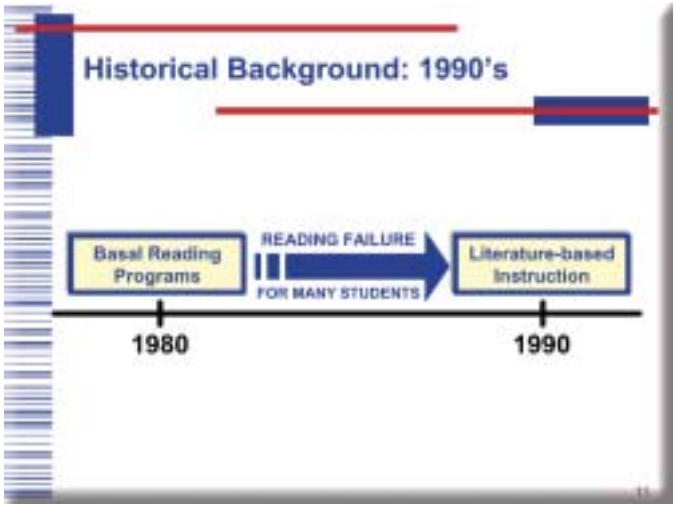

The movement from basal reading programs to literature-based instruction was influenced by:

- Dissatisfaction with basal reading programs of the 80's
- Reading failure with large numbers of students
- Competing reading philosophies

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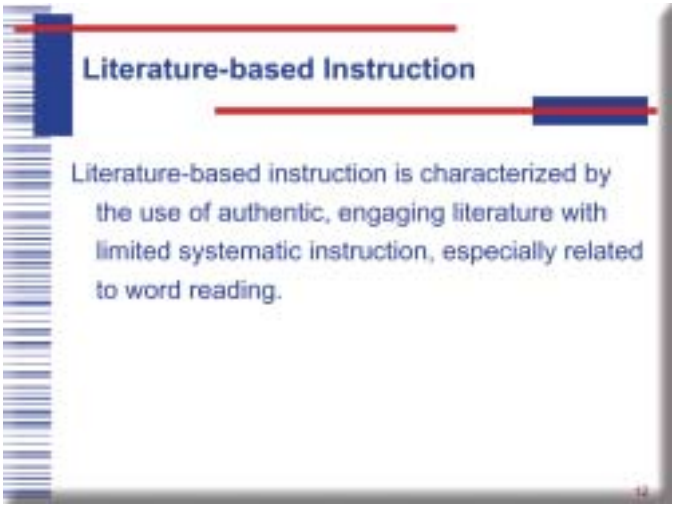
Literature-based Instruction
Literature-based instruction is characterized by the use of authentic, engaging literature with limited systematic instruction, especially related to word reading.

13


Literature-based Instruction
Program Features:
teacher- or commercially-developed
student-initiated activities
whole class instruction
mini-phonics lessons
emphasis on context and picture clues
emphasis on silent reading
leveled books

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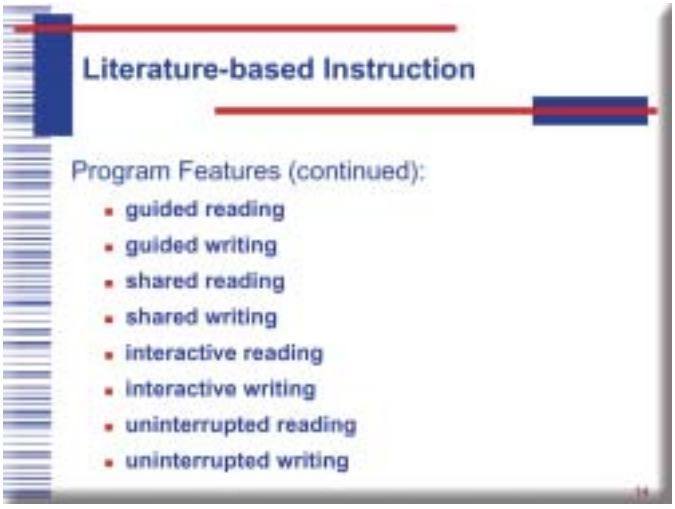
Literature-based Instruction
Program Features (continued):
guided reading
guided writing
shared reading
shared writing
interactive reading
interactive writing
uninterrupted reading
uninterrupted writing

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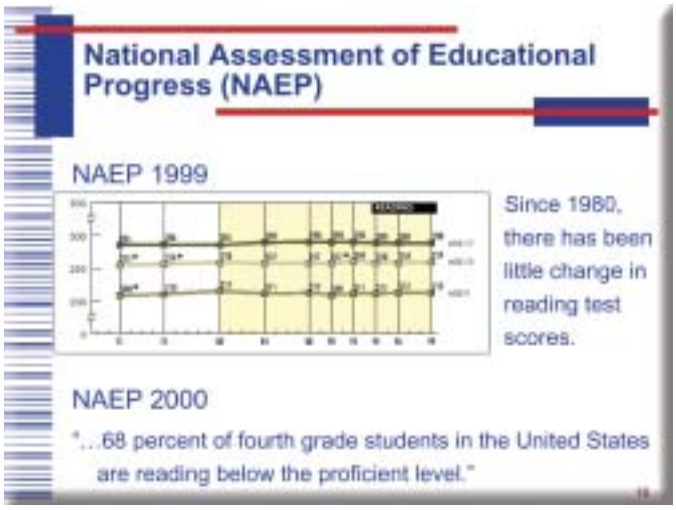

(Chart from: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/main1999/2000469.asp For NAEP Reading information: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/)

Despite the movement from basal reading programs to literature-based instruction

- reading scores did not improve significantly
- many students still could not read at grade level

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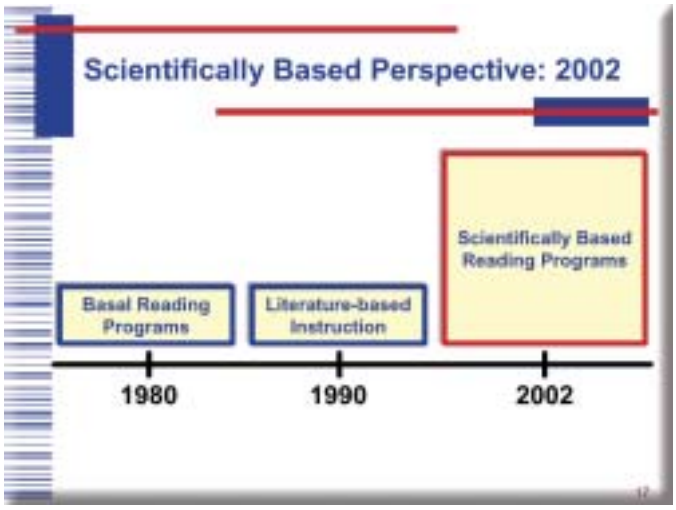

Because of the convergence of scientific findings about reading

- reading programs can now include scientifically based instruction
- the potential exists for greater reading achievement

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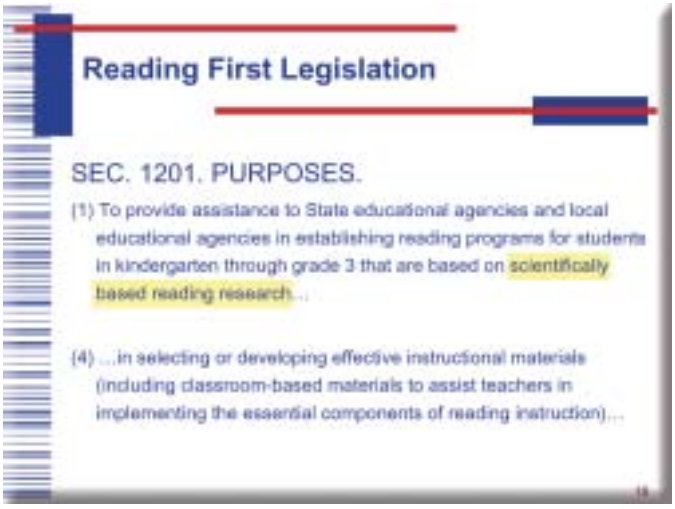
Reading First Legislation requires

- the establishment of scientifically based reading programs in grades K-3
- assistance in selection or development of scientifically based instructional materials



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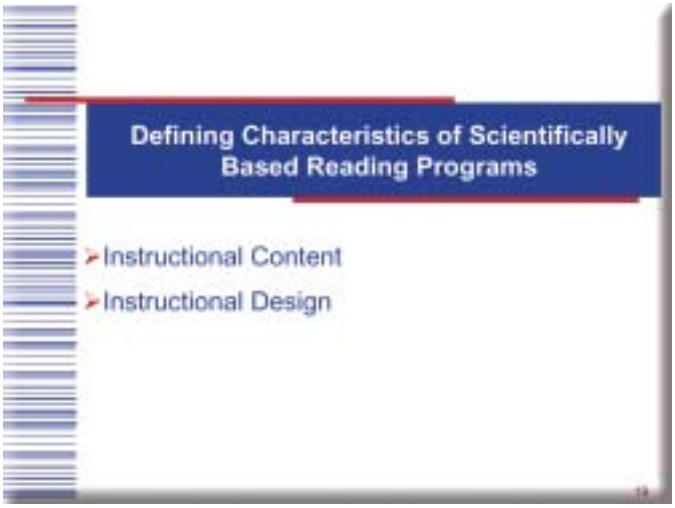
- Next we will provide an overview of the characteristics of the instructional content of scientifically based reading programs. We will include examples of instruction from current reading programs for the core elements of reading that were introduced in the Effective Reading Instruction presentation. We also will discuss key features of instructional design and show examples from well-designed reading programs.



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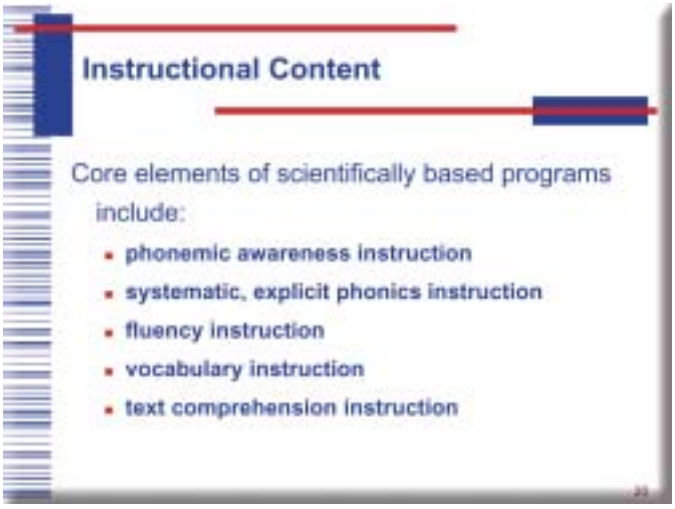

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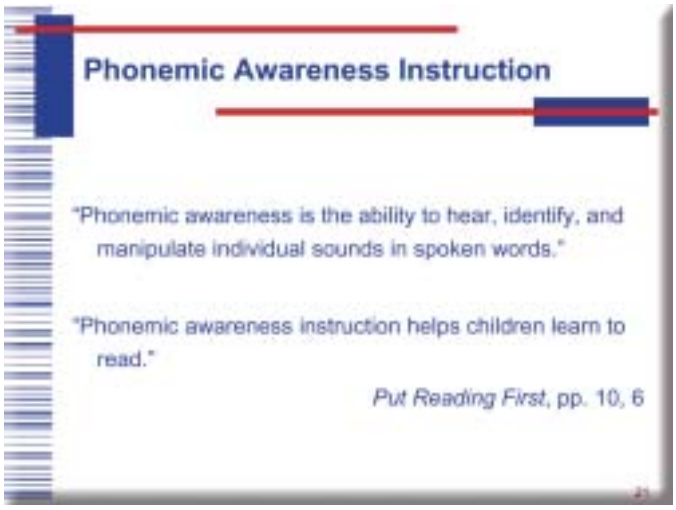

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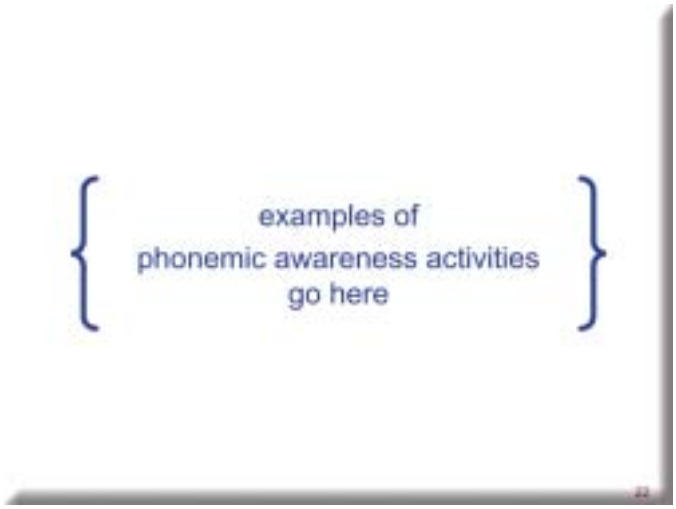

Examples of two phonemic awareness exercises

- teachers are given explicit instructions for teaching phonemic awareness
- (first exercise) students orally blend sounds to form words
- (second exercise) students identify the beginning sound in spoken words

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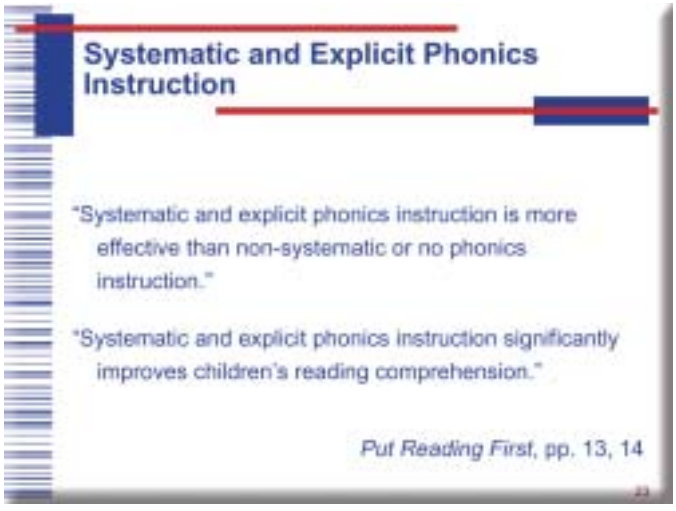

- Systematic, explicit "Phonics instruction teaches students the relationships between the letters… of written language and the individual sounds… of spoken language." (Put Reading First, p.12.)
- It is important to understand that phonics instruction is not just about word reading. As was discussed earlier, research has demonstrated a strong relationship between phonics instruction and students' ability to understand what they read.

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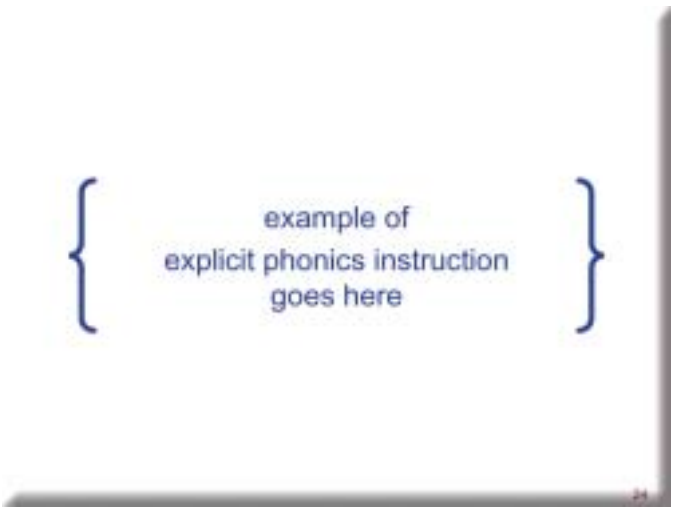
An example of explicit phonics instruction

- teachers are given explicit instruction for teaching phonics
- students sound out words containing sounds recently taught
- students read sentences containing words with sounds recently taught



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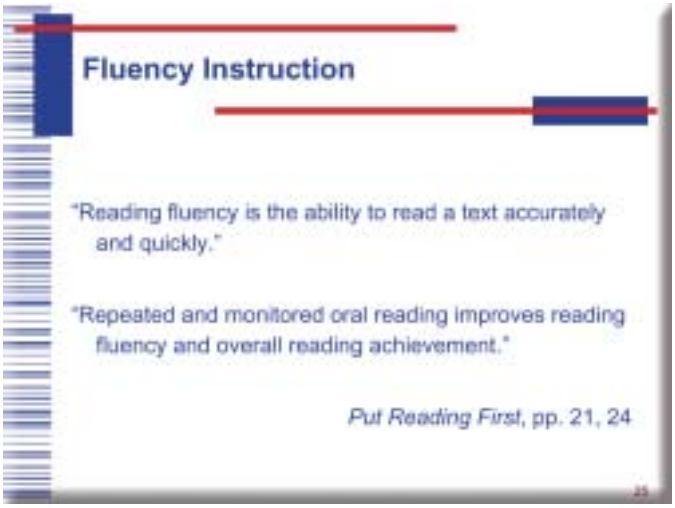
- Teachers need to closely monitor their students' reading fluency to ensure their success in reading. Reading programs should provide teachers with specific directions in how to do this.



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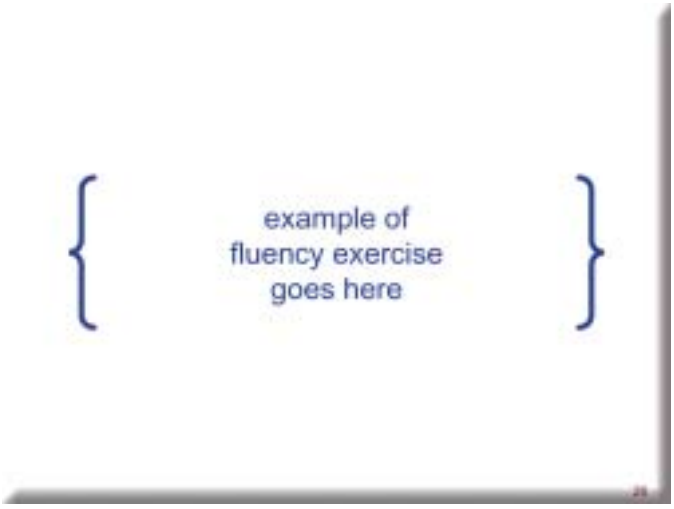
An example of a fluency exercise in a reading program

- teachers are encouraged to have students read aloud or with a partner for fluency practice
- teachers are given explicit instructions for evaluating students' reading rates to determine fluency levels



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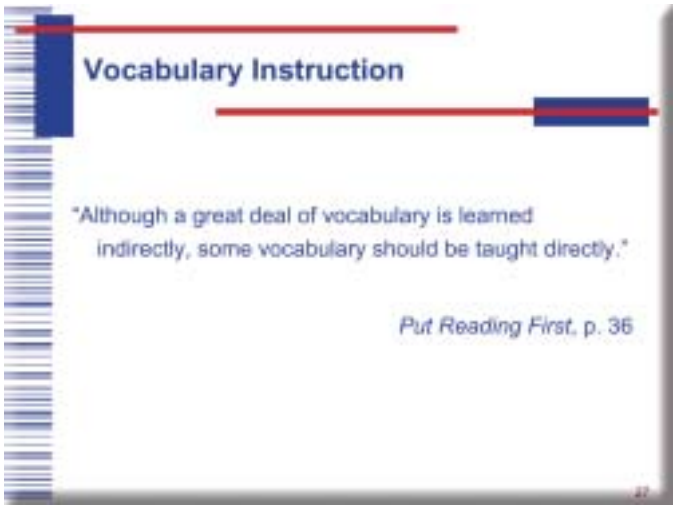
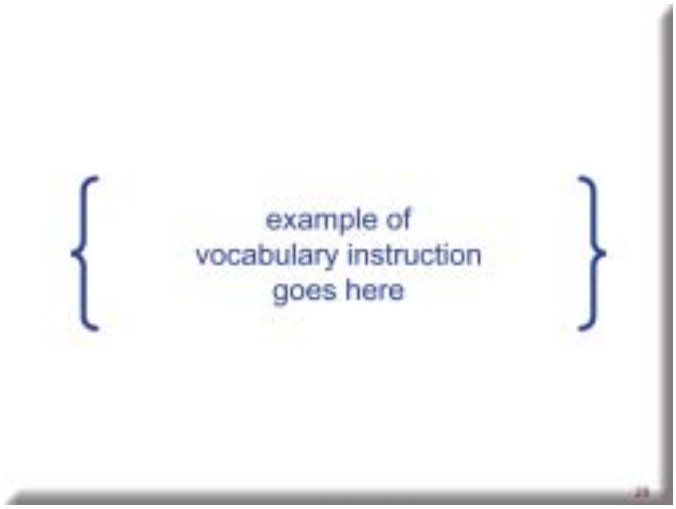


"Readers cannot understand what they are reading without knowing what most of the words mean." (Put Reading First, p.34)

- One means of teaching new vocabulary involves teaching students specific word meanings. Teaching vocabulary also can involve teaching students how to figure out the meanings of words from reading the surrounding text.

28



An example of vocabulary instruction

- teachers are given explicit instruction for teaching students new vocabulary
- students are explicitly taught how to figure out word meanings by looking for clues in the surrounding text
- students are given guided practice in applying that vocabulary strategy

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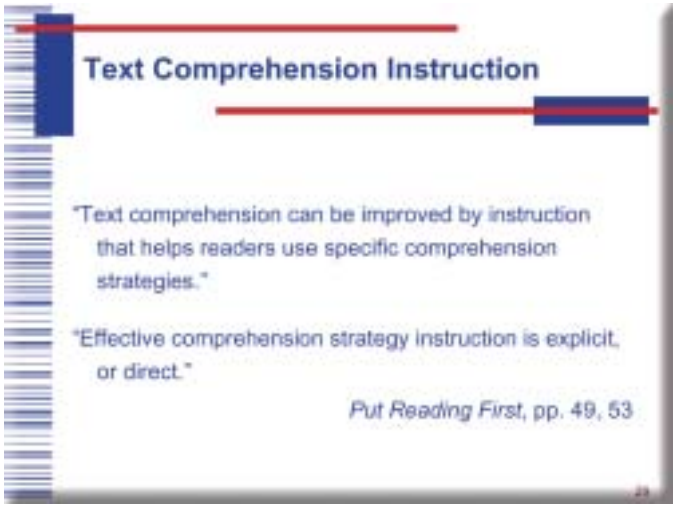
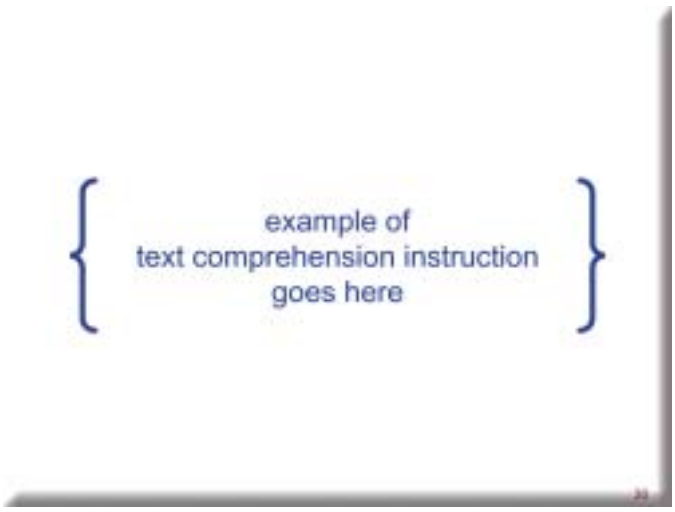


- Text comprehension instruction involves teaching students how to understand what they read. Research suggests that students benefit when that instruction is explicit or direct.

30

An example of comprehension instruction

- the teacher is given explicit instructions for teaching students how to compare and contrast two characters from a story
- students are taught to use a graphic organizer (Venn diagram) to help them organize and remember how these characters are alike and different



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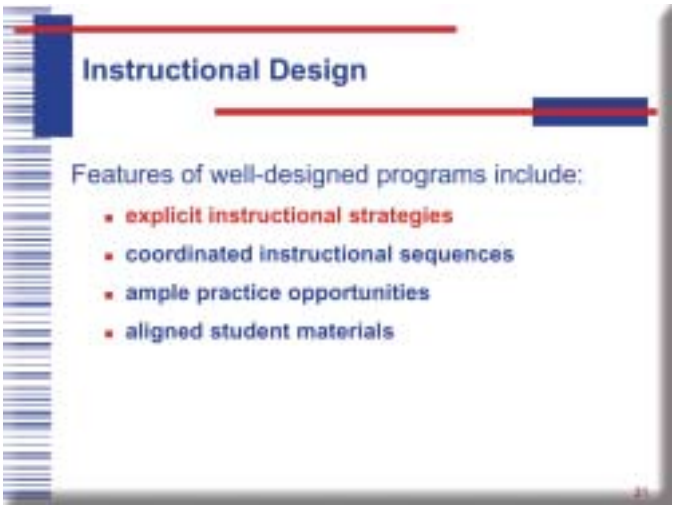
- We have just been discussing examples of instructional content from comprehensive reading programs. Now we are going to talk about some general features of well-designed programs and show a few examples that illustrate those features. This section focuses on how program components are organized and how the lessons are designed. These organizational features include: explicit instructional strategies, coordinated instructional sequences, ample practice opportunities, and aligned student materials.



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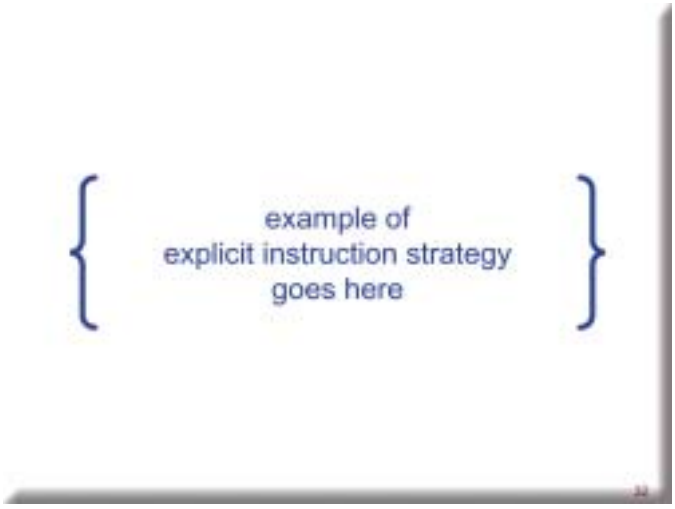
An example of an explicit instructional strategy for teaching letter-sound correspondences

- the teacher is directed to explicitly model the sound /g/ for students
- the teacher also is directed to have students say words with /g/ and identify the sound



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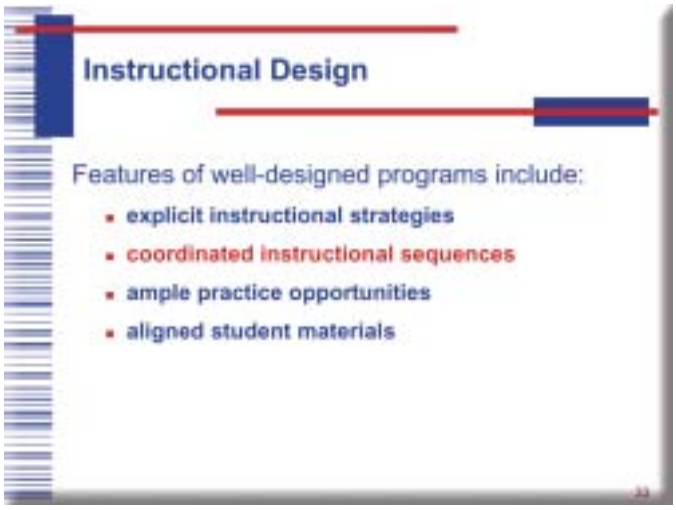

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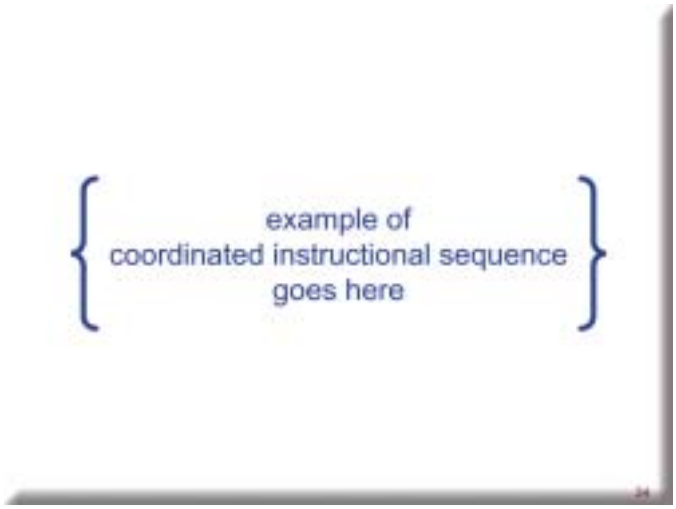

An example of a coordinated instructional sequence with three different instructional activities (phonological awareness, connecting sound-spelling, and practice/apply) with the letter/sound m

- first students practice oral blending focusing on the /m/ sound
- then students learn to connect the sound with the letter m
- finally, students read words which include the /m/ sound

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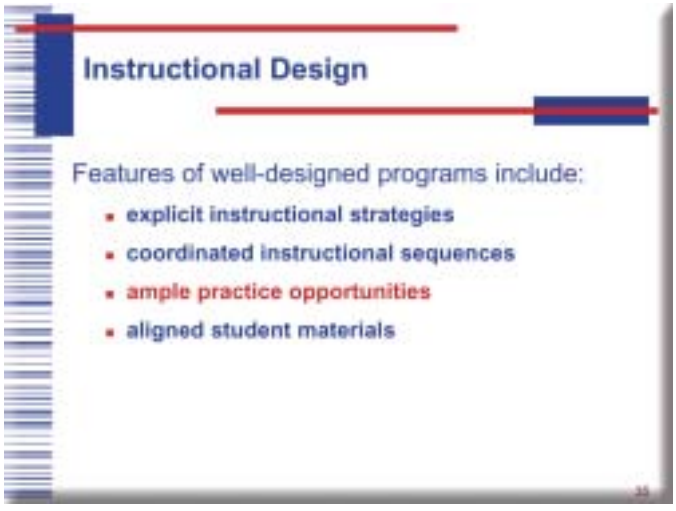

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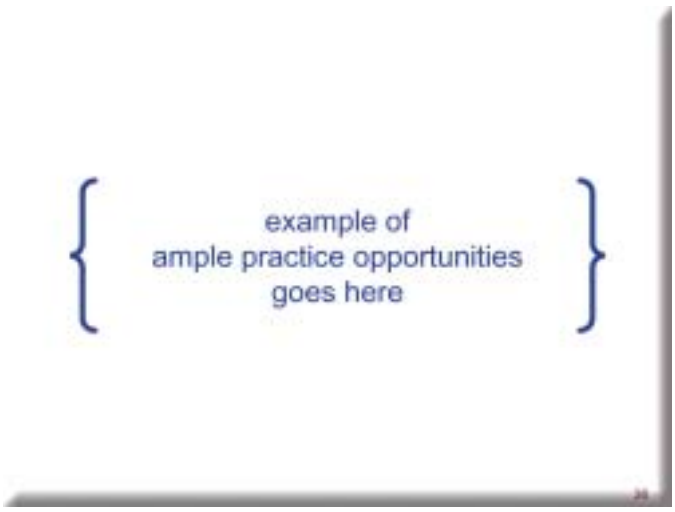
An example of ample practice opportunities to promote reading fluency

- the program provides teachers with various practice exercises to promote fluency on a daily basis
- the program provides teachers with activities organized to accommodate a range of reading abilities



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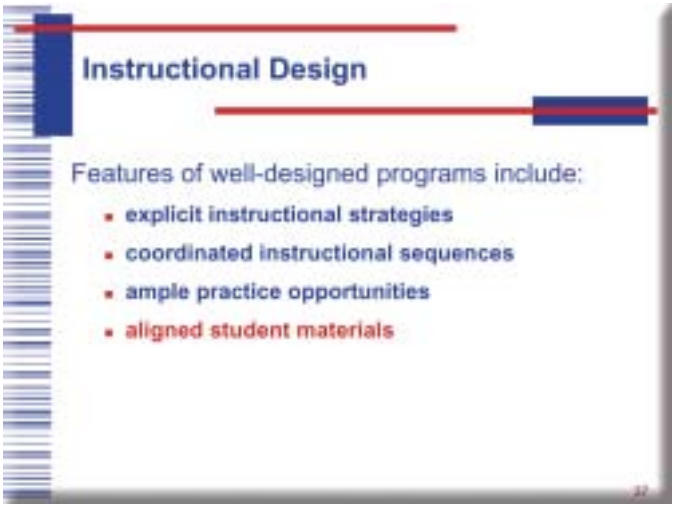

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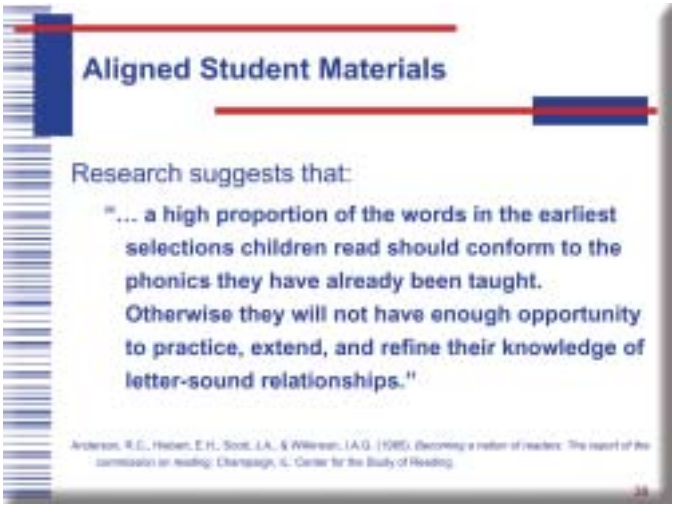
- One way a program aligns student materials with instruction is by providing materials for the students to read that reflect that instruction.



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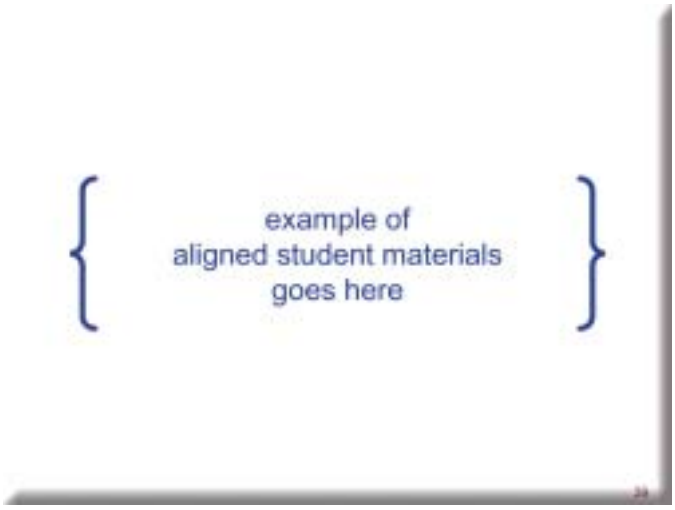

An example of aligned student materials

- This example illustrates one way that a program can align student materials. It demonstrates the close alignment between the phonics instruction students receive and the text selections that they read.

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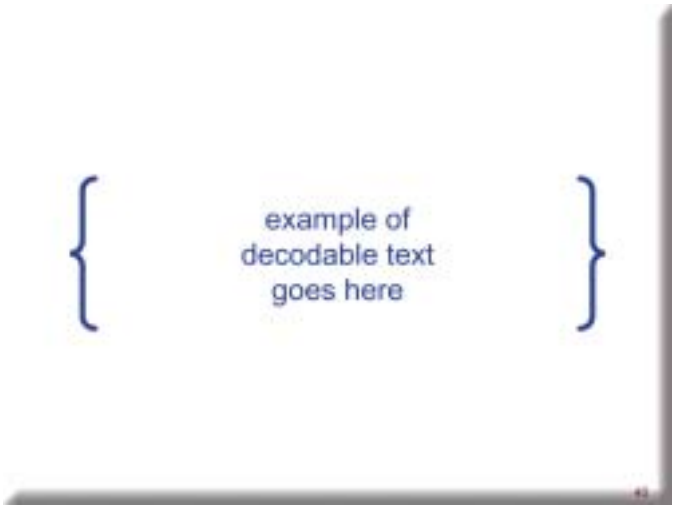

- This is an example of a decodable text, one for which the students have been taught the appropriate phonics that will enable them to read the selection.

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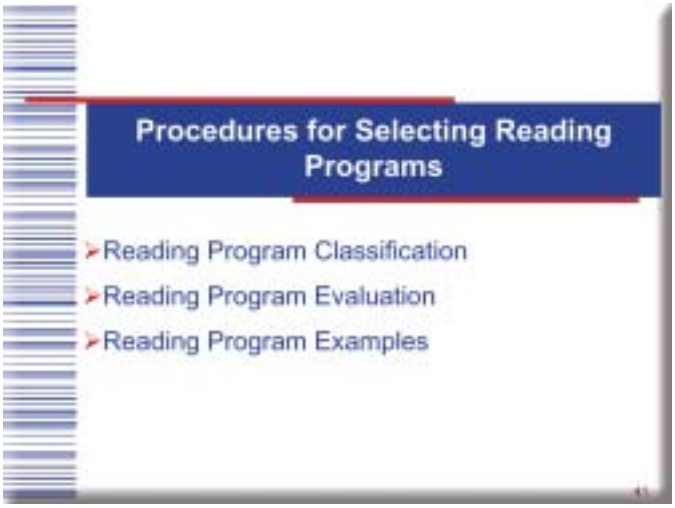

- In the previous sections, we have discussed what a scientifically based reading program looks like. In this section we will be talking about how you identify these programs. First we'll discuss some general issues related to reading program evaluation. Next we'll talk about how to classify different types of reading programs. Finally, we'll provide examples from currently published programs that illustrate scientifically based research, and examples from earlier published programs that do not.

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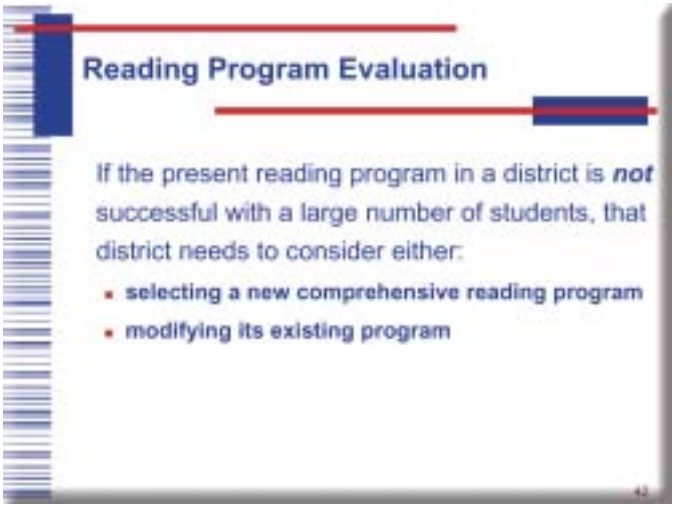
Reading Program Evaluation
If the present reading program in a district is *not* successful with a large number of students, that district needs to consider either:
selecting a new comprehensive reading program
modifying its existing program

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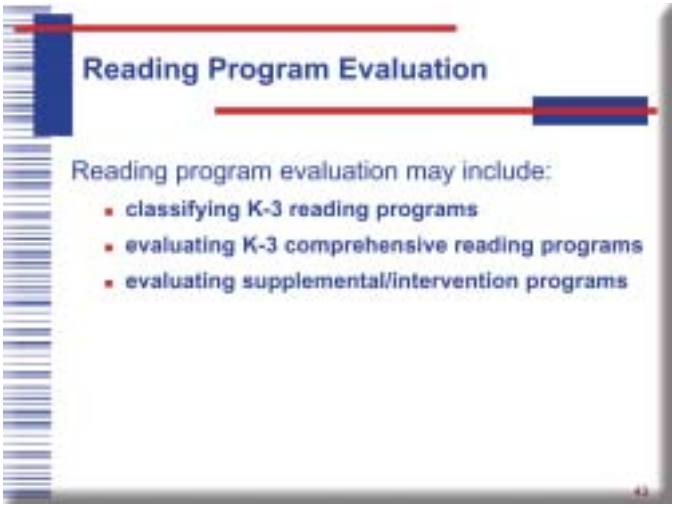
Reading Program Evaluation
Reading program evaluation may include:
classifying K-3 reading programs
evaluating K-3 comprehensive reading programs
evaluating supplemental/intervention programs

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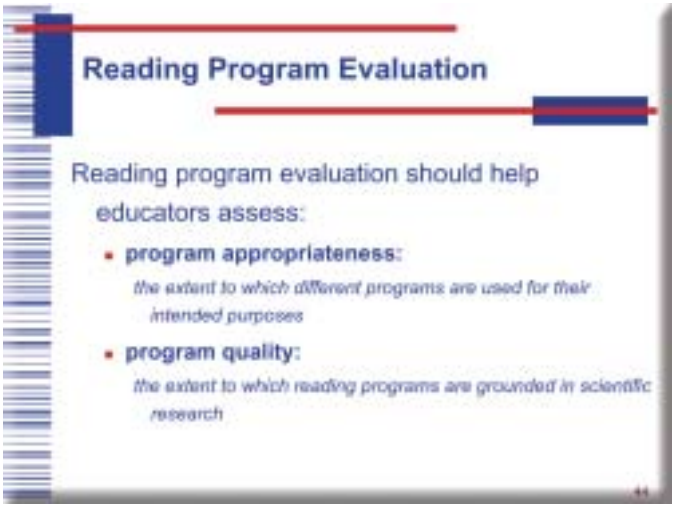
Reading Program Evaluation
Reading program evaluation should help educators assess:
program appropriateness:
the extent to which different programs are used for their intended purposes
program quality:
the extent to which reading programs are grounded in scientific research

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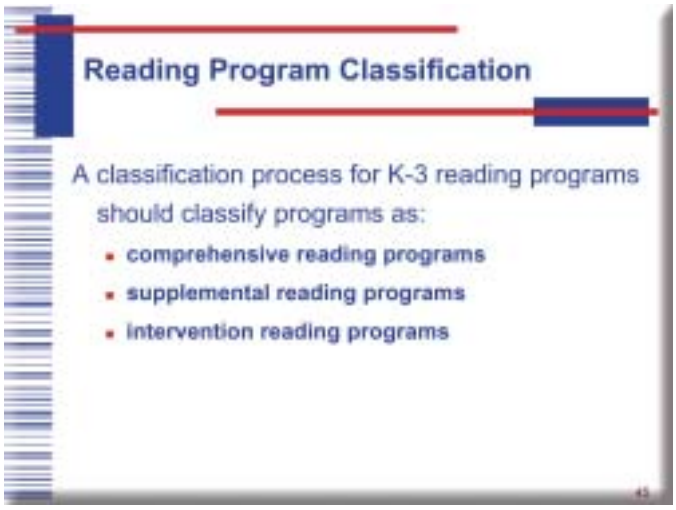

- One reason for evaluating a reading program is to ensure that the program is being used for its intended purpose. We've already discussed comprehensive reading programs and how they are used to teach reading to many students. The next slides will address supplemental and intervention reading programs.

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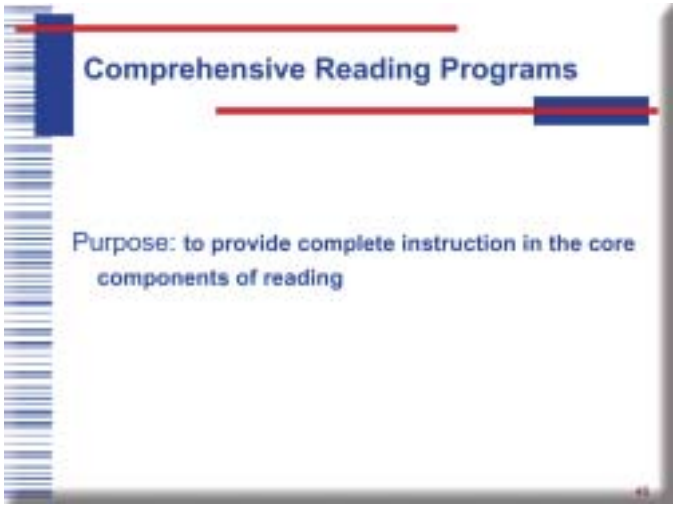

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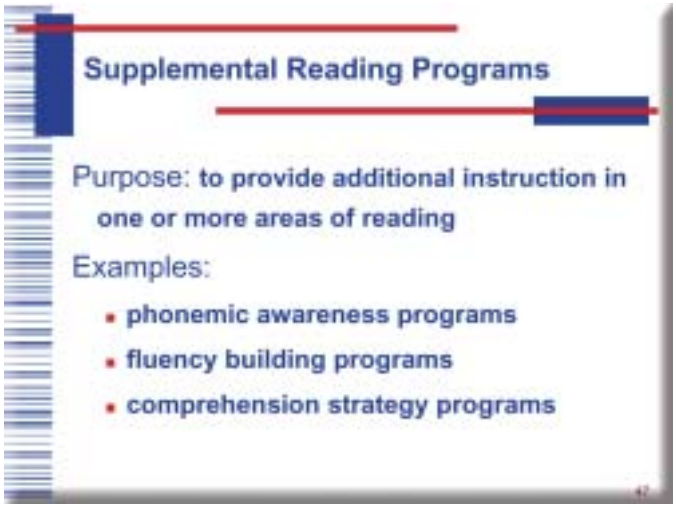
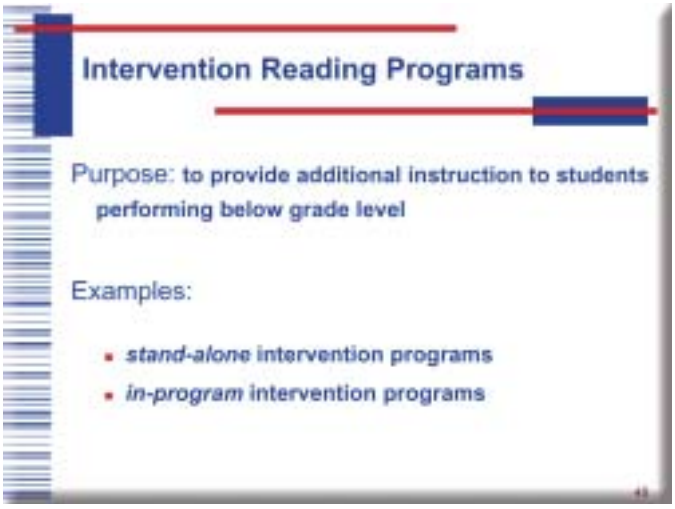
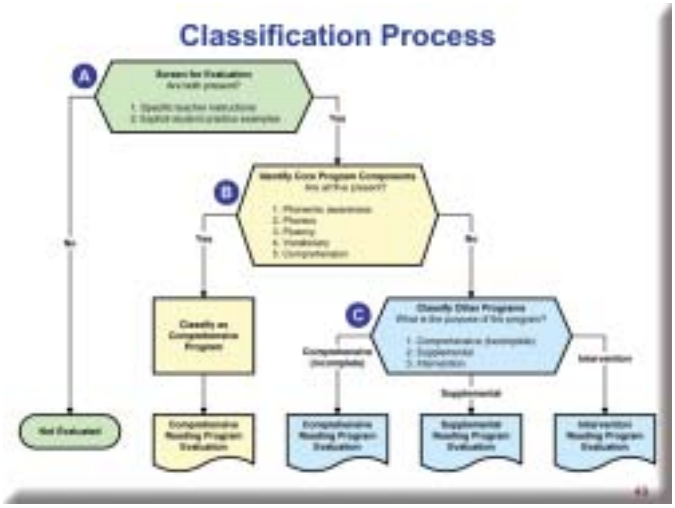


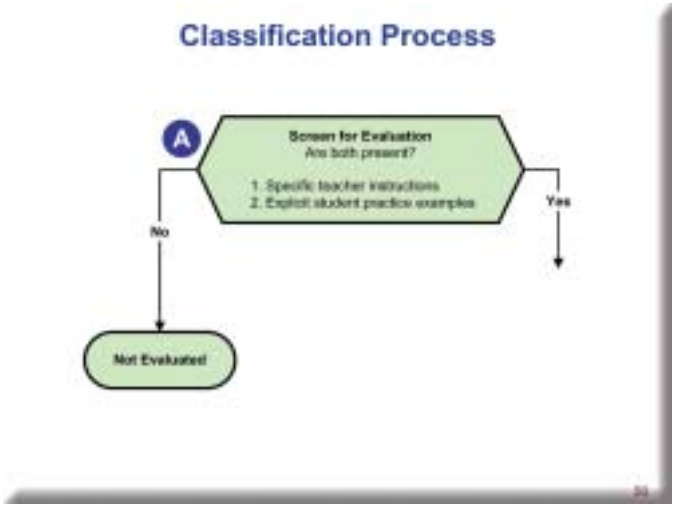
- The term "intervention" can be used in many ways. For example, a reading intervention could involve providing summer school for struggling readers. The term intervention as used here refers to specific programs designed to provide additional assistance for those students performing below grade level.
- Stand-alone intervention programs are remedial programs that can be used by themselves or in conjunction with other reading programs. They are designed to address one or more reading skills.
- In-program intervention programs are components of comprehensive reading programs. The in-program intervention programs contain lessons that are coordinated with comprehensive programs. In their most recent reading curriculum adoption, California required all comprehensive reading programs to include an intervention component.



- This is an overview of a process that can be used for classifying reading programs. On the next few slides we will walk through the process. It is designed to help evaluators choose an appropriate evaluation process.



- Before a program can be evaluated, it must be determined that the program contains detailed teacher instructions and explicit student practice examples.



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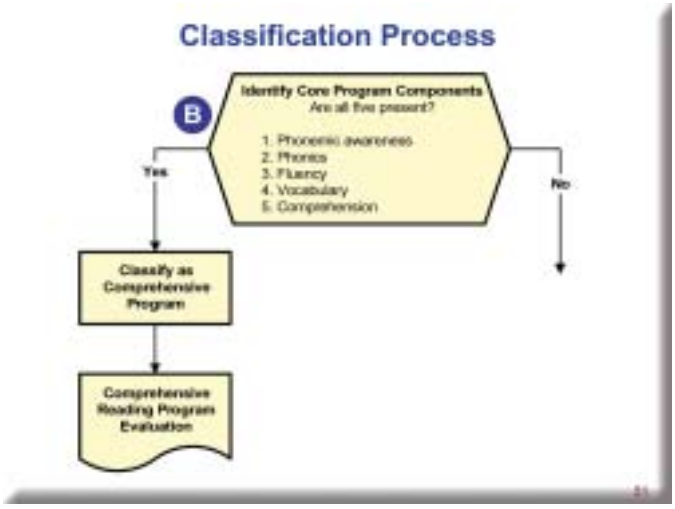

- Once it has been determined that specific teacher directions and student practice examples are provided, evaluators look for the core program components suggested by research. If all five of the core components are present, then the program is classified as a comprehensive reading program.

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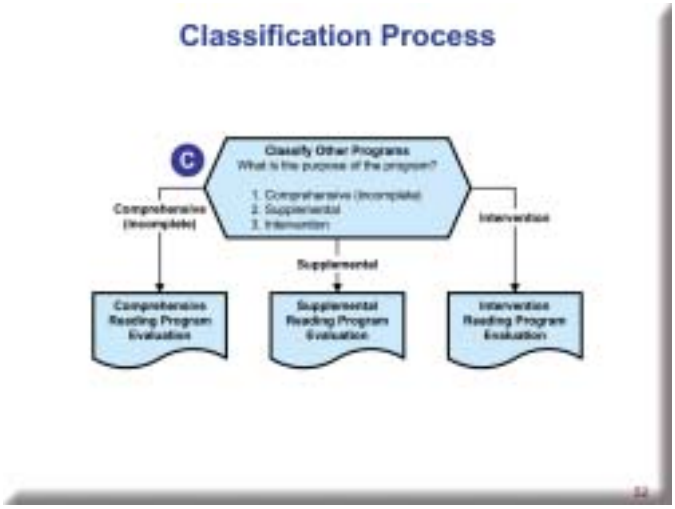

- If the program does not contain all five of the core program components, then an additional step is required. In order to conduct the appropriate evaluation, evaluators must determine the purpose of the program. That is, whether the program is designed to be used as a comprehensive reading program but is incomplete, as a supplemental program, or as an intervention program.
- If the program is intended to be a comprehensive reading program but is missing one or more core components, the program is classified as an incomplete comprehensive reading program. Evaluators then would ascertain the quality of the existing core components. The results of this evaluation would be used to determine whether to modify or replace the program.
- If the programs are classified as supplemental or intervention, evaluators would use an appropriate evaluation process to determine program quality.

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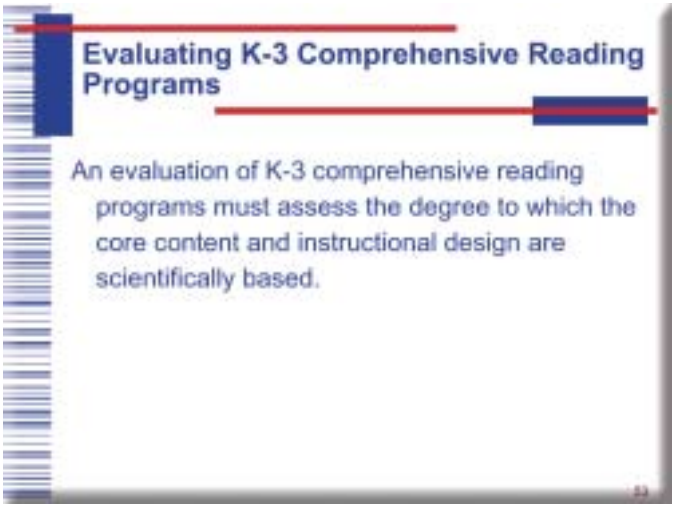
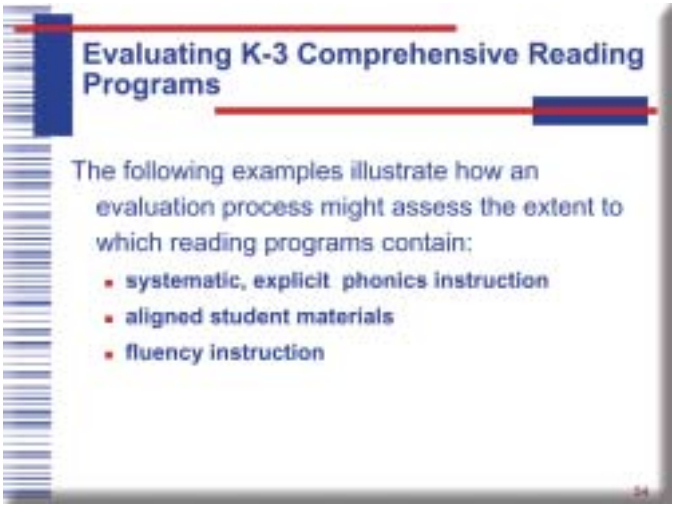


- Once a program has been classified as a comprehensive reading program, the extent to which the core program content and instructional design represent scientifically based instruction should be determined.

54

- The next slides show how different programs address instructional content and design including systematic, explicit phonics instruction; aligned student materials; and fluency. Examples taken from recently published programs represent scientifically based instruction; those from earlier published programs do not. An effective evaluation process for K-3 reading programs should help educators distinguish those programs that are scientifically based from those that are not.



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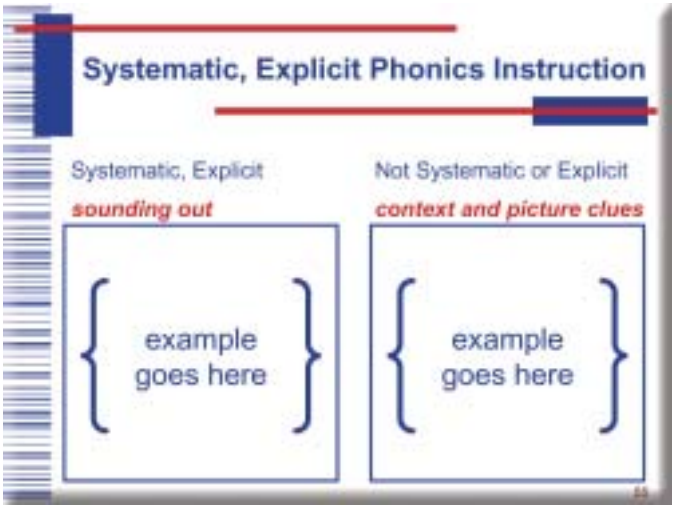
- These examples highlight the differences between systematic, explicit instruction and instruction that is not explicit or systematic. As illustrated earlier, programs containing explicit phonics strategies encourage students to sound out words to read them. In contrast, programs using non-explicit and non-systematic strategies encourage students to use other kinds of clues like context and pictures to figure out words. Research strongly suggests that poor readers, not good readers, use these other kinds of clues.



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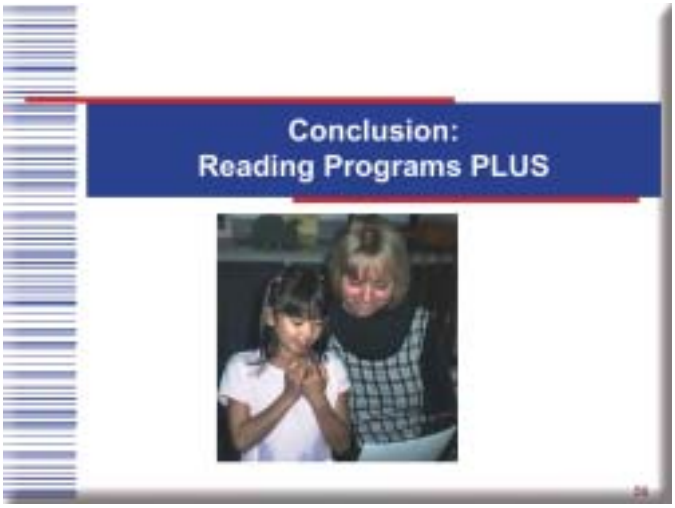

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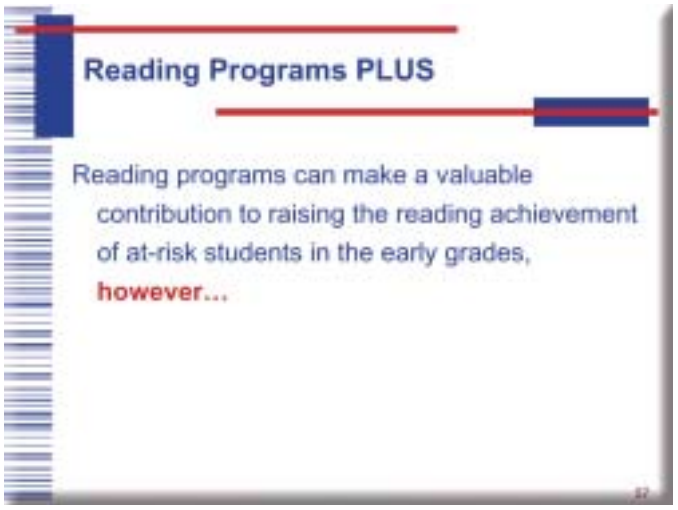
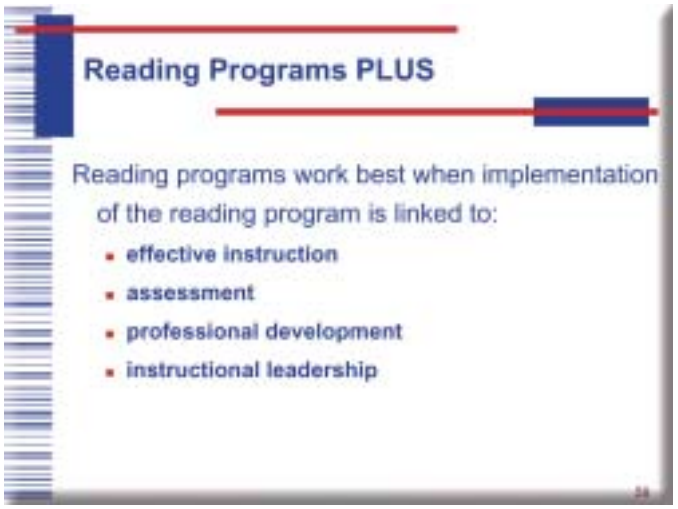
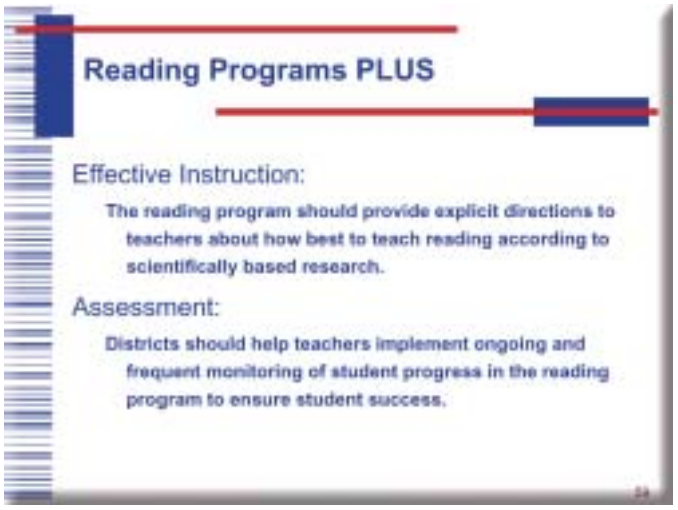

Reading Programs PLUS
Reading programs can make a valuable contribution to raising the reading achievement of at-risk students in the early grades, however...

58


Reading Programs PLUS
Reading programs work best when implementation of the reading program is linked to:
effective instruction
assessment
professional development
instructional leadership

59


Reading Programs PLUS
Effective Instruction:
The reading program should provide explicit directions to teachers about how best to teach reading according to scientifically based research.
Assessment:
Districts should help teachers implement ongoing and frequent monitoring of student progress in the reading program to ensure student success.

60

Reading Programs PLUS

Professional Development:

Districts should provide substantive and frequent support for the implementation of the reading program using information from the assessment to inform staff development.

61

Reading Programs PLUS

Reading programs contain ***numerous*** activities:

Weekly Count for First Grade Reading Programs	Program A	Program B	Program C	Program D	Program E
Instructional Activities	179	227	165	190	165

Professional development should help teachers choose those activities essential for effective reading instruction.

62

Reading Programs PLUS

Instructional Leadership:

District leadership should provide coordination between the implementation of the reading program and support for teachers.

- Reading achievement for at-risk students can be improved. Scientifically based reading programs will provide the foundation for this effort. In concert with effective instruction, assessment, and professional development, and under good leadership, all students will learn to read.

Textbook Evaluation and Adoption Practices: An Introductory Paper

TEXTBOOK EVALUATION AND ADOPTION

Given the prevalence of commercially developed instructional materials in classrooms throughout the United States, the purpose of this article is to encourage educators to carefully examine the textbook adoption process, especially the way in which adoption committees evaluate and select instructional materials. While the evaluation and adoption of these materials is dictated in part by state and local policy, the process of textbook adoption is critical to the selection of high-quality materials. In this article, we review the available research literature on the textbook adoption process and include recommendations for improving the process. In addition, we discuss guidelines for designing evaluation criteria that can be used in the selection of instructional materials. Specific examples of screening instruments and an adoption timeline are provided and discussed.

Given the prevalence of commercially developed instructional materials and their potential impact on student achievement, the purpose of this article is to encourage educators to examine carefully the processes by which they select materials and, more specifically, the procedures they use to evaluate the materials. The examples we use in this article are drawn primarily from the area of reading. However, the discussion of the textbook adoption and evaluation processes pertains to other content areas as well.

Estimates vary regarding the current use of commercially developed instructional materials in American classrooms. Indeed, estimates suggest that textbooks serve as the basis for 75 to 90 percent of classroom instruction (Farr, Tulley & Powell, 1987; Miller 1986; Tyson & Woodward, 1989). Chall and Squire (1991) reported that expenditures for basal reading programs accounted for at least two-thirds of the total dollars allocated for reading instruction, and that basal reading programs were used in more than 95 percent of all school districts. At that time, the authors acknowledged that the widespread acceptance of a whole language approach to beginning reading might have reduced teachers' use of basal programs. More recently, in a survey of 1000 members of the International Reading Association, Baumann and Heubach (1996) found that only 12 percent of the 563 responding members held a philosophical orientation that precluded the use of published basal reading materials. These findings support those of Canney and Neuenfeldt (1993), who found that despite the movement toward more literature-based classroom instruction in reading, 66 percent of the (predominantly elementary) teachers surveyed preferred to teach reading using a combination of basal materials and trade books.

In light of recent educational reform movements, many educators are reexamining the role that commercially developed materials play in the classroom (Ball & Cohen, 1996) and the role of basal reading materials in particular (Baker, Kame'enui, Simmons, & Stahl, 1994). The above evidence suggests that commercially developed materials remain predominant in most classrooms today.

It should be noted that this article is not written with a specific student population in mind. However, readers should understand that an assumption underlying our work is that better designed instructional materials would most likely have their greatest impact on low-performing students or those students with disabilities who are receiving most, if not all, of their instruction in the general education classroom. While we understand that no program will meet the needs of

all students, we feel strongly that teachers should have access to instructional materials that assist them in being effective with all of their students, not just the average and high-performing ones.

On the following pages, we first outline what is known about how most textbook adoptions are conducted and provide recommendations for improving the process. We then discuss at length the critical components of any textbook adoption, that is, the instructional evaluation.

THE TEXTBOOK ADOPTION PROCESS

Relatively little research has been conducted on the textbook adoption process, which is surprising given that commercially developed instructional materials have an impact on a large number of teachers and students across the United States. We found that most research about the adoption process was written between 10 and 15 years ago. However, our more recent experiences with local textbook adoption committees suggest that findings from that research literature are consistent with current practice.

The adoption of instructional materials is partially dictated by the policies of individual states and local districts. Currently, 22 states conduct textbook adoptions at the state level, which involves a centralized evaluation and selection process, while 28 states are considered "free." That is, individual school districts are free to select textbooks they deem to best meet the needs of their local communities. While adoption procedures at the state and local levels vary considerably (Tulley & Farr, 1990), the impact of state-level adoptions on the development of instructional materials should not be minimized. In particular, California and Texas, the two largest adoption states, together account for 11% of the total amount spent on textbooks and related materials in the United States (American Association of Publishers, 1987). The significance of two states holding such a large share of the market is widely recognized. Publishers have been known not only to time the production of the newest editions of their textbooks to coincide with the adoption cycles of Texas and California, but also to design their instructional programs to align with the curriculum objectives or standards identified in those states.

Generally, state adoptions involve two tiers of review and selection. The first is by members of a state level panel who review the submitted materials and select a limited number for inclusion on an approved list. Since local districts must choose instructional materials from this list, a second tier of review and selection is conducted by an adoption committee at the district or school level. This adoption committee reviews textbooks on the list and selects those materials that best meet district or school needs. Local adoption in free states, on the other hand, is a one-level process in that district adoption committees select materials without the restriction of a state-imposed list.

Over the years, proponents of state adoptions have offered several arguments in support of a statewide system of textbook evaluation and adoption. These advocates suggest that purchasing instructional materials in large quantities results in lower prices, that adoption is done on a more regular basis when it is regulated by the state, and that teaching and learning are more consistent across school districts when districts are limited in the number of options they have. However, Farr, Tulley, and Rayford (1987) found that aside from the cost, (non-adoption states paid

approximately $1.00 more per book), there were no significant disadvantages to adoptions done at the local level in these free states.

In fact, Tulley and Farr (1990) suggest that there may even be certain advantages to adoptions done at the local level. For example, when compared to a two-tiered adoption process, adoptions only at the local level may encourage teachers and administrators engaged in the selection of instructional materials to more thoroughly analyze the materials. Regardless of whether the adoption is carried out at the state and then local level, or only at the local level, researchers agree that the evaluation process itself is critical to the selection of high quality and relevant textbooks and related materials (Chall & Squire, 1991; Farr, Tulley, & Rayford, 1987; Miller, 1986). The remainder of this article will address issues relevant to conducting a textbook adoption at the local level.

Weaknesses in the Adoption Process

Researchers have identified several weaknesses in the adoption process that may potentially limit the validity of final selection decisions (Farr, Tulley, & Powell, 1987; Ross, 1989; Tulley & Farr, 1990). Perhaps the most significant weakness they identified is the lack of training of educators serving on adoption committees. According to Farr, Tulley, and Powell (1987), teachers are generally not offered any training in the evaluation of instructional materials, either in their teacher preparation programs or as members of adoption committees. Adoption committee members, therefore, tend to evaluate commercially developed materials with only limited attention to research (Ross, 1989) and without systematic standards and procedures (Farr, Tulley, & Powell, 1987; Tulley & Farr, 1990). Thus, rather than participating in informed, rigorous inspections of materials, committee members are often left to make adoption decisions based on intuition, familiarity with known publishers, and personal preferences (Ross, 1989).

A second, frequently discussed weakness in the textbook adoption process is the lack of time allocated to it. Textbook adoptions are generally conducted over the course of one school year, although only a fraction of this time, perhaps two months, is actually spent carefully evaluating materials (Farr, Tulley, & Powell, 1987). The problem is accentuated in that teachers and administrators are often not provided release time to do the serious and time-consuming business of instructional evaluation, but rather are expected to do this in addition to their regular teaching responsibilities. Such time constraints can lead to decisions based on the notorious "flip test," that is, teachers must settle for a brief and superficial examination of the materials.

Related to the issue of lack of allocated time is the issue of the "all teacher vote." The all teacher vote is a practice that allows all teachers in a school district to vote on the final selection of an instructional program or textbook. Research suggests that in such situations teachers tend to vote after only brief and limited examination of materials. The result is that final recommendations are made based not on the quality, but rather on the quantity, of evaluations. Farr, Tulley, and Powell (1987) noted that the "all teacher vote" not only limits the validity of the final decision, but also compromises the role of the committee.

Finally, a serious weakness in the adoption process seems to be the lack of research-based criteria available for evaluating and selecting instructional materials (Farr, Tulley, & Powell,

1987; Ross, 1989; Tulley & Farr, 1990). The topic of evaluation criteria is discussed in the next section, but it is important to note here that textbook adoption is often conducted without specific guidelines on which to base the selection. Rather, criteria often take the form of predetermined checklists supplied by publishers or adaptations of checklists used by other committees. Such checklists do not encourage comprehensive examination of materials; instead, they limit reviews to brief and rather generic evaluations.

Certainly, there are numerous other factors that may adversely affect the work of adoption committees. Some districts may face financial constraints that preclude them from providing sufficient release time for members of the committee to examine textbooks. Other constraints may include pressure from publishers' representatives, pressure from concerned citizens, and lack of direction due to ineffective leadership.

Recommendations to Improve the Adoption Process

When approaching a textbook adoption cycle, a school district has the opportunity to strengthen the evaluation and selection process by seriously studying and implementing the recommendations of researchers in the field. Tulley and Farr provide a concise and useful summary of some recommendations in their 1990 discussion of textbook evaluation and selection. Their suggestions include, among others, allocating sufficient time for a thorough review of all materials, organizing committees to promote communication both within and across grade level, and establishing committee responsibility for the selection decision. The following section contains a discussion of these suggestions.

Adoption Timeline

Figure 1 presents an example of the sequence of events comprising a textbook adoption. Note that a substantial amount of planning occurs prior to the establishment and work of the committee. For example, budget considerations, adoption timeline, criteria for committee membership, communication procedures, and ground rules for working with publishers are determined before the committee begins its review.

Committee members must be given adequate release time to review the materials. Without such provisions, teachers are often forced to examine materials in a hurried and haphazard fashion. Recommendations based on such reviews are certainly subject to question and may have a negative impact on the final adoption decision. One recent elementary reading adoption in which two of the present authors were involved included six days of release time for teachers and administrators specifically intended for the review and evaluation of materials (see Figure 2).

The number of days varies depending on the subject being evaluated. Review of textbooks for a physics, foreign language, or health class, for example, will involve fewer choices, and therefore fewer days for evaluation. However, it must be noted that meaningful examination of materials requires large blocks of uninterrupted time. Such an allocation of time by the district suggests a serious commitment to the review process and to the efforts of committee members.

Committee Membership

Adoption committee members are often selected on the basis of years of experience and are usually grouped according to grade level. While experience is certainly not a factor to be ignored, we have identified several additional criteria to consider when selecting committee members. First, committee members should not only have an academic interest in the curricular area being addressed, but they should also exhibit excellent interpersonal skills, including the ability to communicate effectively and honestly to the group they represent. Additionally, it is important that committee members understand, support, and take responsibility for group process activities and decisions. Moreover, the committee should be representative of the entire school/district student and staff population in terms of gender, ethnicity, experience, special populations (e.g., students with disabilities or special talents), and community members, when appropriate. Finally, the work of the committee is enhanced when members are given the opportunity to discuss specific aspects of the adoption, both within and across grade levels. When this kind of dialogue is encouraged, issues such as development and sequencing of skills can be considered in the larger context of a student's educational experience. Such thoughtful and purposeful selection of committee members is one way to significantly strengthen the adoption process, thereby increasing the likelihood that the final decision will be understood and supported by the entire educational community.

Committee Responsibilities

A critical component of the adoption process is the direction provided by the chairperson. The work of an adoption committee can be severely jeopardized without strong, responsible leadership. Such leadership includes clearly defining the responsibilities of the committee at the beginning of the process, defining parameters for the committee in terms of district policies, community politics, outlining budget constraints, and establishing the lines of authority, that is, articulating the decision-making process. We agree with Tulley and Farr (1990) that the selection decision should rest with the adoption committee. Furthermore, we believe that if appropriate training is provided and sufficient time is allowed for review of materials, members of the committee will be prepared to make an informed decision.

Tulley and Farr, among others, have emphasized the need for improving selection criteria and evaluation procedures. In the next section, we provide specific recommendations for evaluating the instructional integrity of the textbooks and instructional programs.

EVALUATING THE INSTRUCTIONAL INTEGRITY OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The central activity of the textbook adoption process is the evaluation of the textbook materials. The adoption committee is charged with the selection of materials that are based both on a coherent body of educational research in a given content area (i.e., literacy, mathematics, science) and on sound principles of instructional design. Therefore, prior to the examination of instructional materials, the committee should be given adequate time and assistance to review relevant research in the content area.

Many teacher preparation programs do not include courses in the understanding of educational research or even include the analysis of research in their coursework (Stanovich, 1993/1994). As

such, the administrator in charge of the adoption may elect to hire a consultant to assist the committee with reading and interpreting the research literature. The consultant should be someone with expertise in the targeted content area who also has experience reading and interpreting research literature. Moreover, the consultant should understand that his or her role is that of an impartial participant available to help committee members review the research and implications of research findings on the design of the content of instructional materials and classroom instruction.

Designing Screening Instruments

After reviewing relevant research and discussing how that research should be reflected in instructional materials, the committee needs to generate two sets of criteria for evaluation. The first set of criteria is the screening criteria. In areas such as reading, the number of commercially developed instructional programs can be so overwhelming that evaluating all of them would be untenable. In textbook adoptions where numerous programs have been submitted for consideration, the use of screening criteria can help reduce the number of programs that the committee needs to evaluate more comprehensively.

To generate screening criteria, a committee needs to agree on 2-3 critical content components to examine in all programs. In the reading adoption in which two of the present authors participated, the primary grade teachers agreed, based on the beginning reading research literature, that the predominant instructional approach to beginning reading instruction evident in the beginning levels was critical to the success of their students. As a result, this committee designed a screening instrument for the primary grade levels that looked for evidence that the program employed an explicit phonics approach supported by considerable research. If the reading program promoted an explicit phonics approach, the text selections would be more likely to correspond to the phonics lessons provided in the teacher manual. In addition, the text selections would contain a higher percentage of decodable words (i.e., words that can be sounded out) than sight words. As a result of their analysis, the primary teachers selected two items for their beginning reading screening instrument. One item focused on the program's instructional approach, and the second item required examination of the relationship between the identified approach and the text materials provided for students to read. (See Figure 3 for an example of an initial screening instrument used by primary grade teachers in a reading curriculum adoption.)

In this adoption, the intermediate grade teachers on the committee were concerned about instruction in the areas of study skills and content area reading, as well as the balance of fiction and nonfiction text selections. As a result of their discussions, those teachers designed a screening instrument that included examining the available instruction in the areas of study skills and content area reading (specifically, vocabulary and main idea instruction). In addition, the intermediate teachers counted the number of fiction and nonfiction selections at a given grade level to determine balance of text selections. Since most major basal reading programs have a general design for the introduction and review of skills, teachers predicted that the examination of these carefully selected skills would likely reflect how other skills were addressed in the program. (See Figure 4 for an example of an initial screening instrument used by intermediate grade teachers in a reading curriculum adoption.)

Designing Evaluation Instruments

The goal of the screening activity is to generate a more manageable number of textbooks or instructional programs to be evaluated. Once the number of programs to be evaluated is reduced, committee members are ready to begin a more comprehensive evaluation process. The first task in this process involves establishing the final evaluation criteria and designing evaluation worksheets. The evaluation criteria should be generated in the same manner as the screening criteria. That is, the criteria should be based on the available research literature in the content area as well as on sound principles of instructional design. Moreover, committee members should strive to design criteria that are objective in nature and verifiable. For example, counting the number of different types of text selections is preferable to commenting on whether the programs provide a balance of fiction and nonfiction text selections. Designing objective evaluation criteria and requiring evaluators to document their evaluations by citing actual page numbers from the programs helps reduce evaluator bias and maintain a professional atmosphere during what can sometimes prove to be a stressful process.

It is important to note that an assumption underlying the textbook evaluation process is that the process is conducted to determine the instructional integrity of instructional materials being considered for purchase. Teachers are constantly faced with modifying and adapting materials to meet the needs of their students. We understand that the perfect program does not exist and that good teaching involves monitoring student progress and adjusting instruction to meet individual needs. However, the goal of the evaluation process should be to objectively select those materials that will be the most useful, requiring the least amount of modification and change.

Since it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the research literature in specific content areas, we will discuss instead a set of guidelines for evaluating materials that are based on empirically derived principles of instructional design (Stein, Carnine, & Dixon, 1998). These guidelines include content organization around big ideas; the presence of explicit, generalizable strategies; opportunities for scaffolded instruction; the strategic integration of skills and concepts; and judicious review. On the following pages, we discuss each of these guidelines, as well as provide examples of how to apply them to evaluating instructional materials in specific content areas.

Guideline 1: Is Content Organized Around Big Ideas?

Porter (1989) observed that a relatively large number of topics received brief coverage in many published programs. He reported that teachers referred to this phenomenon as "teaching for exposure." When analyzing the content organization or coverage in any of the given instructional materials, adoption committee members should be cautioned to examine carefully the scope and sequence charts provided in the materials. Scope and sequence charts often illustrate the phenomenon that Porter's teachers labeled as "teaching for exposure." The number of different topics included in any one given level of a published program often appears extensive. However, a closer examination of the materials often reveals limited instruction on any single topic.

An alternative to limited exposure to many different topics is the organization of content around "big ideas." These big ideas are critical concepts that are essential for content mastery in a given

subject. For example, the authors of a recently published American history text organized the content of the text using the big idea of the problem/solution text structure. In this history text, students are introduced to the big idea that people are often faced with two kinds of problems: economic problems and rights of people. Then, students are taught another big idea that people tend to solve their problems in one of five ways: move, dominate, invent, tolerate, and accommodate (Carnine, Crawford, Harniss, & Hollenbeck, 1995).

Once students learn this framework, they can apply the problem/solution strategy to the major events in history. In doing so, they gain an understanding of the underlying causes of major historic events as well as insights into the interrelationships among events. Determining whether the instruction in a given textbook or program is focused and comprehensive should be one of the first criteria in evaluating instructional materials.

Guideline 2: Do the Curriculum Materials Contain Explicit Strategies?

After determining whether the content is organized in a reasonable way, evaluators need to examine whether the materials provide teachers with explicit strategies to use in teaching their students important content. These strategies should also be designed to promote generalization of concepts and skills. The initial strategy of sounding out words to decode in an example of an explicit strategy in a beginning reading program. Given that students have the prerequisite letter/sound knowledge, students can use this strategy to decode new words. In the area of written expression, a strategy for self-editing is an explicit strategy, provided students have the prerequisite knowledge required for editing.

Guideline 3: Do the Curriculum Materials Provide Opportunities for Teachers to Scaffold Instruction?

An explicit strategy contains a set of overt steps that support students as they move toward mastery of the skills and concepts. Once the strategy is identified, the process for teaching students to apply that strategy must involve an instructional sequence that provides maximum support in the early stages of acquisition while gradually encouraging more independent application of the skill or concept. Ideally, commercially developed materials should serve as a resource for teachers that provides them with the means and strategies for support during initial teaching and a means for monitoring how much support students continue to need.

Most commercially developed materials contain an assessment component. Evaluating the degree to which the assessment recommendations provide sufficient information regarding student progress should also be an important part of any instructional evaluation.

Guideline 4: To What Degree are the Skills and Concepts Intentionally and Strategically Integrated?

The degree to which the skills and concepts in any given program are systematically integrated is a critical yet difficult guideline to implement. A common criticism against the teaching of specific skills has been that skill instruction is often presented in an isolated, fragmented manner. In response to this criticism, many educators have chosen to teach skills only in the context of a

more wholistic approach. In some mathematics programs, for example, computation skills are taught only in the context of word problems that depict real-life situations. In some written expression programs, grammar is introduced during the writing process, and only as needed. In some reading programs, word identification is taught only in the context of reading literature. A serious problem with providing only contextualized instruction is that the nature of that instruction is not always sufficient to ensure that students will successfully learn the concept or strategy being presented.

An alternative to teaching skills only in context is teaching the skills as prerequisite knowledge that is later integrated into the appropriate context. Few advocates of skill-based instruction have ever considered student performance in isolated skill exercises as a final student outcome. These educators acknowledge that skills are of no use to students if students are not taught explicitly when and how to apply them in the appropriate context. We have found that the primary problem with most skill instruction is that while the instruction is initially presented in isolation, the textbooks or instructional programs provide very few examples of teaching students how and when to appropriately integrate their skills.

Sound instructional design should follow a sequence of instruction that includes teaching prerequisite knowledge, teaching explicit strategies that integrate knowledge and skills, and providing opportunities that encourage students to become automatic in the use of the strategies. A good example of strategic integration can be found by examining writing instruction. Before students can apply self-editing strategies, they must have the prerequisite knowledge that allows them to identify problems with their own writing. Self-editing is a strategy that allows the integration of both creative efforts (i.e., structure and organization of content) and more mechanical skills (grammar, punctuation, and spelling). As students begin to acquire these specific writing skills, they are encouraged to evaluate their own work by examining the extent to which they have used both creative efforts and mechanical skills during their composition.

To read expository text critically, students must integrate numerous aspects of comprehension, including determining what the author wants the reader to understand, searching for evidence that what the author says is true, assessing the credibility of the author, and identifying contradictions in the text. A strategy for reading critically that involves a process of self-questioning can be taught fairly easily to students. However, prior to the introduction of such a strategy that integrates a variety of skills, each of the concepts should be introduced in isolation.

Guideline 5: Is the Review Provided in the Instructional Materials Sufficient, Cumulative, and Varied?

The value of review is rarely disputed among educators. However, in our experience, rarely is the amount or type of review related to the value of the instructional strategies presented. If an instructional strategy is of limited use, then reviewing that strategy extensively is a waste of valuable instructional time. Moreover, the type of review should vary as students become more proficient. The review available in instructional materials can be evaluated by examining the extent to which the review is sufficient, cumulative, and varied. Teachers can begin to compare the extent to which different programs provide adequate review simply by counting the number of opportunities for review (e.g., the number of review examples).

Determining the extent to which the review is cumulative over time is more difficult to ascertain. If skills are introduced as prerequisite knowledge to be integrated at a later time, teachers need to determine whether the programs do, in fact, provide students with opportunities to integrate and practice the skills at a later time. Finally, the practice opportunities should vary enough to give students the opportunity to generalize the application of their newly acquired knowledge and skills to less structured contexts.

CONCLUSION

Given the prevalence of these materials in the classroom, the impact of the use of commercially developed materials on student achievement is estimated to be quite substantial. The textbook adoption process is the primary means educators have of ensuring that they have access to well-designed instructional materials. In this paper, we have suggested that prior to participating in such a process, educators consider how that process might be organized to yield the best possible selection of instructional materials for the students they serve.

Central to the implementation of an effective adoption process is a procedure for evaluating commercially developed materials. We have suggested that evaluation criteria used in reviewing these materials reflect the current educational research literature as well as sound principles of instructional design. We also suggested that adoption committee members be provided adequate training and sufficient time to thoroughly analyze the textbooks or programs to make better-informed recommendations.

Finally, we believe that the process of evaluating and selecting textbooks and instructional programs can become an important conduit for communication between educators and program developers. This communication, hopefully, will encourage the education community to develop commercially developed materials that serve to enhance teacher expertise and foster student growth.

This article on textbook selection clearly emphasizes the role of research and the application of that research to instructional practice through the use of sound instructional design principles. However, we acknowledge that there exist other very important topics that may be addressed in the textbook selection process. Educational philosophy, diversity of student population (e.g., gender, race, economic status), as well as specific community values all may play a role in the selection of instructional materials to meet the needs of a specific school district. We have chosen to focus on those features of the evaluation and selection process that we feel are most likely to have the greatest impact on student achievement. Clearly, districts involved in textbook adoption need to consider our recommendations and design a process that takes into account their individual needs.

FIGURE 1 The textbook adoption process.

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District Decision to Develop Curriculum and/or Select
Instructional Materials

    Administration Establishes Parameters for Development and/or
        Adoption
```

* Curriculum Adoption Cycle

* Budget Considerations

* Timeline for Adoption and Implementation

* Staffing

* General Adoption Policies

Administrator Assigned to Facilitate Project

* Establish Adoption Procedures

* Determine Committee Membership

* Define Budget

* Begin Work with Principals/Other Involved Administrators

* Establish Communication Procedures

* Establish Ground Rules with Publisher Representatives

Curriculum Committee Membership Determined

* Determine Make-up of Committee

* Identify Individual Committee Members

* Educate Committee

Committee Review of Research

* Curriculum Written or Instructional Materials Selected Based on Criteria Established from Research

Curriculum Committee Makes Recommendation to Administrator and Board for Approval

Purchase of Instructional Materials and/or Publication of Curriculum

Staff Development and In-Service for Teachers & Administrators

Implementation of Curriculum and/or Instructional Materials

Ongoing Review of Implementation

Evaluation of Curriculum and New Instructional Materials

Modifications of New Program

FIGURE 2 Sample adoption timeline for reading curriculum adoption committee.

1995-96-School Year

Day 1: October 27

* Review of district curriculum process

  [a] Board policies

  [a] State laws

  [a] Time allocations

* What our district students are expected to learn

  [a] Essential learnings--state assessment

  [a] Grade level objective

Discussion of research and instructional methodologies

  [a] Invited Guest(s): research-based practices

* Completion of District Survey/Questionnaire

Days 2-3 December 5-6

* Review Day 1

* Review survey results

* Establish `first draft' of screening criteria

Day 4 December 20

* Finalize screening criteria

* Field test screening criteria

Days 5-6-7 January 22-24

* Initial screening of 13 programs

* Identify no fewer than 2 or more than 5 `finalists' programs

* `First draft' of evaluation tool

Days 8-9-10 February 12-14

* Evaluate 2-5 `finalist' programs

* Reach tentative decision on district adoption

* Correlation of grade level objectives to selected program

Day 11 February 28

* Invite `finalist' consultants to work with committee

Days 12-13 March 12-13

* Finalize `original draft' of grade level of objectives to `finalist' program

* Develop communication plan to announce recommendation to staff

* Prepare for school board presentation/adoption

Days 14-15

* Develop individual school orders

* Develop staff development program

* Develop plan for program implementation

* Other Activities

* 3 staff/community open houses for public review of recommendations

* Community Curriculum Advisory Council (CCAC)--mid-April

* Consultants with Title I teachers--early April

* Consultants with special education/kindergarten teachers--early April

* School Board--April 22

* Purchase orders prepared--May 1

* Staff development plan finalized--May 15

* Implementation of new adoption--September, 1996

* Summer staff development days--August 27

and August 28

FIGURE 3 Sample textbook adoption initial screening instrument for primary grades.

```
                INITIAL SCREENING INSTRUMENT--PRIMARY
   Materials Needed: Teacher's Manual for First and Third Grades

A. Approaches to Beginning Reading

    Name of Program

1. Do the early text selections in the
   first grade readers correspond to
   phonics instruction in the teacher-directed
   lessons?

2. Are the words in the early text
   selections decodable [a]  words or
   sight words?

B. Decoding Instructions

1. Are there teacher-directed
   decoding instructions in third
   grade?
```

Note. [a] = Able to be sounded out

FIGURE 4 Sample textbook adoption initial screening instrument for intermediate grades.

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              INITIAL SCREENING INSTRUMENT--INTERMEDIATE

       Materials Needed: Teacher's Manual for Fourth, Fifth, and
                         Sixth Grade Levels

A. Study Skills Instruction

  List the study skills taught in each
  of the grade levels. (Verify
  instruction for two study skills.)

B. Type of Text Selections

  Count the number of fiction and
    non-fiction text selections in the
    fifth grade teachers' manuals.

C. Instruction in Content Area Reading

  Count the number of activities
    designed to teach vocabulary
    related to the content text
    selections.

  Count the number of main idea
```

activities available that are related to content area reading.

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A Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program: Grades K-3

A Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program Grades K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis

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The selection and adoption of an effective, research-based core reading program in the primary grades is a critical step in the development of an effective schoolwide reading initiative. The investment in identifying a core program that aligns with research and fits the needs of learners in your school will reap long-term benefits for children's reading acquisition and development.

A critical review of reading programs requires objective and in-depth analysis. For these reasons, we offer the following recommendations and procedures for analyzing critical elements of programs. First, we address questions regarding the importance and process of a core program. Following, we specify the criteria for program evaluation organized by grade level and reading dimensions. Further, we offer guidelines regarding instructional time, differentiated instruction, and assessment. We trust you will find these guidelines useful and usable in this significant professional process.

1. What is a core reading program?

A core reading program is the primary instructional tool that teachers use to teach children to learn to read and ensure they reach reading levels that meet or exceed grade-level standards. A core program should address the instructional needs of the majority of students in a respective school or district.

Historically, core reading programs have been referred to as basal reading programs in that they serve as the "base" for reading instruction. Adoption of a core does not imply that other materials and strategies are not used to provide a rich, comprehensive program of instruction. The core program, however, should serve as the primary reading program for the school and the expectation is that all teachers within and between the primary grades will use the core program as the base of reading instruction.

2. Why adopt a core reading program?

In a recent document entitled "Teaching Reading is Rocket Science," Louisa Moats (1999) revealed and articulated the complexities of carefully designed and implemented reading instruction. Teaching reading is far more complex than most professionals and laypersons realize. The demands of the phonologic, alphabetic, semantic, and syntactic systems of written language require a careful schedule and sequence of prioritized objectives, explicit strategies, and scaffolds that support students' initial learning and transfer of knowledge and skills to other contexts. The requirements of curriculum construction and instructional design that effectively move children through the "learning to read" stage to the "reading to learn" stage are simply too important to leave to the judgment of individuals. The better the core addresses instructional priorities, the less teachers will need to supplement and modify instruction for the majority of learners.

3. What process should be used to select a core reading program?

Ideally, every teacher involved in reading instruction would be involved in the review and selection of the core reading program. Realistically, a grade-level representative may be responsible for the initial review and reduce the "possible" options to a reasonable number. At minimum, we recommend that grade-level representatives use the criteria that follow and then share those findings with grade-level teams.

Schools often ask whether the adoption should be K-6 or whether a K-3/4-6 adoption is advisable. Ideally, there would be consensus across grades K-6; however, it is imperative to give priority to how children are taught to learn to read. Therefore, kindergarten and first grades are critical grades and should be weighted heavily in adoption decisions. This may entail a different adoption for grades 4-6.

4. What criteria should be used to select a core reading program?

A converging body of scientific evidence is available and accessible to guide the development of primary-grade reading programs. We know from research the critical skills and strategies that children must acquire in order to become successful readers by grade 3 (National Research Council, 1998; NICHD, 1996, Simmons & Kameenui, 1998). Following, we specify criteria in critical elements of reading organized by grade.

Stage I: Is There Trustworthy Evidence of Program Efficacy?

Prior scientific studies of program efficacy should be a first-level criterion to identify the pool of possible core programs. Your review of programs should determine:

_____ 1. Does the program have evidence of efficacy established through carefully designed experimental studies?

_____ 2. Does the program reflect current and confirmed research in reading?

_____ 3. Does the program provide explicit, systematic instruction in the primary grades (K-3) in the following dimensions:

- phonemic awareness (grades K-1)
- phonics
- decoding
- word recognition
- spelling
- vocabulary
- comprehension (listening and reading)
- writing
- oral and written language

_____ 4. Was the program tested in schools and classrooms with similar demographic and learner profiles as your school?

If the answers to questions 1-4 are yes, you have evidence to indicate that if adopted and implemented faithfully, there is high probability the program will be effective.

If you can narrow your selection to programs with trustworthy evidence, proceed to Stage II for more comprehensive analysis.

Your review of programs may yield those that lack prior evidence of efficacy but that have components based on research. A lack of program efficacy should not exclude a program from consideration. Your analysis of critical elements, however, assumes greater importance.

A new generation of reading programs is currently finding its way into the market place, a generation of programs that holds great promise yet lack confirmed research. New programs often do not have adequate levels of evidence because large-scale, longitudinal evidence is costly and time consuming. If programs the reading committee considers promising lack established program efficacy, evaluate the program carefully and thoroughly according to following critical elements.

Stage II: A Consumer's Guide to Selecting a Core Program: A Critical Elements Analysis

A key assumption of a core program is that it will (1) address all grade-level standards and (2) ensure that high priority standards are taught in sufficient depth, breadth, and quality that all learners will achieve or exceed expected levels of proficiency. All standards are not equally important. Our critical elements analysis focuses on those skills and strategies most essential for early reading.

For each "cluster" or dimension of reading skills/standards, review the program according to the following criteria. To evaluate the quality of instructional design, we recommend that you sample lessons across the program and that you also review successive lessons to determine how the program builds, reviews, and extends learners' skills and strategies.

Use the following criteria for each critical element:

● = Element consistently meets/exceeds criterion.

◑ = Element inconsistently meets/exceeds criterion.

○ = Element does not satisfy criterion.

When evaluating individual elements, slash (/) the respective circle that represents your rating (e.g., ).

Critical Elements Analysis
Kindergarten

I. Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate the sound structure of language. It is a strong predictor of reading success. Phonemic awareness is an auditory skill and consists of multiple components and does not involve print.

Phonemic Awareness Instruction

● ◑ ○ Progresses from the easier phonemic awareness activities to the more difficult—from rhyming and sound matching to blending, segmentation, and manipulation.

● ◑ ○ Teaches skills explicitly and systematically.

● ◑ ○ Starts with larger linguistic units (words and syllables) and proceeds to smaller linguistic units (phonemes).

● ◑ ○ Focuses beginning instruction on the phonemic level of phonological units with short words (two to three phonemes; e.g., *at*, *mud*, *run*).

● ◑ ○ Focuses first on the initial sound (*sat*), then on the final sound (*sat*), and lastly on the medial sound (*sat*) in words.

● ◑ ○ Makes students' cognitive manipulations of sounds overt by using concrete representations (e.g., markers, pictures, and Elkonin boxes) or auditory cues that signal the movement of one sound to the next (e.g., claps).

● ◑ ○ Models phonemic awareness tasks and responses orally and follows with students' production of the task.

● ◑ ○ Introduces several continuous sounds first (e.g., */m/*, */r/*, */s/*) before introducing stop sounds (e.g., */t/*, */b/*, */k/*) because stop sounds are more difficult to isolate.

● ◑ ○ Culminates with segmentation or the combination of blending and segmenting.

● ◑ ○ Adds letter-sound correspondence instruction to phonological awareness interventions after students demonstrate early phonemic awareness.

● ◑ ○ Provides brief instructional sessions. (Significant gains in phonemic awareness are often made in 15 to 20 minutes of daily instruction and practice over a period of 9 to 12 weeks.)

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

II. Decoding and Word Recognition

The ability to recognize words accurately, fluently, and independently is fundamental to reading in an alphabetic writing system. For kindergarten students, critical skills include learning to associate sounds with letters, using those associations to decode and read simple words, and learning to recognize important nondecodable *words.*

Letter-Sound Association Instruction

● ◑ ○ Schedules high-utility letter sounds early in the sequence (e.g., */m/, /s/, /a/, /r/, /t/*) instead of low-utility letter sounds (e.g., */x/, /y/, /z/*).

● ◑ ○ Models the sound of letter prior to assessing student knowledge.

● ◑ ○ Sequences the introduction of letter sounds in ways that minimize confusion (e.g., sequence */p/, /b/, /v/; /e/, /i/*).

● ◑ ○ Includes a few short vowels early in the sequence so that students can use letter-sound knowledge to form and read words.

● ◑ ○ Incorporates frequent and cumulative review of taught letter sounds.

● ◑ ○ Begins with individual letter-sounds (e.g., *a, m, t)* and not phonograms (e.g., *ab, at*) or sound chunks.

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Decoding Instruction

● ◑ ○ Introduces regular word types (CV or CVC) first in the sequence.

● ◑ ○ Includes only words for which students know all letter sounds.

● ◑ ○ Provides explicit strategy for sounding out words.

● ◑ ○ Provides practice in word lists and short, controlled connected text.

● ◑ ○ Provides multiple opportunities within lessons for students to read words.

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Irregular Words Instruction

● ◑ ○ Introduces words of high utility (e.g., I, have, etc.).

● ◑ ○ Limits # of words introduced within a lesson to 2-3 per week.

● ◑ ○ Separates highly similar words (e.g., was/saw).

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

III. Listening Comprehension and Vocabulary Development

The ability to listen to stories, answer questions, sequence events, learn new vocabulary, and retell information heard are the foundation of reading comprehension. Because many kindergarten children cannot yet read stories, it is imperative that they have frequent and rich opportunities to listen to and discuss stories and informational text that will extend their current understandings and vocabulary knowledge.

Listening Comprehension Instruction

● ◑ ○ Models and systematically reviews critical comprehension skills
- Literal comprehension
- Retelling
- Main idea
- Summarization

● ◑ ○ Eases into instruction, beginning with stories containing obvious elements and information before moving to more the complex text.

● ◑ ○ Introduces stories where elements are explicit (e.g., setting is described specifically).

● ◑ ○ Focuses on only a few important elements and introduces additional elements when the students can reliably identify those previously taught.

● ◑ ○ Models and guides the students through stories, thinking out loud as the elements are being identified.

● ◑ ○ Models multiple examples and provides extensive guided practice in listening-comprehension strategies.

● ◑ ○ Inserts questions at strategic intervals to reduce the memory load for learners when introducing strategies in stories. (For example, have students retell the important events after each page rather than wait for the end of the story.)

● ◑ ○ Uses both narrative and expository text.

● ◑ ○ Provides plentiful opportunities to listen to and explore a variety of text forms and to engage in interactive discussion of the messages and meanings of the text.

● ◑ ○ Uses elements of story grammar as a structure for recalling and retelling the story.

Tally the number of elements with each rating.	_____● _____◑ _____○

Summary of Kindergarten Ratings

Phonemic Awareness Instruction	_____● _____◑ _____○
Letter-Sound Association Instruction	_____● _____◑ _____○
Decoding Instruction	_____● _____◑ _____○
Irregular Words Instruction	_____● _____◑ _____○
Listening Comprehension Instruction	_____● _____◑ _____○

Critical Elements Analysis

First Grade

Phonemic Awareness Instruction

I. Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate the sound structure of language. It is a strong predictor of reading success. Phonemic awareness is an auditory skill and consists of multiple components and does not involve print.

● ◑ ○ Analyzes words at the phoneme level (i.e., working with individual sounds within words).

● ◑ ○ Works with phonemes in all position in words (initial, final, medial).

● ◑ ○ Progresses from identifying or distinguishing the positions of sounds in words to producing the sound and adding, deleting, and changing selected sounds.

● ◑ ○ Allocates a significant amount of time to blending, segmenting, and manipulating tasks.

● ◑ ○ Works with increasingly longer words (three to four phonemes).

● ◑ ○ Expands beyond consonant-vowel-consonant words (e.g., *sun*) to more complex phonemic structures (consonant blends).

● ◑ ○ Incorporates letters into phonemic awareness activities.

● ◑ ○ Aligns the words used in phonemic awareness activities with those used in reading.

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Decoding and Word Recognition Instruction

● ◑ ○ Progresses systematically from simple word types (e.g., consonant-vowel-consonant) and word lengths (e.g., number of phonemes) and word complexity (e.g., phonemes in the word, position of blends, stop sounds) to more complex words.

● ◑ ○ Models instruction at each of the fundamental stages (e.g., letter-sound correspondences, blending, reading whole words).

● ◑ ○ Sequences words strategically to incorporate known letters or letter-sound combinations.

● ◑ ○ Provides initial practice in controlled connected text in which students can apply their newly learned skills successfully.

● ◑ ○ Includes repeated opportunities to read words in contexts in which students can apply their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences.

● ◑ ○ Uses decodable text based on specific phonics lessons in the early part of the first grade as an intervening step between explicit skill acquisition and the students' ability to read quality trade books. Decodable texts should contain the phonics elements and sight words that students have been taught. However, the text should be unfamiliar to students so that they are required to apply word-analysis skills and not simply reconstruct text they have memorized.

● ◑ ○ Begins instruction in word families and word patterns (i.e., reading orthographic units of text, such as *at, sat, fat, rat*) after students have learned the letter-sound correspondences in the unit.

● ◑ ○ Teaches students to process larger, highly represented patterns to increase fluency in word recognition.

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Irregular Words Instruction

● ◑ ○ Selects words of high utility.

● ◑ ○ Controls the number of irregular words introduced so that the students will not be overwhelmed.

● ◑ ○ Strategically separates high-frequency words (e.g., *was, saw; them, they, there*), that are often confused by students.

● ◑ ○ Points out irregularities while focusing student attention on all letters in the word.

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Passage Reading Instruction

● ◑ ○ Introduces passage reading soon after students can read a corpus of words accurately.

● ◑ ○ Contains only words comprised of letter-sounds and word types that have been introduced.

● ◑ ○ Contains only irregular words that have been previously taught

● ◑ ○ Includes passages in which the majority of high frequency irregular words are from list of commonly used words in English.

● ◑ ○ Uses initial stories/passages composed of a high percentage of regular words (minimum of 75-80% decodable words).

● ◑ ○ Contains a small number of low frequency irregular words.

● ◑ ○ Teaches explicit strategy to move from reading words in lists to reading words in sentences and passages.

● ◑ ○ Introduces fluency practice after students read words in passages accurately.

● ◑ ○ Builds toward a 60 word per minute fluency goal by end of grade.

● ◑ ○ Includes sufficient independent practice materials of appropriate difficulty for students to develop fluency.

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Reading Comprehension Instruction

● ◑ ○ The text for initial instruction in comprehension:
-begins with linguistic units appropriate for the learner
-uses familiar vocabulary
-uses a topic with which the learner is familiar
-uses simple syntactical structures.

● ◑ ○ Ensures that students have a conceptual understanding of beginning, middle, and end.

● ◑ ○ Introduces text where the components of text are explicit (beginning, middle, and end being obvious).

● ◑ ○ Begins with short passages to reduce the memory load for learners.

● ◑ ○ Guides students through sample text in which teachers think out loud as they identify the components.

● ◑ ○ Has students discuss the elements orally and make comparisons with other stories.

● ◑ ○ Requires students to determine which strategy to use and why and provide extensive opportunities for students to read and apply the strategies throughout the year. For example, instruction designed to teach children to answer *who, what, when, where,* and *how* questions would consist of determining which type of question to ask first. *Who* and *what* questions are typically easier to answer then *when* and *where* questions. For *when* and *where* questions, instruction in how to identify the when and where in text may be necessary.

● ◑ ○ Uses both narrative and expository text.

● ◑ ○ Provides plentiful opportunities to listen to and explore a variety of text forms and to engage in interactive discussion of the messages and meanings of the text.

● ◑ ○ Uses elements of story grammar as a structure for recalling and retelling the story. Models retelling, using the setting, characters, and important events as recall anchors. Provides picture cues to help students learn the essential elements.

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Summary of First Grade Ratings

Phonemic Awareness Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○
Decoding and Word Recognition Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○
Irregular Words Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○
Passage Reading Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○
Reading Comprehension Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○

Critical Elements Analysis

Second Grade

Decoding and Word Recognition Instruction

● ◑ ○ Teaches advanced phonic-analysis skills explicitly, first in isolation, then in words and connected text, and when students become proficient, in trade books.

● ◑ ○ Avoids assuming that learners will automatically transfer skills from one word type to another. When introducing a new letter combination, prefix, or word ending, models each of the fundamental stages of blending the word and then reading the whole word.

● ◑ ○ Separates auditorily and visually similar letter combinations in the instructional sequence (e.g., does not introduce both sounds for *oo* simultaneously; separates *ai, au*).

● ◑ ○ Sequences words and sentences strategically to incorporate known phonics units (e.g., letter combinations, inflectional endings).

● ◑ ○ Ensures that students know the sounds of the individual letters prior to introducing larger orthographic units (e.g., *ill, ap, ing*).

● ◑ ○ Provides initial practice in controlled contexts in which students can apply newly learned skills successfully.

● ◑ ○ Offers repeated opportunities for students to read words in contexts where they can apply their advanced phonics skills with a high level of success.

● ◑ ○ Uses decodable texts, if needed, as an intervening step between explicit skill acquisition and the student's ability to read quality trade books.

● ◑ ○ Incorporates spelling to reinforce word analysis. After students can read words, provides explicit instruction in spelling, showing students how to map the sounds of letters onto print.

● ◑ ○ Makes clear the connections between decoding (symbol to sound) and spelling (sound to symbol).

● ◑ ○ Teaches explicit strategy to read multisyllabic words by using prefixes, suffixes, and known word parts.

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Irregular Words Instruction

● ◑ ○ Selects words that have high utility; that is, words that are used frequently in grade-appropriate literature and informational text.

● ◑ ○ Sequences high-frequency irregular words to avoid potential confusion. For example, high-frequency words that are often confused by students should be strategically separated for initial instruction.

● ◑ ○ Limits the number of sight words introduced at one time (five to seven new words).

● ◑ ○ Preteaches the sight words prior to reading connected text.

● ◑ ○ Provides a cumulative review of important high-frequency sight words as part of daily reading instruction (two to three minutes).

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Vocabulary and Concept Instruction

● ◑ ○ Provides direct instruction of specific concepts and vocabulary essential to understanding text.

● ◑ ○ Incorporates exposure to a broad and diverse vocabulary through listening to an reading stories and informational texts.

● ◑ ○ Provides repeated and multiple exposures to critical vocabulary.

● ◑ ○ Integrates words into sentences and asks students to tell the meaning of the word in the sentence and to use it in a variety of contexts.

● ◑ ○ Reviews previously introduced words cumulatively.

● ◑ ○ Teaches strategy for word meanings based on meaning of prefixes and suffixes.

● ◑ ○ Introduces the prefix or suffix in isolation, indicating its meaning and then connecting it in words.

● ◑ ○ Illustrates the prefix or suffix with multiple examples.

● ◑ ○ Uses examples when the roots are familiar to students (e.g., *remake* and *replay* as opposed to *record* and *recode*).

● ◑ ○ Separates prefixes that appear similar in initial instructional sequences (e.g., *pre, pro*).

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Passage Reading - Fluency Instruction

● ◑ ○ Contains only words comprised of phonic elements and word types that have been introduced.

● ◑ ○ Contains only irregular words that have been previously taught.

● ◑ ○ Selects majority of high frequency irregular words from list of commonly used words in English.

● ◑ ○ Introduces fluency practice after students read words in passages accurately.

● ◑ ○ Builds toward a 90 word-per-minute fluency goal by end of grade 2.

● ◑ ○ Includes sufficient independent practice materials of appropriate difficulty for students to develop fluency.

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Reading Comprehension Instruction

● ◑ ○ Teaches conventions of informational text (e.g., titles, chapter headings) to locate important information.

● ◑ ○ Teaches explicit strategy to interpret information from graphs, diagrams, and charts.

● ◑ ○ Teaches the importance of reading in locating facts and details in narrative and informational text and recognizing cause-and-effect relationships.

● ◑ ○ Organizes instruction in a coherent structure.

● ◑ ○ Teaches information or strategies to increase a student's understanding of what is read.

● ◑ ○ Teaches skill or strategy explicitly with the aid of carefully designed examples and practice.

● ◑ ○ Continues skill or strategy instruction across several instructional sessions to illustrate the applicability and utility of the skill or strategy.

● ◑ ○ Connects previously taught skills and strategies with new content and text.

● ◑ ○ Cumulatively builds a repertoire of skills and strategies that are introduced, applied, and integrated with appropriate texts and for authentic purposes over the course of the year.

● ◑ ○ Teaches analyzing elements of narrative text and comparing and contrasting elements within and among texts.

● ◑ ○ Uses story grammar structure as a tool for prompting information to compare and contrast, organize information, and group related ideas to maintain a consistent focus.

Tally the number of elements with each rating.	_____●	_____◑	_____○

Summary of Second Grade Ratings

Decoding and Word Recognition Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○
Irregular Words Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○
Vocabulary and Concept Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○
Passage Reading - Fluency Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○
Reading Comprehension Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○

Critical Elements Analysis

Third Grade

Decoding and Word Recognition Instruction

● ◑ ○ Separates word parts that are highly similar (e.g., *ight* and *aight*).

● ◑ ○ Introduces word parts that occur with high frequency over those that occur in only a few words.

● ◑ ○ Teaches the word parts first and then incorporates the words into sentences and connected text.

● ◑ ○ Emphasizes reading harder and bigger words (i.e., multisyllabic words) and reading all words more fluently.

● ◑ ○ Extends instruction to orthographically larger and more complex units (e.g., *ight, aught, own*).

● ◑ ○ Teaches strategies to decode multisyllabic words using the structural features of such word parts as affixes (e.g., *pre-, mis-,-tion*) to aid in word recognition.

● ◑ ○ Provides explicit explanations, including modeling, "Think-alouds," guided practice, and the gradual transfer of responsibility to students.

● ◑ ○ Relys on examples more than abstract rules. (Begin with familiar words. Show "nonexamples." Use word parts rather than have students search for little words within a word. *Examples*: depart, report.)

● ◑ ○ Makes clear the limitations of structural analysis.

● ◑ ○ Uses extended text in opportunities for application.

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Vocabulary and Concept Instruction

● ◑ ○ Teaches dictionary usage explicitly with grade-appropriate dictionaries that allow students to access and understand the meaning of an unknown word. Uses words in context and that are encountered frequently.

● ◑ ○ Uses context to gain the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Context includes the words surrounding the unfamiliar word that provide information to its meaning. Because not all contexts are created equal, however, initial instruction must be designed carefully to enable learners to acquire this important vocabulary strategy.

● ◑ ○ Extends the understanding of concepts and vocabulary of the English language through (1) learning and using antonyms and synonyms: (2) using individual words in compound words to predict the meaning; (3) using prefixes and suffixes to assist in word meaning; and (4) learning simple multiple-meaning words.

● ◑ ○ Emphasizes direct instruction in specific concepts and vocabulary essential to understanding text and exposure to a broad and diverse vocabulary through listening to and reading stories.

Tally the number of elements with each rating.	_____●	_____◑	_____○

Passage Reading - Fluency Instruction

● ◑ ○ Contains only words comprised of phonic elements and word types that have been introduced.

● ◑ ○ Contains only irregular words that have been previously taught.

● ◑ ○ Selects majority of high frequency irregular words from list of commonly used words in English.

● ◑ ○ Introduces fluency practice after students read words in passages accurately.

● ◑ ○ Builds toward a 120 word-per-minute fluency goal by end of grade 3.

● ◑ ○ Includes sufficient independent practice materials of appropriate difficulty for students to develop fluency.

Tally the number of elements with each rating.	_____●	_____◑	_____○

Reading Comprehension Instruction

● ◑ ○ Explicitly teaches comprehension strategies.

● ◑ ○ Provides a range of examples for initial teaching and practice.

● ◑ ○ Provides independent practice activities that parallel requirements of instruction.

● ◑ ○ Begins with linguistic units appropriate to the learner; for example, uses pictures and a set of individual sentences before presenting paragraph or passage-level text to help students learn the concept of main idea.

● ◑ ○ Uses text in which the main idea or comprehension unit is explicitly stated, clear, and in which the ideas follow a logical order.

● ◑ ○ Uses familiar vocabulary and passages at appropriate readability levels for learners.

● ◑ ○ Uses familiar topics during initial teaching.

● ◑ ○ Uses familiar, simple syntactical structures and sentence types.

● ◑ ○ Progresses to more complex structures in which main ideas are not explicit and passages are longer.

● ◑ ○ Teaches skill or strategy explicitly with the aid of carefully designed examples and practice.

● ◑ ○ Continues skill or strategy instruction across several instructional sessions to illustrate the applicability and utility of the skill or strategy.

● ◑ ○ Connects previously taught skills and strategies with new content and text.

● ◑ ○ Cumulatively builds a repertoire of skills and strategies that are introduced, applied, and integrated with appropriate texts and for authentic purposes over the course of the year.

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Summary of Third Grade Ratings

Decoding and Word Recognition Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○
Vocabulary and Concept Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○
Passage Reading - Fluency Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○
Reading Comprehension Instruction	_____●	_____◑	_____○

Critical Elements Analysis — All Grades

Assessment

Program Assessment Components

● ◑ ○ Include assessment items for each major reading skill/strategy that can be used to determine what students need to learn and what teachers need to teach.

● ◑ ○ Provide indicators of critical skills and strategies to identify students at risk of difficulty and in need of specialized instruction.

● ◑ ○ Allow teachers to determine the effectiveness of their instruction by:
- conducting assessments at strategic point of instruction (entry, monitoring of progress, and summative).
- monitor student progress at the end of each unit of instruction.

● ◑ ○ Link closely the instruction and curriculum activities to school-, district-, and state standards.

Tally the number of elements with each rating.	_____●	_____◑	_____○

Critical Elements Analysis — All Grades

Instructional Programs and Materials

Materials and Programs

● ◑ ○ Prioritize essential skills and strategies.

● ◑ ○ Sequence skills and strategies in a logical, coherent manner.

● ◑ ○ Demonstrate and build the relationships between fundamental skills leading to higher order skills.

● ◑ ○ Address or reinforce content area standards in mathematics, science, and history-social science.

● ◑ ○ Focus on activities that relate directly to the learning objectives.

● ◑ ○ Provide specific suggestions for learners with special needs.

Tally the number of elements with each rating. _____● _____◑ _____○

Critical Elements Analysis — All Grades

Differentiated Instruction

Instructional Materials

Instructional Grouping

● ◑ ○ Provide a range within the instructional materials which allows flexibility to start students at different entry points in the materials depending on student performance.

● ◑ ○ Suggest appropriate grouping based on students' performance

● ◑ ○ Recommend and accommodate flexible groupings to maximize student performance.

Tally the number of elements with each rating.	_____●	_____◑	_____○

Learners with Special Needs

● ◑ ○ Present comprehensive guidance for teachers in providing effective, efficient instruction for students with special needs.

● ◑ ○ Provide explicit and systematic instruction and practice materials to accelerate reading achievement for students who are reading significantly below grade level.

Tally the number of elements with each rating.	_____●	_____◑	_____○

Advanced Learners

● ◑ ○ Includes enrichment and acceleration options for advanced students who demonstrate mastery of information.

● ◑ ○ Provides suggestions to help students study a particular theme or concept in greater depth or perspective.

Tally the number of elements with each rating.	_____●	_____◑	_____○

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