

*Take Me On A Reading  
Adventure*



A LITERACY GUIDE FOR  
AMERICA'S CHARTER SCHOOLS



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AMERICA'S CHARTER SCHOOLS

**America's  
Charter** School Finance Corporation

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# Preface

## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

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When it comes to our children's future, the importance of literacy cannot be overstated. Proficiency in reading and writing are essential tools that open doors to higher education, as well as to employment opportunities. Reading and writing skills allow young people to explore the world, learning about their own culture and society and those of others—a necessity in our ever-growing global economy.

With statistics showing that 37 percent of fourth-graders fail a basic reading test (US ED NAEP 2001), education has vaulted to the top of our nation's agenda—where it should be. On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind Act*. This legislation, which was passed with overwhelming support by both houses of Congress, will bring accountability and flexibility to the expenditure of federal dollars in support of local schools. Two key initiatives promoted in the legislation are:

- ★ the “Reading First” and “Early Reading First” programs to improve student literacy; and
- ★ enhancement of federal charter school programs to expand public school choices for families.

Bridging these two federal initiatives, in the fall of 2001, America's Charter began development of a literacy program guide for charter schools with kindergarten through grade five programs. We had three audiences in mind. First, we wanted to provide organizers and leaders of new charter schools with information that would help them evaluate reading curricula and develop their reading programs. Second, we aimed to support teachers and administrators in existing schools in their efforts to refine and improve their reading programs. Finally, we focused on reaching the rest of the charter school community, families, and community leaders, hoping to make their important job in helping children become skilled readers a little bit easier.

Our efforts culminated in the publication of *The Reading Adventure*, which provides a description of how children learn to read, reviews recent studies on teaching strategies, discusses the importance of faculty development, assessment and accountability, and profiles a group of charter schools that implemented reading programs resulting in significant student achievement. It is our hope that *The Reading Adventure* will be an impetus for further collaboration among charter schools and an exchange of ideas and strategies aimed at improving student reading achievement.

## OVERVIEW OF THE READING ADVENTURE

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### **Chapter 1** - *Can Charter Schools Help America*

*Read?* Here, we present current statistics on the state of reading achievement in the United States. Then, we provide a brief description of the charter school sector and the educational opportunities afforded by this relatively new type of school. While charter schools are still in the early phase of development, we report on studies that, so far, indicate charter schools are achieving positive results in their reading programs. Finally, we hypothesize, using the current performance outcomes of American students as a benchmark, that certain common attributes of charter schools put charter school students in the optimum position to realize improvement in reading.

### **Chapter 2** - *What Experts Say About Learning to*

*Read* provides a description of how children learn to read and the skills needed to be proficient in reading. The discussion is supplemented with examples of activities that parents, caregivers, and teachers can use to develop critical reading skills. The framework presented incorporates recommendations from recent comprehensive scientific studies that were highlighted by literacy experts during congressional hearings and other public forums.

### **Chapter 3** - *Teaching Struggling Readers*

addresses the reasons why some students struggle with reading and fall behind in their reading skills. The chapter lays out basic principles for teachers to follow in their lessons with all their struggling readers. In addition, for each type of struggler addressed in this chapter, we offer practical teaching strategies and lessons that teachers can use.

Because success in reading instruction is directly linked to the quality of the teacher in the classroom, in **Chapter 4** – *Faculty Development—Hire and Inspire a Quality Team*, we focus on hiring practices and faculty development. Given the flexibility of charter schools, we encourage charter schools to think differently about hiring practices and to create professional learning communities for teachers.

### **Chapter 5** - *Literacy Assessment—Linking Testing*

*and Instruction* reviews various forms of literacy assessment. Charter schools are deeply concerned with assessment of student performance. While formal assessment can provide an overall profile of a school and its students, informal methods of assessment can provide teachers with immediate feedback and the opportunity to modify instruction or reinforce certain skills as identified by the assessment.

### **Chapter 6** - *Steps to Success: Nine Charter*

*Schools with Great Reading Programs* includes profiles of nine diverse charter schools that have demonstrated success in their reading programs. These schools have shared a lot with America's Charter, including information about their reading programs and what aspects of their methods and curriculum they believe contribute to their success.

### **Chapter 7** - *Recommended Reading Activities*

includes a collection of sample K through 5 reading activities that can be used to supplement traditional instruction. The in-school activities were recommended by several of the charter schools profiled in Chapter 6. Reading experts at Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. developed the *Family Reading Tips and Activities* included in this chapter, which are designed to help parents encourage and motivate children to read at home.



## CONTRIBUTORS TO THE READING ADVENTURE

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America's Charter worked with an extraordinary group of organizations and professionals in the process of creating *The Reading Adventure*. Many charter school authorizers, advocates, and administrators helped shape the focus of the guide and participated in our early outreach. In addition, America's Charter benefited from the contributions, advice, and reviews provided by the following individuals and organizations:

### Contributors

*Chapter 3 – Teaching Struggling Readers* was contributed by Dr. Cathy Collins Block, Professor of Education, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas.

*The Family Reading Tips and Activities* in Chapter 7 were contributed by Reading Is Fundamental, Inc., Washington, D.C.

### Profiled Schools

The Accelerated School,  
*Los Angeles, California*

The Benjamin Franklin Charter School,  
*Franklin, Massachusetts*

Benjamin Franklin Charter School,  
*Mesa, Queen Creek, and Gilbert, Arizona*

Cherry Creek Academy,  
*Englewood, Colorado*

Cross Creek Academy,  
*Bryon Center, Michigan*

Einstein Montessori School,  
*Gainesville, Florida*

Friendship Edison Public School,  
*Washington, D.C.*

Harlem Day Charter School,  
*New York, New York*

Rapoport Academy Charter School,  
*Waco, Texas*

### Reviewers

The Accelerated School,  
*Los Angeles, California*

Brown Publishing Network,  
*New York, New York*

The Center for Education Reform,  
*Washington, D.C.*

Charter Friends National Network,  
*St. Paul, Minnesota*

Minnesota Association of Charter Schools

Rapoport Academy Charter School,  
*Waco, Texas*

## ABOUT AMERICA'S CHARTER

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America's Charter, founded in 2000, is a nonprofit organization with a mission to support the creation and expansion of high-quality charter schools throughout the nation by providing them with creative and customized facilities financing products. In June 2002, America's Charter was selected by the U.S. Department of Education as one of five entities to receive funding under the Charter School Facility Financing Demonstration Program. While America's Charter focuses its activities on facilities finance, we recognize that the

success of the charter school movement overall depends greatly on the achievement of students enrolled at charter schools. America's Charter is committed to supporting the charter school community in its mission to ensure the highest quality education for its students.

America's Charter is led by a senior management group with over 50 years' experience in education policy and finance.

Our experience also includes the creation of the largest education-related foundation in New England and the support of community-based programs designed to help low-income students achieve education success and enrollment in college. This team also has extensive experience in managing policy initiatives and projects with a national perspective. America's Charter is proud to be a part of the important national priority to improve all of America's schools. ★

# *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes*

Mother Goose nursery rhymes have been charming young children for hundreds of years. Because no one person is responsible for all of the tales, numerous editions are available today—no two exactly alike.

What all versions of the Mother Goose rhymes share is a delightful collection of characters, pictures, words and rhythms that engage the hearts and minds of children and draw them into the process of reading.

Jacqueline, age 4, tells us that she has one Mother Goose book at home that her mother reads to her and another book at her grandparents' house that they both read to her and the books are different from one another. Luckily, her favorite rhyme, "Three Little Kittens" is in both versions! Her other favorites, which are set to music that is very often playing in the car on the way to school, include "Polly Put the Kettle On" and "Rub a Dub Dub" which she likes because "mommy and me sing it at bath time!"



# *Pre-Kindergarten Book List*

Big Black Bear

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom

Dr. Dog

Five Little Monkeys

If You Give a Pig a Pancake

I Wish I Were a Butterfly

The Napping House

There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly

There's a Wocket in My Pocket!

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

# *Chapter 1- Can Charter Schools Help America Read?*

In American schools, too many children are struggling to develop the skills necessary to become competent readers. While some children succeed in this endeavor, others do not. Studies (Lyon 1998, 1996) show that about five percent of children learn to read nearly effortlessly. Another 20 to 30 percent of children learn to read quite easily once introduced to formal instruction. For the remaining children, learning to read is a formidable challenge with 17 to 20 percent of children experiencing substantial difficulties learning to read. These difficulties exist not because the children are not smart enough, but rather because they read too slowly (often due to being poor decoders and lacking fluency), and are unable to remember or understand what has been read. If educational and economic achievements are dependent on being a skilled reader, what type of lifetime journey and opportunities can we expect for those without strong reading skills?

Charter schools are an innovative alternative playing an important role in reforming elementary and secondary education in American public schools. As such, charter schools have an extraordinary opportunity to address the fact that too many American children are not learning to read at an adequate level. Educators need to better understand the factors that lead to student achievement; to develop strategies to implement proven approaches so that all children have an opportunity to succeed; and to foster learning communities where student achievement is the clear and driving focus. With a goal of motivating and encouraging reform initiatives to address these needs, in this chapter we describe the current national student reading achievement landscape and the limitations that illiteracy places on potential success over a lifetime.

Later in this chapter, we describe some of the common characteristics of charter schools. Early results of efforts at charter schools to develop essential reading skills have been positive, and we report on these studies as well. Finally, we examine a variety of school data to determine whether attributes common to charter schools are likely to have a positive effect on student achievement in reading.

AMERICAN STUDENT  
PERFORMANCE

There is no shortage of educational achievement statistics. Through all the numbers, there is a consistent message—while per pupil spending continues to increase, the average reading scores for America’s fourth-graders have remained at a relatively constant, but unacceptably low level. Through the National Center for Education Statistics (in the U.S. Department of Education), the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been undertaken periodically since 1969.<sup>1</sup> A NAEP report issued in 2001, *The Nation’s Report Card: Fourth-Grade Reading 2000* indicates a relatively stable pattern in students’ average reading scores over the past ten years. The report (US ED 2001a) also finds a widening reading performance gap between students in the high and low ranges, stating that “scores at the 75<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles in 2000 were significantly higher than 1992. In contrast, the score at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile in 2000 was significantly lower than 1992.” The overall net effect was no change in the student average.

Unfortunately, long-term results for student performance show that too many students are not reading at a basic skill level. The NAEP report (US ED 2001a) shows that in 1992, 1994, 1998, and 2000, more than one-third of fourth-grade students were reading at the *Below Basic* level.<sup>2</sup> The statistics for African American, Hispanic, and American Indian students in Table 1.1 paint an even more troubling picture.

The NAEP report also finds that students performing poorly in reading can come from families at all income levels. They attend both public and nonpublic schools. In addition, while there is a high degree of public attention on the poor achievement of inner-city schools, the problems with reading achievement are evident in both urban and rural settings. Specifically, the report states:

★ Family Income – While more than 50 percent of the students eligible for the free/reduced-price lunch program had scores at the *Below Basic* level, 25 percent of students whose family incomes made them

Table 1.1 - 2000 NAEP Results by Race/Ethnicity

| Race/Ethnicity               | Students at or above Proficient Level | Students at Below Basic Level |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| African American             | 12 %                                  | 63%                           |
| Hispanic                     | 16%                                   | 58%                           |
| American Indian              | 17%                                   | 57%                           |
| White                        | 40%                                   | 27%                           |
| Asian/Pacific Islander       | 46%                                   | 22%                           |
| Combined Student Achievement | 32%                                   | 37%                           |

1 NAEP assessments are conducted in reading, math, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography and the arts. NAEP results are provided for both public and private schools and segmented into a number of categories including, state, grade level, race, gender, and parental education. Detailed information on this assessment can be found at [www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard](http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard).

2 NAEP results were generally segmented into four categories—Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced.

ineligible for that program also performed at the *Below Basic* level.

- ★ **School Control** – While the rates of students at nonpublic schools performing at the *Below Basic* level were about half the rates reported by public school students, a troubling 20 percent of nonpublic school students failed to perform at a *Basic* level.
- ★ **School Setting** – One-third of students enrolled in “urban fringe/large town schools” and “rural/small town schools” were reading at the *Below Basic* level.

In addition to examining the reading performance of American students, the study also asked fourth-grade students a series of questions related to reading behavior. Some of the study’s findings included:

- ★ Students who reported reading more pages daily, either in-school or at-home, as well as students who reported they were asked to write about their reading, were higher achievers than their peers.
- ★ Those students who reported reading for fun, discussing studies with families, or talking about reading with family also had higher reading achievement.
- ★ Access to a variety of reading materials was also common among high achieving students.

While no definitive relationships can be made between the information students reported about their home and school behaviors and their reading performance, the report asserts that the information does “suggest that active

engagement with words and meaning may be an essential factor for literacy development.”<sup>3</sup>

In summary, the NAEP results demonstrate that as a nation we are failing in our efforts to improve the reading achievement of America’s children. With more than one-third of fourth-graders performing at the *Below Basic* level, there is a clear and urgent need to reform and strengthen American schools and to stem the tide of students leaving our schools ill-prepared in reading and other subjects.

## ADULT LITERACY IN AMERICA

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Studies have established that the consequences of reading failure go beyond test results and the classroom and cannot be viewed solely as an educational problem. According to expert Reid Lyon (1996), “Anywhere from 10 to 15 percent of children with reading difficulties drop out of school prior to high school graduation. Of those who do graduate, less than 2 percent attend a four-year college, despite the fact that many are above average in intelligence. A quick survey of adolescents and young adults with histories of delinquent or criminal conduct indicates that approximately half have reading difficulties, and similar rates of reading failure are seen among kids with substance abuse problems. No doubt, occupational and vocational independence and success are compromised.”

In order to measure the scope of adult literacy and its impact on society, the National Center for Education Statistics conducts a periodic national study called the National Adult Literacy Study (NALS). Like the NAEP study,

<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, many of the charter schools profiled in Chapter 6 for their excellent reading programs reported that they foster in-school and at-home behaviors consistent with the positive behaviors noted in the study.





skills were more varied than the lowest category, but were still quite limited. While adults in this category were able to locate information in text and make low level inferences, they were much less likely to respond correctly to tasks that required them to integrate or synthesize information. In the aggregate, the NALS study found that 46 to 51 percent of adults have low-level literacy skills.

So what are the consequences of poor reading achievement? Literacy experts argue that lower literacy skills mean a lower quality of life and more limited employment opportunities. The NALS data appear to support such views reporting that:

the NALS groups the respondents on the basis of their performance on an array of tasks that reflect different types of reading materials (versus counting the number of illiterates, as is done with many other studies).<sup>4</sup> The most recent study was completed in 1992 and published in 1993. An updated study is planned for 2002.<sup>5</sup>

NALS (Kirsch et al. 1993) reported that 21 to 23 percent of adults living in the United States performed at the lowest levels of prose literacy, document literacy, and quantitative literacy. Many adults at this level were unable to perform simple routine tasks such as identifying a piece of specific information from a short news article, reading a map, and totaling an entry on a deposit slip. One out of every four adults in this level was an immigrant, and two out of three had not completed high school.

Another 25 to 28 percent of the respondents demonstrated skill at the next level up. Their

- ★ Respondents in the lowest level of reading achievement reported incomes that were less than half the incomes reported by those in the highest level.
- ★ While four percent of those in the two highest reading levels reported receiving food stamps, nearly 20 percent of those at the lowest level received food stamps.
- ★ More than 75 percent of those at the two highest levels reported receiving interest from a bank account, compared to 25 percent of those at the lowest level.
- ★ Nearly 50 percent of those in the lowest level were living in poverty compared to only four percent for those at the highest level.
- ★ Slightly more than 50 percent of those performing at the lowest level reported voting in a recent national or state election,

<sup>4</sup> Respondents to the NALS study are grouped into five levels. Level one is the lowest skill level and level five is the highest skill level.

<sup>5</sup> Information on the NALS study being planned by the National Center for Education Statistics can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/design/about02.asp>.

compared to 90 percent of those at the highest level.

While having higher levels of literacy skills does not guarantee opportunity, “Still, literacy can be thought of as a currency in this society” (Kirsch et al. 1993). Given this conclusion, there can be no doubt that the NAEP and NALS findings should be spurring research, innovation, and cooperation to get American education, and reading education in particular, on track.

## WHAT ARE CHARTER SCHOOLS?

The message from the research and statistics is clear—as a society we need to do more to ensure the success of all children when it comes to literacy. In response to this message, local, state, and federal reforms are underway. Research continues to help shape the kinds of programs and support that will be most effective in helping different types of learners, particularly those students who have been unable to succeed in the traditional public school. Teacher education programs are being enhanced to help teachers be more effective in all of the core subject areas, including reading. Accountability measures are being adopted. Various types of education models, including public charter schools, are being examined.

Charter schools are public schools that operate alongside the traditional public school system.<sup>6</sup> Enrollment is open to all students, and students attend the school free of charge, as with other public schools. Under a charter, or contract, a charter school is held accountable for achieving established goals and improving student

performance. In exchange for its commitment to the performance goals, the school is granted greater autonomy over its operation and curriculum. In the 2001–02 school year, there were more than 2,400 charter schools operating in 34 states and the District of Columbia (CER 2001a). An additional 450 schools are expected to open in the fall of 2002, expanding charter school reach to 36 states and the District of Columbia (CER 2002).

The following statistics give a flavor of some of the attributes of charter schools that separate them from traditional public schools:

- ★ Average enrollment in a traditional public school is three times higher than average charter school enrollment (Nelson et al. 2000).
- ★ The student to teacher ratio for charter schools is slightly lower than traditional public schools (Nelson et al. 2000).
- ★ Charter schools are more likely than traditional public schools to serve Hispanic students (23 percent versus 18 percent) and African American students (24 percent versus 17 percent) (Nelson et al. 2000).
- ★ Charter schools enroll a slightly higher percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch than traditional schools (Nelson et al. 2000).
- ★ Ninety-seven percent of charter schools administer at least one standardized test per year (CER 2001b). Thirty-four percent of charter schools report using at least seven types of assessments to measure student achievement and progress (Nelson et al. 2000).

<sup>6</sup> The United States Department of Education sponsors a web site rich with information about charter schools. The web site address is [www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org).

★ Charter schools enjoy high levels of parent involvement and satisfaction. For example:

☆ In Pennsylvania, 25 percent of parents report that they volunteer more than three hours per month, and half of the charter schools require parental volunteerism (Miron and Nelson 2000). Several other states and many individual charter school studies have reported similar levels of parental participation.

☆ A Colorado study (State of Charter Schools in Colorado 2001) confirms that 98 percent of the schools in the study administered parent satisfaction surveys, and 47 percent of the schools used a parent to promote parent involvement. In addition, the study found that charter schools enjoyed “striking (sometimes extraordinary)” levels of parental involvement.

☆ Harvard University Professor of Economics, Caroline Hoxby completed a study in which she reported that parents in a school choice program are more involved in their child’s education and expect higher standards of achievement (Hoxby 2001).

worth exploring. Although the charter school movement is relatively new and long-term evaluations are, therefore, not yet available, it is possible to investigate:

★ the early impact that charter schools are having on student achievement in reading; and

★ attributes that are common among charter schools and the effect of these attributes on reading achievement.

Let’s start by exploring whether charter schools have an impact on reading by reviewing a number of studies that have been initiated to evaluate charter schools’ success.

## Reading Achievement

While many charter schools are relatively young and baseline data has only recently been compiled, early studies show evidence of success with this educational alternative. In August 2001, The Center for Education Reform issued a summary of 65 research-based charter school studies. Table 1.2 summarizes various studies in which reading performance results were cited.

This early evidence indicates that charters are successful in raising student reading scores. The studies that exist to date are somewhat limited, however, and are not national in scope. Until broader studies are performed, it is difficult to evaluate on this basis alone whether charter schools are contributing to advancement of reading achievement on a national scale.

## THE IMPACT OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

To answer the question “Can charter schools help America read?” there are several avenues

*Charter schools provide educational options for parents and children by allowing teachers and leaders to design schools that better serve particular populations.*

*Table 1.2 - Summary of Charter School Studies on Reading Achievement*

| Study   | Reading Outcomes Reported by Study   |
|---|--|
| Navigating Newly Chartered Waters: An Analysis of Texas Charter School Performance – 2001               | Continuing charter school students have greater improvement in reading scores than students continuing in traditional public schools.  |
| Does Charter School Attendance Improve Test Scores? – 2001  | Arizona study found the longer a student remained in a charter school, the greater the academic gains. Charter school students are making greater gains in reading and about the same in math. |
| An Evaluation of the Michigan Charter School Initiative: Performance, Accountability, and Impact – 2000 | Study found that charters opened for five years outgained and had higher maximum scores than the host district on 4th grade reading.   |
| Massachusetts Charter School Profiles – 1999  | On average, charter schools scored about five points higher on the state exam which tests several core areas, including reading.   |
| Minnesota Charter Schools Evaluation Report – 1998  | Minnesota basic graduation test results showed, 71 percent of charter schools had a higher percentage of students passing compared with the surrounding districts.                             |

Source: CER 2001c



However, it is possible to examine some attributes common to charter schools and their effects on reading achievement. While many of the characteristics described below are considered to have a positive impact on student achievement, no one factor alone is a panacea. In other words, each factor must be considered along with all the others.

### School Size

Charter schools tend to be smaller than their traditional public school counterparts—averaging 250 students as compared to 700 in traditional public schools (CER 2001b). Research (Howley 1989) demonstrates that smaller schools (defined as 300 students or less) have a positive impact on student behavior and achievement. The Rural School and Community Trust examined the impact of small schools on student achievement and issued its study results in February 2000. The study

reports that smaller schools can help students from poor communities reduce the academic achievement gap (measured by standardized tests, including reading assessments) between these poorer students and students from wealthier communities.

Similar results were reported in a 1996 review of over one hundred research documents by Kathleen Cotton for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. In this review, Cotton concludes that small schools have a positive effect on the achievement (measured by a number of factors including grades, test scores, and subject matter achievement) of minority and low-income students. Other than the positive impact on low-income communities, about half of the research she reviewed found no difference in student achievement based on school size. The other half of the research reached the opposite conclusion, reporting that achievement is higher in small schools. None of the research, however, showed that large schools resulted in higher achievement than small schools.

### Class Size

Charter schools tend to have slightly lower student to teacher ratios—16 students per teacher versus 17.2 in traditional public schools. (Nelson et al. 2000). Research conducted to study the impact of class size on student achievement has resulted in mixed conclusions. Tennessee's STAR Project (HEROS 1997) found that students enrolled in small classes (defined as 13 to 17 students) significantly outperformed those in larger classes in both math and reading. In a review of class size research studies, Snow et al. (1998) reported that reducing class-size had a positive effect on reading achievement for first-grade students, although the impact was small and short term.

*Within the school setting, parental involvement can integrate the two most important aspects of children's lives – school and family.*

While the debate on class size still lingers and not all questions about class size have been answered, research findings point toward a set of benefits associated with reducing class size. The U.S. Department of Education synthesized the research on class size in its 1999 report entitled *Reducing Class Size: What Do We Know?* and reported that:

- ★ a consensus of the research is that class size reduction in kindergarten through grade three leads to higher student achievement;
- ★ the beneficial effect of class size reduction occurs when the size is reduced to somewhere between 15 and 20 students;
- ★ if class size is reduced from more than 20 students to less than 20 students, average student achievement improves from the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile up to above the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile; the effect on disadvantaged and minority students is somewhat larger; and
- ★ students, parents, and teachers report positive effects from class size reduction on the quality of the instructional environment.

### **Family Involvement**

Charter schools have high levels of parent involvement (State of Charter Schools in Colorado 2001; Miron and Nelson 2000; Hoxby 2001). Research (Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1998) indicates that parental attitudes and support in reading have a strong influence on a child's ability to develop important reading skills. Reading values, attitudes, and expectations held by parents are likely to have lasting effects on a

child's attitude about reading. Some research has found that children of parents who demonstrate that reading is a source of entertainment have more positive views about reading than children whose parents focus on skill development.

Studies (Peterson 1989) have also shown that students whose families are involved in their formal education gain many advantages. "They have better grades, test scores, long-term academic achievement, attitudes, and behavior than those with disinterested families." Within the school setting, parental involvement can integrate the two most important aspects of children's lives—school and family. Parents can serve as important advocates and tutors for their children. Within the home, parents can provide highly effective one-on-one teaching.

### **Assessment and Accountability**

Charter schools have greater accountability than is generally required of traditional public schools. Charter schools must meet strict academic standards and other goals outlined in their charter. If charter schools don't perform, they are closed. One method used to demonstrate to its authorizer that a school has met its charter goals, is frequent formal and informal assessment of students. The assessment is used to determine whether there is improvement in achievement in accordance with the charter goals (CER 2001b; Nelson et al. 2000). The assessment results are interpreted at the school, classroom, and student levels to modify instruction so as to improve student achievement.

An extensive review of the research (Black and Wiliam 1998) found that improving assessment raises student achievement. “All of these studies show that innovations that include strengthening the practice of formative assessment<sup>7</sup> produce significant and often substantial learning gains.” The review also found that improved assessment helped low achievers more than other students. A key component of the overall effectiveness of assessments is that teachers adjusted teaching based on assessment results.

According to Robert Linn (2000), “[T]here is evidence that performance on the measures used in accountability systems increases over time, but that can also be linked to the use of old norms, the repeated use of the forms year after year, the exclusion of students from participating in accountability testing programs, and the narrow focusing of instruction on the skills and question types used on the test. Comparative data are needed to evaluate the apparent gains.” Linn suggests that schools and states adopt multiple tools to measure improvement trends, such as using the data

from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) coupled with state assessment results. Where state results are in conflict with other assessments, assessment test results can be validated with the use of additional testing measurements.

## CONCLUSION

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The research summarized in this chapter demonstrates that certain common characteristics of charter schools (small school size, small class size, family involvement, and assessment) are factors that create the potential for improved achievement for students. Based on the positive reports on reading outcomes in charter schools to date, and reports on the positive impact that characteristics that are common in charter schools have on achievement in general, it is reasonable to conclude that charter schools are in a unique position to improve reading achievement among their students and have great potential to help America read. ★

<sup>7</sup> An assessment becomes formative when the assessment results are used to modify teaching to focus on student needs.

# *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*

One of 25 books written and illustrated by Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* was originally written for an ailing five year old boy. Now, 100 years after it was first published in England, this tale of a mischievous rabbit continues to delight its young fans.

Even though she thought that Peter was a naughty rabbit, Emma liked the book because Peter made her laugh with his silliness and because the book ends happily. When she and her mom read this book at bedtime recently, they had fun with the British-ness of the vocabulary. The words "lippity, lippity," used to describe Peter as he hopped, especially made Emma laugh.

Emma, age 5, had her own thoughts as to how she would have handled Peter's predicament though. "If I was Peter," she said, "and I lost my clothes, I'd go back for them. But, I'd be very sneaky and quiet as a mouse. And if I was a skinny rabbit, I could slip under the gate quicker so Mr. McGregor couldn't catch me. Peter was a fat little rabbit; I know that 'cause I looked at the pictures."





# *Kindergarten Book List*

Casey Jones

The Hobyahs

Johnny Appleseed

Junie B. Jones Series

The Kissing Hand

Madeline

Piggie Pie

Rainbow Fish

The Ugly Duckling

The Velveteen Rabbit

## *Chapter 2 - What Experts Say About Learning to Read*

As discussed in the previous chapter *Can Charter Schools Help America Read?* this country faces a major challenge to structure instruction so that all children learn to read effectively. Charter schools, because of their very nature, are uniquely positioned to take advantage of the best information in the area of reading instruction as it becomes available. While parents and teachers play key roles in shaping the nature and success of the process of learning to read, the decisions made by charter school organizers and administrators will also greatly affect the process.

Over the last 20 years, a great deal of research into how the brain functions and how we learn to read has yielded valuable information for the education community. Sifting through all of it can be daunting and time-consuming, but it is valuable information for all members of the charter school community. School organizers and administrators can share this information with parents so that they understand the learning process and achievement goals. Informed parents become more effective advocates for their children and partners with the school. School boards and administrators can use the information to more effectively set student and school performance goals and to gauge classroom practice for the purpose of hiring new teachers and supporting experienced ones. Administrators and teachers will have information they need to evaluate the numerous and sometimes very different curricula available and to design solid professional development programs that align with the reading goals they've established for their students.

This chapter describes the interlinking strands which comprise the process of learning to read and practical activities which support each of those strands. Parents, organizers, teachers and administrators can use this information to make the best possible decisions for their children and students.

## WHAT RESEARCH HAS REVEALED ABOUT TEACHING READING

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The Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children was established at the behest of the U.S. Department of Education and the Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to conduct a review of research focusing on young children at risk for reading difficulties. Their report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties*, was published in 1998. Additionally, Congress charged the NICHD to convene a “national panel to assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read” (US HHS 2000). After conducting an analysis of experimental research literature, the National Reading Panel issued its report, *Teaching Children to Read*, in 1999. Between them, these groups reviewed thousands of studies, most completed within the last 15 years. Both groups reported similar findings about which methods are most effective in teaching children to read, information that is of critical importance to parents, teachers, and school administrators. Their findings include the following:

- ★ *phonemic awareness instruction* helps emergent readers at all ability levels improve their reading;
- ★ *systematic and explicit teaching of phonics* contributes significantly to children’s understanding of the alphabetic principle, reading ability, reading comprehension, and spelling ability, no matter the class size, especially if it is introduced early in the learning process;

- ★ *vocabulary instruction*, both direct and indirect, contributes to reading comprehension as does explicit *teaching of comprehension strategies*; and

- ★ *fluency is an under-emphasized skill* which should be assessed regularly and which can be dramatically improved by immersing children in a print-rich environment and by requiring students to read more.

## HOW WE LEARN TO READ

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Researchers agree that reading, unlike speech, is *not* something that can be learned without explicit instruction for most children. Reading has not yet become hard-wired into our brains through the process of evolution (D’Arcangelo 1999). Nevertheless, because all of our brains share a similar structure, we learn to read following the same pathways (Moats 2000). Some children weave all of the strands together seemingly effortlessly which gives the impression that they may have skipped some of them. And some children get stuck on certain strands giving the mistaken impression that they are unable to learn to read. Regardless, the process must follow a certain course; a missed or poorly-developed strand makes learning to read a difficult journey.

The process of learning to read starts at a very early age as an infant begins to *assimilate language* and its rules by hearing it (Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1998). Because the written word is only a symbolic representation of our spoken language, not a separate language, the ability to become a fluent speaker is the first step in becoming a fluent reader. When young children have extended verbal contact with family members (in conversation, while making up or listening to stories, even when singing), they

are learning language. The more language they experience, the more firmly the rules of spoken language will be fixed in their brains.

Another important early element of reading comprehension is *background knowledge* (Lyon 1997). Background knowledge is gained from experience with the world at large. It adds depth to a child's overall knowledge base and brings relevance to the process of learning to read. Amassing background knowledge is a life-long process that starts at a very early age. The richer the background knowledge afforded the child through the efforts of his family to expose him to the world (through stories, books, outings, and a judicious use of television), the more context he can apply to what he reads. The greater the framework a child brings to the reading process, the easier it will be to gain meaning from the words he reads.



Experts agree that a child who has been exposed from her earliest years to print in various settings (at home, at the library, with the family and with daycare providers) stands the greatest chance of successfully learning to read (Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1998). Exposing children to print develops *concepts of print* and supports the ability to gain *letter knowledge* and the *alphabetic principle* (both of which must be taught explicitly). Concepts of print include the knowledge that there is a directionality to reading words on a page (e.g., reading from left to right and from the top of the page to the bottom). Letter knowledge is the ability to recognize the letters of the alphabet which includes the ability to recognize upper- and lowercase letters, letters in isolation as well as within words, and handwritten and machine-generated letters. The alphabetic principle is the understanding that letters represent segments of speech, that specific sounds within a word can be represented by a letter or

letters. It is important to remember that children need to be explicitly taught the names of letters and the sounds that they stand for.

Eventually, while gaining language comprehension skills and concepts about print, children begin to develop *phonological awareness*, an awareness that spoken language is made up of words and phrases and that a sentence is not just one long stream of uninterrupted sounds. One important element of phonological awareness is *phoneme awareness* which is the understanding that words can be broken down into separate sounds. For instance, a child with phonemic awareness would know that the word “rope” is made up of three different sounds (/r/, /ō/, /p/) and that the only audible difference between the words “rope” and “soap” is the difference in the first sound of each word. Researchers have concluded that phonemic awareness is absolutely critical to the ability to read. In fact, the degree of phonemic

awareness that young children exhibit is one of the best predictors of reading success (Adams 1990).

After children have gained the ability to recognize sound-letter correspondences and have incorporated the rules of language, they begin to develop an ability to *decode* text. Decoding means that the emergent reader is able to derive a pronunciation for a sequence of letters (Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1998). It is a *big breakthrough*. Decoding ability combined with a thorough phonological understanding of language creates the ability to decipher the pronunciation of most regularly-spelled words that cross a reader's path.

To this point, the goal of the process has been to acquire the elements of reading comprehension discussed above. With the acquisition of the skills necessary to decode text, an individual can be said to be reading; however, he is reading at the lowest level of competency. He is just decoding words without constructing meaning from them. The skills he possesses allow him to decode most words he encounters, but at a speed too slow to allow him to process the information in a useful manner. For beginning readers, in other words, the process requires so much mental energy that the dual effort of remembering previous words in the sentence while decoding the present word leaves little capacity to gain meaning from what is being read (US ED 2001d).

One of the culminating achievements in the process of learning to read is *automaticity*. When a reader can decode words quickly

without being conscious of the effort or without being aware that she is trying to sound out words, she has achieved automaticity. The best means to achieve automaticity is extensive practice—that means lots and lots of reading of appropriate text. When decoding has become automatic and an individual can read quickly, accurately, and with expression, then she is a fluent reader. *Fluency* is one of the hallmarks of a highly-skilled reader (US ED 2001d).

Full *reading comprehension* occurs at the point at which a child is able to weave all of these strands together. When she can use her word recognition skills, her vocabulary skills and background knowledge—and all the skills underpinning them—to discern not only the meanings of the words but the intent of the author and the expression of the text, and when she can do so with fluency, then she is a proficient reader (Lyon 1998).

## ACQUIRING THE SKILLS

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It is important to note that the process of learning to read is a process in which more than one skill can, and usually does, develop at the same time. Additionally, the achievement of certain milestones which generally can be said to fall within a certain age range, may occur earlier or later in some children. Thus, activities that are appropriate for some children in pre-school may be appropriate for others only when they reach kindergarten (and vice-versa), while activities and expectations for some third-graders will be appropriate for some second-graders, and so on. Therefore, in this chapter we are presenting the spectrum of

*The process of learning to read starts at a very early age as an infant begins to assimilate language and its rules.*



## *Phonemes of the English Language*

| Phoneme      | Example Words                                     |
|--------------|---|
| /A/          | a (able), a_e (cake), ai (main), ay (bay)         |
| /a/          | a (mat)   |
| /b/          | b (bad)   |
| /k/          | c (corn), k (kit), ck (sack)                      |
| /d/          | d (dog)   |
| /E/          | e (he), ee (meet), ea (seat), y (lady)            |
| /e/          | e (get), ea (head)                                |
| /f/          | f (fit), ph (photo)                               |
| /g/          | g (go)  |
| /h/          | h (hog)   |
| /I/          | i (I), i_e (kite), igh (high), y (try)            |
| /i/          | i (mit)   |
| /j/          | j (jog), dge (fudge), g[e,i,y] (gel)              |
| /l/          | l (luck)  |
| /m/          | m (man)   |
| /n/          | n (no), kn (knob)                                 |
| /O/          | o (only), o_e (home), oa (loan), ow (slow)        |
| /o/          | o (hot)   |
| /p/          | p (pig)   |
| /kw/         | qu (quick)  |
| /r/          | r (run), wr (wring), er (her), ir (sir), ur (fur) |
| /s/          | s (see), c[e,i,y] (cell)                          |
| /t/          | t (tap)   |
| /U/          | u (fuel), u_e (fume), ew (new)                    |
| /u/          | u (under), a (about), e (folded), o (wagon)       |
| /v/          | v (vote)  |
| /w/          | w (walk)  |
| /ks/ or /gz/ | x (fix, exit)                                     |
| /y/          | y (yogurt)  |
| /z/          | z (zebra), s (toes)                               |
| /OO/         | oo (loot), u (truth), u_e (dune), ew (few)        |
| /oo/         | oo (hook), u (put)                                |
| /oi/         | oi (foil), oy (boy)                               |
| /ou/         | ou (out), ow (how)                                |
| /aw/         | aw (jaw), au (taut), a[I] (ball)                  |
| /ar/         | ar (far)  |
| /sh/         | sh (shop), ti (motion), ci (special)              |
| /hw/         | wh (whip)   |
| /ch/         | ch (choice), tch (patch)                          |
| /th/ or /tʰ/ | th (thin, that)                                   |
| /ng/         | ng (thing), n (drink)                             |
| /zh/         | zh (pleasure)                                     |

*Parents need to make an effort to manipulate language in various ways so that children have the widest possible exposure to how language works.*

skills and activities so that parents and teachers can establish an environment for learning that will meet the needs of every student at his or her level.

### **Birth Through Age 4**

Until a child enters school, the most important influence on his acquisition of the necessary first steps of reading is his parents (or primary caregivers). They can establish a framework for learning language and developing emergent reading skills that will prepare the child to learn to read successfully. The most significant thing parents can do for their children from infancy is to interact with them. In other words, for a child to begin to *assimilate language*, he must hear language being used. Parents and daycare providers who hold conversations with children, using a rich vocabulary, provide ample opportunity for the child to incorporate the rules of language and the sound elements of speech.

Parents need to make an effort to manipulate language in various ways so that children have the widest possible exposure to how language works. Activities that include reading are especially important because they expose children both to language and to concepts of print, but other activities that include songs, rhymes, and nonsense words are important too. Parents can use many of the daily activities in which children are involved to share language with them.

★ *Mealtime* is an opportunity to talk about food or the preparation of food.

★ *Playtime* can be spent reading age-appropriate books, naming toys or describing their properties and making up songs.

★ *Bathtime* can be used to learn the parts of the body or to make up nonsense word games.

★ *Getting-ready-for-sleep time* can be used to read quiet books and to sing lullabies (DeBruin-Parecki, Perkinson, and Ferderer 2000).

When reading with children, parents should encourage interaction. Children can hold the book and turn the pages; they can be asked to describe the pictures and chime in when they know a word or phrase; parents can point to the words as they are read so that the child can see that English is read from left to right. All of these activities will lead to an increased understanding of the *concepts of print* (Cullinan and Bagert 1993).

From their earliest moments children are active observers; they absorb much of what they are surrounded by, even if they cannot understand it. Therefore, it is important for parents to view every opportunity to introduce their children to the world at-large, in an age-appropriate manner, as a means of broadening the child's *background knowledge*. Outings to the local park, playground, beach, library, grocery store, bank, zoo, or museum add depth to a child's understanding of the way the world works. Even as parents are engaging the child with



language in describing these places, children, as participants, are learning a great deal about their environment on their own terms. These activities also provide opportunities to point out environmental print.

A crucial element in the establishment of the desire to learn to read is for children to see “print in action.” That is, parents and care providers should ensure that children see them reading (books, magazines, newspapers) and writing (letters, lists, notes, bills) (US ED 1997). These activities serve to show children that reading is enjoyable and interesting, and that print has many purposes. At the same time, engaging children in these activities at this stage shows them that the things we read contain words and that words contain letters, a fact which will help a child with his understanding of the *alphabetic principle*. In addition, children should be supplied with writing materials—crayons, markers, paper, pencils, stamps and stamp pads—so that they can experiment with

print. Although at first whatever is put on paper will be just scribbles, by the time the child is three years old, the scribbles will probably start to look something like letters because at about this point children start to recognize that printed words convey information. While the scribbling that children do at this stage is not real writing, it paves the way for real writing in later years (DeBruin-Parecki, Perkinson, and Ferderer 2000).

## Kindergarten

Kindergarten usually represents a major change for children. Kindergarten learning may take place in a more structured environment and in a larger school setting than many children are used to. Both parents and teachers should make sure that the desire to learn is not stifled by the necessity of sharing space, resources, and the teacher’s attention.

Parents and teachers should focus on the following areas of instruction to ensure that children at the end of kindergarten are ready for first grade.

★ *Concepts of print* including making sure children:

- know the difference between words and nonwords;
- understand the purpose of the empty space between words;
- understand that words are read from left to right on a page;
- understand that lines of a text are read from top to bottom on a page; and can identify the front of a book and a page in it.

★ *Alphabet recognition* including being sure that children:

- recognize letters in their many forms and contexts; and
- understand the alphabetic principle (that is,



that this system of letters stands for a series of sounds).

- ★ *Phonological awareness* including recognition of :
  - words within sentences;
  - rhyming units within words;
  - beginning and ending sounds within words
  - syllables within words; and
  - phonemes, or sounds, within words (phonemic awareness).
- ★ *Comprehension and vocabulary development* including:
  - intentional instruction in reading skills such as plot, setting, character; and
  - vocabulary instruction focusing on high-frequency words and other story words that may be unfamiliar to children.

Below are a sampling of activities that support kindergarten learning.

- ★ *Track print* in a Big Book to help children develop the concept of a word.
- ★ *Take children on a walk* around the school or neighborhood. Have them look for and identify learned letters in environmental print.
- ★ *Read alphabet books* to develop alphabet recognition and to build vocabulary.
- ★ *Read nursery rhymes* such as “Baa Baa Black Sheep” and “Humpty Dumpty” so that children can enjoy their playful language.
- ★ *Play oral blending games* to help children hear how sounds are put together to make a word. For instance, say “I am thinking of an animal. It is a /p/...ig. What am I thinking of?” (pig)

- ★ *Provide oral segmentation exercises* that help children learn to separate words into sounds. For example, ask children “Can you tell me what the first sound is in *fish*, *foot*, and *fan*?” Then, “What other words do you know that begin with /f/?”

## First Grade

First grade is a pivotal point on the path towards literacy and it is the point at which the responsibility for instruction shifts largely to schools and teachers to ensure that the skills which parents and previous teachers have worked to achieve are enhanced and refined. While the parent’s job is to enforce the importance of reading and monitor their child’s progress, teachers need to approach this year armed with myriad activities and methods designed to enhance reading fluency and comprehension and to keep student motivation high. *At a minimum*, by the end of first grade, children need to be reading in a grade-level appropriate manner, or the opportunity to become fluent readers in the subsequent grades will likely be more difficult. Additionally, while every effort must be made to ensure that children achieve a level of skill that allows them to read fluently, it is equally important that they have fun reading.

While aiming towards the dual goals of *automaticity* and *fluency* by reading texts of varying difficulty levels and genres, it will still be necessary for most children to continue to develop the basic skills required for success. Key strategies to be employed by teachers during this year include:

- ★ explicit instruction and practice with sound structures that lead to phonemic awareness;
- ★ explicit instruction in sound-spelling correspondences;

## *100 Most Frequent Words in Books for Beginning Readers*

|          |            |           |
|----------|------------|-----------|
| 1. the   | 35. not    | 69. her   |
| 2. a     | 36. do     | 70. from  |
| 3. and   | 37. then   | 71. had   |
| 4. to    | 38. this   | 72. got   |
| 5. I     | 39. no     | 73. put   |
| 6. in    | 40. too    | 74. came  |
| 7. is    | 41. she    | 75. just  |
| 8. on    | 42. went   | 76. cat   |
| 9. you   | 43. see    | 77. them  |
| 10. it   | 44. will   | 78. tree  |
| 11. of   | 45. so     | 79. where |
| 12. said | 46. some   | 80. away  |
| 13. can  | 47. down   | 81. time  |
| 14. for  | 48. little | 82. as    |
| 15. my   | 49. come   | 83. water |
| 16. but  | 50. get    | 84. home  |
| 17. all  | 51. be     | 85. made  |
| 18. we   | 52. now    | 86. long  |
| 19. are  | 53. when   | 87. has   |
| 20. up   | 54. there  | 88. help  |
| 21. at   | 55. into   | 89. good  |
| 22. with | 56. day    | 90. going |
| 23. me   | 57. look   | 91. by    |
| 24. they | 58. eat    | 92. how   |
| 25. have | 59. make   | 93. house |
| 26. he   | 60. his    | 94. dad   |
| 27. out  | 61. here   | 95. or    |
| 28. that | 62. your   | 96. two   |
| 29. one  | 63. an     | 97. red   |
| 30. big  | 64. back   | 98. am    |
| 31. go   | 65. mom    | 99. over  |
| 32. was  | 66. dog    | 100. saw  |
| 33. like | 67. very   |           |
| 34. what | 68. did    |           |

This list was derived from a survey of 1,000 pre-primer, early and first readers.

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- ★ explicit instruction in spelling conventions and how to use them to decode words;
- ★ practice in sight recognition of high-frequency words; and
- ★ independent reading, including reading aloud (Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1998).

The following is a list (by no means exhaustive) of activities that can be used to implement the foregoing strategies:

- ★ continued instruction in phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, and decoding strategies:
  - using *word journals* or *word files* so that difficult or unusual words can be learned and reviewed or so that favorite words can be collected;
  - *taking apart and putting together* words and syllables (as in kindergarten); and

- *playing word games* (using letter cards or mystery words which contain the letters being studied).

- ★ oral reading for automaticity, fluency and comprehension:
  - *choral reading* in which groups of children read at the same time;
  - *reading in pairs*;
  - *reading with a teacher or an aide*; and
  - *pre-reading discussions* to prepare students to discuss the main themes, characters, etc., of what they are reading and *post-reading discussions* to practice the ability to summarize a story or to relate the story to what they already know or may have experienced.
- ★ building vocabulary and background knowledge using field trips and classroom activities (gardening, cooking, aquariums). Pre-activity vocabulary training will expose children to vocabulary important to the activity and post-activity discussions will cement the words and concepts (Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1999; US ED 2001c).

## Second and Third Grade Overview

Second and third grades are the years during which the separate foundational skills of reading begin to merge and allow the child to read independently with fluency and good comprehension. There will be varying abilities within a classroom. Therefore, teachers should spend time during the school year (especially at the beginning) assessing the levels of reading ability and then tailoring instruction to the specific needs of their students. Review and practice of the skills learned in kindergarten and first grade—using the same or similar methods previously listed—are appropriate early in the year. Having taken the time to assess their students, successful teachers will

know which students are ready to move onto more advanced skills and which need additional skill building.

Teachers must ensure that the basic skills of reading (phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle and decoding) are firmly in place. Additionally, they must ensure that children are using decoding skills to sound out unfamiliar words, that they are reading familiar words with automaticity, and that they are developing fluency. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) cite studies that found that students who read independent level text aloud, with teacher guidance and feedback, showed significant gains in fluency.

Researchers describe three levels of text:

- ★ *Independent level text* is the highest level at which a child can read easily and fluently; generally this means *no more than one out of twenty words* is difficult for the child to decode;
- ★ *Instructional level text* is the highest level at which the reader can read satisfactorily; *no more than one out of ten words* should be difficult for the child to decode; and
- ★ *Frustration level text* is the level at which a child's reading skills break down, fluency disappears and comprehension is minimal; *more than one in ten words* is difficult for the child to decode (US ED 2001d; Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1998).

Simply put, there is no way to cement fluency

(or any other skill) if one pushes the emergent skill to its breaking point repeatedly, as would happen if children were asked to read at the frustration level too often.

Finally, teachers should still be reading aloud to their classes, although for somewhat different reasons than the kindergarten or first-grade teacher might. In second and third grade, teachers read aloud to model appropriate reading rate, phrasing, and expression—that is, what it sounds like to be a fluent reader. In addition, being read to continues to build a child's vocabulary and background knowledge.

At this stage, parents should continue to project enthusiasm for reading by taking an interest in what their child is reading and writing about, by taking an interest in homework assignments and by continuing to present the library as a place of fun and adventure. In addition, as children amass their own library of cherished books, it is appropriate for parents to designate a special place for them; a shelf in the family's bookcase or a special nook in the child's room helps reinforce the concept that a book is a special possession and that reading is a special accomplishment (Cullinan and Bagert 1993). Finally, at-home activities in which children can participate, such as cooking, grocery shopping and family correspondence, continue to be meaningful exercises in the process of developing literacy.

Second and third grades represent a critical time in the course towards literacy. It is often said that children *learn to read* in grades K

*From their earliest moments children are active observers; they absorb much of what they are surrounded by, even if they cannot understand it.*

through 3, and after that, they *read to learn*. In other words, children in kindergarten through third grade are acquiring the skills to make them proficient readers. Through this point, many classroom activities are designed to support the process of learning to read, even though they impart knowledge in various subjects as well. After third grade, a certain level of reading ability is assumed and the primary goal of education becomes the acquisition of knowledge, not the skills needed to acquire the knowledge. A child who cannot read proficiently by the end of third grade will have difficulty learning subject matter from grades 4 through 12. Children who cannot read competently at grade level by the end of third grade are much more likely to drop out of high school (Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1998).

## Second Grade

Instruction in phonics, spelling conventions, punctuation and sentence structure should become more sophisticated during second grade. Students should be reading various types of material including fiction and nonfiction and should be able to distinguish which is which. When students read fiction, the following activities will help build their comprehension skills:

- ★ *creating story maps* or *plot charts* with the class;
- ★ *reciprocal teaching* in which students and teachers assume the role of leader in discussing a specific piece of text;
- ★ *dramatizations of text*; and
- ★ *oral presentations* (Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1999).

Children should be starting to read to gain

information. To that end, instruction in skills and strategies for reading nonfiction text must also be part of a second grade reading program. These skills include:

- ★ an understanding of how text features, such as chapter titles, headings, and visual aids (e.g., diagrams and maps), can help comprehension;
- ★ a beginning understanding that nonfiction text usually follows one of these organizing principles: sequence, description, compare and contrast, problem and solution, cause and effect; and
- ★ how to use graphic organizers, such as Venn diagrams, to organize the information that was read.

Expert teachers will also continue to develop students' vocabulary, spelling, and writing skills. Second-graders should be gaining the ability to recognize and write complete sentences with correct grammar and punctuation. Practice in writing in various formats—reports, short stories, poetry, letters, etc.—will bolster these skills.

## Third Grade

Third grade should see increasingly refined skills and the start of a shift towards reading to learn. Many of the activities presented in second grade are appropriate in third grade, but the resources and materials used by the teacher should be of a more sophisticated nature. Children at this level should be reading longer texts. They should be comfortable using varied resources to glean information from text including various parts of the books they read (index, table of contents, etc.), dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc. Goals of the third-grade reading program include:

- ★ an ability to read more difficult reading material;
- ★ increased fluency and comprehension;
- ★ an ability to recognize prefixes, suffixes, homophones, synonyms, and antonyms and to use this knowledge to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words;
- ★ an ability to understand and write sentences of greater complexity;
- ★ an ability to complete writing assignments of greater length and complexity;
- ★ increasingly refined research skills; and
- ★ an increasingly sophisticated vocabulary (Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1999).

### Fourth and Fifth Grade Overview

In fourth and fifth grades, good reading and writing skills are necessary for success in all



subject areas, including social studies, science, and math, as well as the language arts. A priority for teachers of fourth and fifth-graders is ensuring that students are able to read accurately and fluently in order to comprehend the demands of increasingly complex narrative and informational texts.

In reading, students continue to learn about the elements of literature so that they will comprehend and appreciate a wider range of materials. They should be expected to identify and analyze the characteristics of fiction and nonfiction including:

- ★ folklore (myths, legends, fables)
- ★ fantasy
- ★ biography and autobiography
- ★ historical fiction
- ★ drama
- ★ poetry

When reading narratives, students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of various comprehension skills, which include:

- ★ identifying the main problem of the plot and explaining its resolution;
- ★ recognizing the work's theme;
- ★ comparing and contrasting the actions and motives of characters; and
- ★ the author's purpose for writing.

However, the greatest demand on students in fourth and fifth grades is that they read and

learn from informational, or expository, text. Although students in earlier grades have been exposed to nonfiction as a source of information, “reading to learn” is the primary focus starting in fourth grade. Among the materials fourth-grade students use are:

- ★ subject-area textbooks
- ★ encyclopedia articles
- ★ newspapers and magazines
- ★ primary sources
- ★ reference sources
- ★ web sites

To address the challenges inherent in expository text, expert teachers focus on the features and structures of informational materials. Students should learn how to use text features—the way the text physically looks on the page—to aid their comprehension. They should recognize and use the visual “clues” that direct readers to concepts and ideas. These signals include:

- ★ chapter titles
- ★ headings
- ★ typefaces (boldface words, pronunciations)
- ★ visual aids (maps, graphs, diagrams, charts)

Students at this stage also learn to identify the way the text is organized, or structured, to help them understand and remember the concepts being conveyed. Five common text structures found in informational text are:

- ★ compare and contrast
- ★ problem and solution
- ★ cause and effect
- ★ sequence or time order
- ★ description

Student success in acquiring the necessary skills that will enable them to “read to learn” requires explicit instruction on the part of the teacher, with many opportunities for review and practice. But not all students have the reading skills to handle the challenges of informational texts, with their particular formats and complex subject matter. Students who cannot comprehend grade-level appropriate text should continue to receive intensive instruction, with an emphasis on:

- ★ strategies for decoding multisyllabic words;
- ★ the use of structural analysis in decoding unfamiliar words; and
- ★ systematic practice in reading fluency which includes rate, phrasing, and expression.

*Student success in acquiring the necessary skills that will enable them to “read to learn” requires explicit instruction on the part of the teacher.*



In writing, students should continue to develop their proficiency in creating multiple-paragraph narrative compositions and reports that demonstrate a good command of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. In preparation for writing paragraphs that have a central idea, focus on a particular audience, and demonstrate a clear purpose (to inform, entertain, or persuade), students should use organizational devices such as graphic organizers and outlines. They should also hone their revising and editing skills. Many state curricula expect students to use technology to create documents, so a familiarity with basic keyboarding skills and computer features is needed.

Accompanying the emphasis on reading expository text is the expectation that students write research reports. This requires instruction in the use of sources of information, such as periodicals, encyclopedias, and reference books.

Parents need to continue to model a reading-for-pleasure philosophy so that children continue to be reminded that reading is an important part of a well-rounded life. Parents should make it a point to know what their children are striving to learn, to know what

their children are studying, to understand the approach that teachers expect towards homework and studying, to obtain a summer reading list that will enhance learning in the coming year, and so on. Parents who are able to help their children approach reading, studying, and learning with a consistently positive attitude and a methodical approach to schoolwork establish a framework that will enhance all of their children's school years.

## CONCLUSION

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Although continued research will reveal much more about how the brain works and how people learn, we already know enough to ensure that all children who are capable of learning to read, actually learn how. It requires a concerted effort from parents to stay involved in the learning and teaching process and from colleges and universities to educate future teachers appropriately. Maybe most importantly, it requires the willingness and flexibility on the part of the teachers and administrators to structure schools, curricula and activities in such a manner that every child learning to read is engaged in a process that best meets his or her needs. ★



# *Where the Wild Things Are*

Every child who feels unfairly punished by his or her parents will love Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. How can they resist the triumph of the little boy named Max who, although he has been sent to his room for bad behavior, experiences an adventure he will never forget. Parents, too, appreciate the way in which this book delivers important values to their children in the guise of an imaginative adventure story.

In the book, Max puts on his wolf suit and ventures into the house in search of mischief. He finds it soon and is sent to his room without any supper. But his adventure continues in his room where a magical forest grows, and he is crowned king of all of the wild and terrible things. The monsters, first scary, then lovable, join the rumpus over which Max exercises his magic power.

According to second-grader Yasmin (whose nickname is Meena), "It's sort of cool and crazy because Max gets to travel in a boat to an island where the Wild Things are, and it all happens in just one night!" Meena's four-year-old brother Amar also loved the book, especially the Wild Things, and the boy who gets to be their king.



## *Grade One Book List*

The Day I Had to Play with My Sister

The Doorbell Rang

It Could Always Be Worse: A Yiddish Folk Tale

Millions of Cats

One Morning in Maine

Sing a Song of People

The Sun's Family of Planets

Three by the Sea

Where the Sidewalk Ends

Where the Wild Things Are

## *Chapter 3 - Teaching Struggling Readers\**

For the last decade there has been a renewed focus on improving the instruction of struggling readers. Unfortunately, many instructional programs have produced disappointing results (Allington 1995). Some even complicate the process for the struggling reader by offering pull-out or after-school approaches that are pedagogically or philosophically different from those offered in the regular classroom. As a result, most poor readers never catch up with their peers, and the gap between low and high-level readers broadens as children progress through school (Stanovich 1991, 1993).

Both researchers and teachers are eagerly asking what can be done to help. This chapter is designed to address these questions by providing teachers with principles for instruction of struggling readers along with practical suggestions for the classroom. Students experiencing difficulty in learning to read may do so for many different reasons, ranging from the simple case of inadequate prior instruction to the potentially complex case of a physical or psychological learning difference. This chapter begins by offering a set of general instructional principles designed to help all struggling readers, whatever the source of their reading difficulty. Next, we examine teaching strategies and instructional lessons that best meet the needs of struggling readers whose difficulties with reading stem from certain learning differences, including neurological differences, cognitive style differences, and differences caused by motivational or psychological beliefs and attitudes. Finally, we address the needs of struggling readers whose difficulties are due to cultural differences and the needs of English-as-Second-Language learners.<sup>1</sup>

*\*This chapter has been contributed by Cathy Collins Block, Ph.D., Professor of Education at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas and member of the International Reading Association Board of Directors.*

*1 While much research is ongoing in the areas of gender or maturational differences, dyslexia, multiple intelligences and learning modalities, we have not attempted to address these possible causes for reading difficulties in this chapter.*

## GENERAL INSTRUCTIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR STRUGGLING READERS

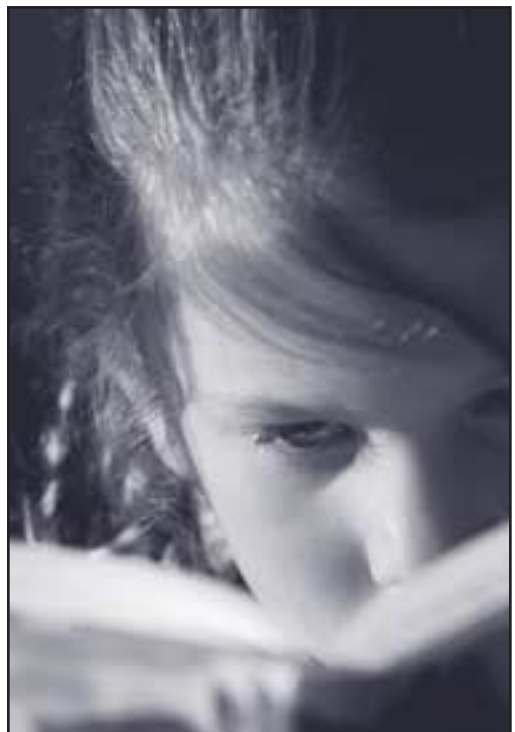
In 2000, the National Assessment of Educational Progress found that on average, seven students in every classroom are struggling readers. Because achieving literacy success is likely to be among these pupils' greatest difficulties, they require special support and instructional assistance. When faced with the daunting task of reading, most strugglers will have tried to camouflage their difficulties so others would not discover them, asked friends for help, felt sorry for themselves because it seemed as if everyone else in the world can read well except them, limited the number of difficult texts that they attempted, used only a few decoding and comprehension strategies, avoided public reading performances, as they become increasingly anxious about making mistakes before peers, and accepted less and less precision and success in their literacy efforts.

These readers need teachers who provide extra cognitive, motivational, and cultural support. They need teachers to change the content and format of their daily instruction. Struggling readers, whatever the cause of their reading difficulty, can more easily realize the joys and benefits of reading when certain research-based instructional principles are followed.

★ **Struggling readers should receive 90 minutes of instruction in literacy each day** (Block and Mangieri 1995a, 1995b, and 1996; Hiebert et al. 1992; Lyons, Place, and Rinehart 1990). This instruction should also include 30 minutes of highly targeted, individualized instruction. Researchers report that even an increase of only five minutes a day in silent reading time results

in one month's reading achievement gains by year's end (Pinnell et al. 1994).

★ **Struggling readers need to have even the smallest reading growth documented and celebrated** (Allington 1995; Chall 1993). Their teachers do not interpret errors as failures, but as information about, and opportunities for, further growth. When success is highlighted during instruction, many struggling students also begin to take ownership over their own assessments, becoming self-appraisers (Bandura 1994). Exemplary teachers ask struggling readers what they want to improve in their reading lessons, and why they would value this learning. Through these answers, teachers can gain important directions for future instruction and information about students' misconceptions about reading (Block 2002; Dowhower 1987; Herman 1985).



*Every struggling reader should have the opportunity to experience multiple instructional approaches until the most effective program is created.*

★ **Struggling readers become more attracted to literacy when they can use books that are of high personal interest because these texts are easier for them to comprehend** (Turner and Paris 1995).

When students read books that they choose, they will internalize new reading strategies faster (Block 1994; Marzano 1992; Samuels 1979). Struggling readers who participated in decisions about their reading lessons scored higher on standardized tests than peers who did not. They were also more likely to continue the work that occurred later in the reading period, even when those tasks were not self-selected (Bandura 1990, 1994).

★ **Struggling readers should have personalized support for some portion of every literacy class.**

When the teacher's availability is limited, struggling readers needing support can (1) work with other students in the class, (2) be tutored by an adult volunteer, (3) interact with older schoolmates who spend 15 to 30 minutes teaching small groups of struggling readers, (4) read materials at the independent and instructional level each day, and (5) use technology. In planning special supports, teachers should ask these questions:

☆ Does the support enable me to ask more from struggling readers than they would ask from themselves without this support?

☆ Does the support sustain engagement for

at least 30 minutes longer than would be possible without it?

☆ Does the quality of the literature used, in and of itself, lead students into other topics, stories, or literary lives? (Block and Mangieri 1995a, 1995b, and 1996; Block, 2002).

★ **Struggling readers should have time to read class materials alone, ahead of the class, at home, with the teacher, or with peers before the lesson using this material begins.**

Before students begin this pre-reading time, most successful teachers ask struggling readers what they want to discuss when the reading session ends, or give the student an idea of what they will be discussing. In this way, these readers will have established a purpose for reading. By repeating this practice, most of these students rapidly learn how to establish their own purposes for reading.

★ **Struggling readers should have teachers who appreciate and build on the literacy accomplishments their students bring to school** (Pikulski 1994).

These teachers use students' strengths to overcome their weaknesses by understanding students' cultural, social, and linguistic strengths and develop a curriculum that focuses on real-world, complex, and meaningful issues in students' lives. By assisting struggling students to connect literacy with out-of-school experiences and increasing opportunities for their higher-



level thinking during literacy instruction, effective teachers help struggling readers master basic skills in the context of more global tasks they will face in the real world.

- ★ **Every struggling reader should have the opportunity to experience multiple instructional approaches until the most effective program is created.** Because the needs of struggling readers are varied, teachers need the flexibility to adopt the visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or tactile instructional methods that best suit their students. For example, a child in a primary grade may be having trouble learning phonetic sounds. If so, the teacher should move to a more visual teaching method for that student, such as using index cards to separate the onset of the word from the rime. The child can then put the cards together to make words using his tactile and visual strengths to compensate for his auditory difficulties. If the child continues to have difficulty with this exercise, the teacher could use different colors or textures of paper to represent the onset and rime further capitalizing on the student's tactile and visual strengths.
- ★ **Struggling readers should have extra time to complete literacy assignments without allowing their slower pace to be perceived as a deficiency by their peers** (Coleman 1992). Because struggling readers' growth is usually not incremental, their teachers must support them when their goals are not achieved, even though those around them are succeeding. Such support keeps struggling students' commitments, interests, and self-concepts high. If these readers are taught that there is no universal "right time" for certain literacy abilities to develop, comparisons to their

peers will be less likely. Consequently, such students usually increase their self-initiated literacy time and positive values for reading.

- ★ **Every struggling reader needs a teacher who knows how to manage a class well.** Research has shown that struggling readers make more progress when their teachers provide structure, clarity, appropriate pace, and maximal student engagement (Scruggs and Mastropieri 1994). Teachers improve class management by taking the steps described in *Figure 3.1*. In addition, teachers may find it helpful to schedule self-selected silent reading times immediately after a recess or lunch period and to instruct students to place materials for their silent readings on their desks before recess so they can begin reading as soon as they enter the room. To minimize unproductive waiting time during class, teachers may assign one student per table to distribute papers and supplies, rather than one or two students for the entire class. Waiting time can also be reduced outside of class and replaced with authentic reading experiences by allowing students to read a favorite book to a group of younger schoolmates in the cafeteria until their bus number is called instead of standing in bus lines for 20 minutes.

## TEACHING STUDENTS WHO HAVE LEARNING DIFFERENCES

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The principles set forth above can be employed to address the needs of all types of struggling readers. After a month or so of careful instruction according to these principles, in most cases, students whose reading difficulties are simply due to inadequate preparation

## *Figure 3.1 Teachers' Classroom Management Skills for Struggling Readers*

### **Assessment of Your Ability to Create Optimal Learning Conditions for Struggling Readers/Writers**

Place a number in the appropriate column to show how many days per week you currently use each procedure. Each day equals one "point".

|   | <b>Frequently</b><br><small>(4 to 5 days/week)</small> | <b>Sometimes</b><br><small>(2 to 3 days/week)</small> | <b>Rarely</b><br><small>(0 to 1 days/week)</small> |
|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Communicating</b>  |  |   |  |
| ★ I clearly define activities for students.   | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I post assignments where students can see them, and they know where to turn in work.      | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ Standards for form and neatness are understood.   | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I have a system for absent students to make up assignments.                               | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ Consequences for incomplete or late work are defined, and students know what they are.    | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I make decisions without hesitation and delegate responsibility where appropriate.        | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I clearly display students' work.   | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I provide various forms of feedback to students.  | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| <b>Monitoring</b>   |  |   |  |
| ★ Each day, I list and prioritize tasks to be done the next day.                            | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I rank daily tasks and complete the most important tasks first.                           | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I have a procedure to monitor students' work in progress.                                 | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I know when students have completed assignments.  | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ Students keep individual records of their work.   | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I use the grading policies and procedures defined by my school.                           | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I set preparation time aside for myself every day.  | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I have a procedure for sending students' work home to parents.                            | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| <b>Teaching Strategies</b>  |  |   |  |
| ★ I allowed struggling readers to read class materials in advance of the rest of the class. | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I gave 90 minutes of reading instruction to struggling readers.                           | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I arranged for personalized support for at least 30 minutes for each struggling reader.   | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| ★ I taught lessons specifically designed to address a struggling reader's need.             | _____  | _____   | _____  |
| <i>Total Points</i>   | _____ +  | _____ +   | _____ +  |

= - \_\_\_\_\_% of 100% of time you are optimizing learning for struggling readers

*According to recent surveys, four or five students in every classroom may have a cognitive processing difficulty.*

should be making good progress with their reading. If it appears, however, that a student is not progressing, the teacher (along with other appropriate experts) should begin to consider whether the student's problems with reading stem from specific learning differences or other causes.<sup>2</sup> Learning differences (also commonly referred to as learning difficulties, learning deficits, or learning disabilities) can be caused by (a) neurological differences, (b) cognitive style variables, or (c) psychological/motivational beliefs. In this section, we describe the characteristics of these learning differences and then suggest teaching strategies and lessons geared toward each type of learning difference.

### Neurological Differences

Scientists have made great progress in understanding brain differences that affect literacy (Jensen 2000). A literacy learning dysfunction can be caused by (a) brain damage, (b) atypical maturation of the brain (one area may develop more slowly than others), (c) a congenital brain defect (underdevelopment of an area of the brain at birth), or (d) attention deficit disorder (ADD), a brain-related learning dysfunction, which has recently been reclassified into two types, ADD and ADD with hyperactivity (ADHD). Students with ADD exhibit behaviors such as distractibility, inattentiveness, short attention spans, and quick frustration with reading/writing tasks. Students with ADHD exhibit the same symptoms, but also have unjustified and unusual amounts of motor activity during reading and other more sedentary tasks (Bosch, Bon, and Schreider

1995; Ingersol and Goldstein 1993). A second category of neurological difference occurs outside of the brain, and includes conditions caused by glandular dysfunction, virus, disease, bleeding during pregnancy, false labor, Rh factor complications, kidney and liver malfunctions, and infections—such as PKU and jaundice, severe ear infections, and infections of the nervous system (Schlozman and Schlozman 2000). Teachers and parents suspecting that a child's reading problems stem from a neurological difference should move swiftly to seek appropriate medical and other experts to help with the diagnosis of that child's learning differences.

### Cognitive Style Variables

Cognitive style variables affect reading success through differences in students' learning modalities or schema weaknesses. *Modalities* are conditions within a learning environment that encourage students to focus intently on the literacy task at hand. The term "*schema*" refers to the pictures, categorizations, and associations that the brain creates whenever a person hears or reads ideas. The way that these pictures, emotions, and associations are stored in the brain is analogous to the way information is stored in a filing cabinet. Schemas are "file folders" containing similar information, bundled together as distinct units. Therefore, if a student's exposures to a concept have been extensive, his or her schema will contain many associations and will become a "thicker folder." For example, if a student enjoys computer work at home, his or her schema for computers will have attached meaning to terms such as *bites*,

<sup>2</sup> Early diagnosis of a child's reading difference is of paramount importance. In this chapter, we cover the issue of diagnosis only to stress its importance and have elected not to address in detail processes for, and complexities of, diagnosis.



*disks, CD-ROM, delete, function keys, macros, sorts, and spellcheck.* This student has a broader schema and, therefore, better comprehension than peers who have never used a computer.

Most students who have weak schema fail to connect their thinking to the content they read. Studies also show that some readers with schema weaknesses lack a concern for reading accuracy, do not have an active problem-solving approach to reading, guess more frequently than peers, and have difficulty breaking down complex sentences and words into simpler ones (Chance 1986). Others spend little time considering a question and choose answers based on only a few clues (Whimbey 1984). According to recent surveys, four or five students in every classroom may have such a cognitive processing difficulty (Chall 1993).

Most theorists agree that successful readers can initiate purposes, recognize meanings, sample details, connect facts, select sentences based on importance relative to the main idea of paragraphs, predict, infer so that they go

beyond available information, engage their schema effectively, become absorbed in ideas as they read and write, correct their thinking, terminate search behaviors, and retain what is read (O'Neil 1991; Ruddell and Ruddell 1994). Unfortunately, struggling readers with any of the foregoing cognitive style differences appear to have "short circuits" that interrupt these processes and inhibit their ability to create meaning from what they read (Jensen 2000; Shapiro, Odgen, and Lind-Blad 1990).

By fourth grade, intelligence becomes more influential in literacy progress, because reading material above the third-grade level often requires a high degree of abstract reasoning. Thus, fourth graders and above who have cognitive style difficulties will likely have more difficulty reading and interpreting implicit meanings. They will benefit from teachers who perform "think alouds" (telling students what they are thinking as they read) so students can duplicate what their teachers do to infer meaning.

Children with cognitive style difficulties may also experience *field dependence*, a difficulty in focusing on individual words and individual elements in an array such as a landscape or page of print. Cognitive style also has to do with a person's tendency toward complexity or simplicity in classifying objects. Complex classifiers, for instance, are more likely to see similarities between words that end in *-tion* (and will group them together for more instant recognition of other words in this family) than are more specific classifiers, who view each word as distinct. Cognitive style also involves a students' global view of causation. For example, some students tend to blame a decoding failure on their *total* inadequacy as a reader, rather than on their lack of skill in analyzing which *part of a word* they did not recognize.

## Motivational/Psychological Beliefs and Attitudes

A third major category of learning difference that a child may experience is caused by his motivational or psychological beliefs and attitudes. *Motivation* is the impulse to direct behavior with a drive toward competence. Motivation can be of two types, external and internal. Externally motivated readers are those who work for rewards they receive from others—such as praise from teachers, recognition from peers, or prizes from contests. Internally motivated readers are those who seek reading because of personal interest and desires to learn, relax, escape, or empathize. Because more struggling readers have difficulty initiating, directing, and sustaining positive literacy experiences (regardless of the drive toward competence they exert), they quickly deplete their intrinsic motivation and positive views of themselves as readers (and about reading). In a study of 21,000 youths, one in five no longer had any significant level of intrinsic motivation to read (O’Neil 1991).



Literacy activities can either be sustained or sabotaged by deep feelings of *self-efficacy* (Bandura 1994). *Self-efficacy* is the degree to which a student expects a successful completion of a task based on an assessment of past performances. It also involves the belief that success results more from ability or effort than from luck (Bandura 1990). A student’s self-efficacy, or his or her self-concept, can be compared to a money sack filled with gold coins. All of a student’s before school experiences, physical and cognitive endowments, and socio-economic environment have either made deposits or withdrawals from this self-concept sack. Students with many deposits can afford to “spend” part of their self-concept in the risk-filled, unpredictable world of decoding and comprehending. These students could invest as much as 20 percent of themselves five times over before a negative level of self-confidence would be reached. On the other hand, the self-concept sacks of struggling readers have often had more withdrawals than deposits by the time they enter your classroom. Thus, when these students are asked to read, they have no positive self-concepts left to spend (Block and Dellamura 2002/2001). Fortunately, these affective factors are even more amenable to instruction than the previously discussed causes of neurologically-based difficulties. With an effective teacher, struggling readers with low motivation or self-efficacy can reestablish a love for learning, develop resiliency, and begin to enjoy reading.

## Teaching Strategies and Lessons for Students with Neurological, Cognitive Style Difference, and Motivational/Psychological Learning Differences

Psychologists have identified three levels of affect in readers and writers: indifference,

*To help struggling students move from letter-name literacy to word literacy, expert teachers use word strips.*

marginal commitment, and total engagement. The following teaching strategies and lessons can assist struggling readers advance from the former to the latter. While the lessons have been grouped according to the learning difference they have been primarily formulated to address, each can yield positive results for all learning differences, whether neurological, cognitive-style-based, motivational, or psychological.

*Teaching Strategies and Lessons for Students with Neurological Differences*

- ★ When placed in testing situations, some struggling readers with neurologically-based literacy difficulties may take hours to respond to one essay question. If necessary, *this extra time should be allowed*. Others benefit from writing ideas on individual index cards before answering their essay question. By laying the cards in front of them, these readers can find the most logical organization of their thoughts. Unless they can manipulate information with their hands, their writing will only reflect a small portion of their knowledge.
- ★ Readers with learning differences can *develop word-analysis abilities through tutorial programs* that make daily use of the Elkonin Method, the Williams ABD Program, or the Lindamood-Bell Auditory Discrimination Program (Bell 1991, Lindamood, Bell, and Lindamood 1992). The Lindamood-Bell materials can be ordered from the address at the end of this chapter.
- ★ Teachers should consider *whether movement options would help their struggling readers*

improve their learning. For example, one boy with a strong kinesthetic learning style found that if he walked around his bedroom as he read, he learned more. Therefore, his teacher assigned his readings in advance so that he could read at home, using kinesthetic movements, before the readings in class. During the time that the rest of the class was reading the assignments he had read at home, this reader created a diagram or object that summarized the main point of the reading, which was shared during full-class conversations about that reading.

- ★ Teachers can *provide support through props* for struggling readers, such as alphabet spelling, words, word strips, and sentences that can be placed on their desks. In this way, peers can also easily point to individual letters when struggling readers work together or with others.
- ★ To help struggling students *move from letter-name literacy to word literacy, an expert teacher uses word strips*. He creates phrases for objects in the room, names them, and labels these objects with tagboard. For example, when it is time to feed the guinea pigs, if he notices that students are having trouble opening the cage with their hands, he may call a struggling reader to his side and suggests that the child find a special pencil to use as a tool—the “guinea pig cage opener.” When the child finds the pencil that works best, the teacher guides that student to write GUINEA PIG CAGE OPENER on an index card, and helps the student attach it to the pencil with yarn. This student then announces to the class what the new object

is, where it will be stored, and places it there for classmates' future use.

- ★ Teachers can also *use tagboard strips on the first day of school for struggling readers with learning disabilities*. By distributing the tagboard strips to pupils, and then passing each desk individually and asking what word or phrase each student wants to learn to read, those students in K through 2 who cannot yet read independently can leave school on the first day with a word or phrase to take home to read.

### *Teaching Strategies and Lessons for Children with Cognitive Style Differences*

- ★ Some readers with learning differences exhibited in visual-processing problems profit from *working on reading materials and texts apart from the rest of their class*. With this adaptation, they can read the material out loud or to themselves without feeling self-conscious. In this separate setting they can also read questions to a tutor, who can verify that they read each word in the text correctly (Lee and Jackson 1992).
- ★ After readers determine their preference for oral or written directions, teachers can accommodate their cognitive processing strengths by ensuring that *directions for each literacy task contain a visual description, an oral explanation, and one to three examples of concepts before they read about them*.
- ★ If students are unable to write their own names, effective teachers make it a point to be beside their desks each time they collect work from the class. While the rest of the students finish their work, the teacher *writes the struggling student's name* (or guide the student's hand to write it) in the upper left-hand corner of the paper so that the student

will develop the habit of looking to that part of all printed materials first.

### *Teaching Strategies and Lessons for Children with Motivational Psychological Differences*

- ★ Teachers should *create a quiet reading space* for students who are struggling due to motivational or psychological beliefs. This may mean providing a headset that blocks out noise; providing a headset that makes a humming sound called "white noise;" or allowing students to read in the library, the lunchroom, or a vacant classroom for 15 minutes alone regularly.
- ★ A struggling reader who exhibits restless behavior when reading or writing on her own may benefit if allowed to *eat dry cereal or sip from a glass of water*. In doing so, the student can rechannel her nervous energy to the activity of eating or drinking. In addition, sipping water can alleviate dehydration that can contribute to decreased ability to sustain a mental focus.
- ★ Teachers can also *create one section of the classroom that has carpet or carpet squares, soft pillows, and an informal atmosphere* for readers who are kinesthetic and enjoy reclining while reading.
- ★ Students may respond well to being offered the *option to work with a peer*, as some readers with auditory preferences grow rapidly when they can discuss their literacy projects, plans, activities, and self-evaluations.
- ★ Many struggling readers can benefit from *learning to read their classmates' names*. The amount of print in books and charts can be overwhelming for some struggling readers, especially in grades K through 3. Because





names are abstract nouns, learning to read them requires the same mental processes and conceptual maturity that students will need when they learn to read nonpictorial nouns. Teachers can therefore help them learn more rapidly if classmates' names are printed often in struggling readers' texts. For example, teachers can make sign-in sheets for daily attendance, check-in sheets for participation in activity centers, check-out lists for the classroom library, name plaques on desks, name plates to display on their classroom lockers, and name cards in large letters under student works posted on bulletin boards.

- ★ *Series and predictable books are effective texts for struggling readers.* The first criterion in selecting a book or activity for struggling readers is the degree to which it will give them a lot to think about, will enable

multiple interpretations, and will elicit their positive responses to literature. Most readers at lower levels of ability also enjoy stories that describe how life is or portray how life could be (Block 1993, 2000). Whenever possible, it is advantageous to allow these readers to read more than one book from a series of books written by the same author, so that characters, settings, or writing style will be familiar. Also, have students read more than one book about the same topic, so that the vocabulary and main ideas will be similar. These books (see *Figure 3.2*) enable less accomplished students to recall schematic stored images more rapidly, increase comprehension, deepen background knowledge, and develop a more advanced vocabulary.

## TEACHING STRUGGLING READERS FROM DIVERSE CULTURES

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to explore how educators can work with the rich cultural and social knowledge base of struggling readers to increase their literacy. Cultural groups define literacy (and what they perceive to be literate behavior) in distinct ways. It is important, therefore, to understand how culture shapes the reading behavior of struggling readers, and how it shapes the literacy events in their homes and communities.

### Cultural Differences

The United States is the most culturally diverse nation in the world. One of the most pressing challenges educators face is the need to increase the literacy of this changing population. To illustrate the complexity of this task, in 2002, a study of a typical K through 8 school in Philadelphia revealed that 53 cultural



### *Figure 3.2 Eliminating Difficulties in Comprehension for Struggling Readers - Series Books*

Directions: Select two books from the same series. Read one book orally as a struggling reader follows the text with you. Ask the student to read second book orally alone. List words missed. Go back and ask questions about books to assess comprehension. Because students should be familiar with content, errors can be interpreted as weaknesses in tying new experiences to background knowledge and lack of adequate decoding and comprehension strengths.

| Reading Level              | Series with Same Characters   | Author  |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| First and<br>Second Grades | Amelia Bedelia<br>Arthur Books<br>Clifford the Big Red Dog<br>Curious George<br>Frog and Toad<br>George and Martha<br>Harry (The Dirty Dog) books<br>Henry and Mudge<br>Little Bear<br>Little Critters<br>Marvin Redpost<br>Mr. Putter and Tabby<br>Nonfiction books  | Peggy Parish<br>Mark Brown (Illustrator)<br>Norman Bridewell<br>Hans Augusto Rey<br>Arnold Lobel<br>James Marshall<br>Gene Zion<br>Cynthia Rylant<br>Else Holmelund Minarik<br>Mercer Mayer<br>Louis Sachar<br>Cynthia Rylant<br>Eric Carle                     |
| Second and<br>Third Grades | Amber Brown<br>Ask a Question about Nature<br>Boxcar Children<br>Encyclopedia Brown<br>Horrible Harry<br>Junie B. Jones<br>The Kids on the Bus<br>Magic School Bus<br>Nate the Great<br>New Kids of the Polk Street School<br>Nonfiction "All About" books<br>Pee Wee Scouts<br>Peter Rabbit  | Paula Danziger<br>Scholastic Books<br>Gertrude Chandler Warner<br>Donald Sobol<br>Suzy Kline<br>Barbara Park<br>Marjorie Weinman Sharmat<br>Joanna Cole<br>Marjorie Weinman Sharmat<br>Patricia Riley Giff<br>Scholastic Books<br>Judy Delton<br>Beatrix Potter |
| Fourth and<br>Fifth Grades | Cracker Jackson<br>Harry Potter<br>Julie of the Wolves<br>Just a Dream<br>Nancy Drew<br>Nothing but the Truth: A Documentary<br>Novel<br>The Pinballs<br>Sleeping Ugly<br>Sounder<br>The Summer of the Swans<br>The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle<br>What Do Fish Have to Do with Anything<br>The Wretched Stone<br>A Year Down Under | Betsy Byars<br>J.K. Rowling<br>Jean Craighead George<br>Chris Van Allsburg<br>Carolyn Keene<br>Avi<br>Betsy Byars<br>Jane Yolen<br>William Howard Armstrong<br>Betsy Byars<br>Avi<br>Avi<br>Chris Van Allsburg<br>Richard Peck                                  |

heritages were present. Most classrooms contained seven cultural heritages for every 25 students. Unfortunately, although attention to identify the impact of culture on literacy has increased, too many culturally diverse students are not performing at the reading levels of Anglo peers, and the gap is not closing (Garcia and Pearson 1994; Jordan, Snow, and Porche 2000).

At the community and family level, sociocultural factors that influence literacy include:

- ★ spoken home language;
- ★ values, beliefs, and goals;
- ★ religion;
- ★ cultural traditions and experiences;
- ★ interpretations of transitions in students' lives;
- ★ students' ways of responding to adults and displaying politeness;
- ★ use of literacy resources and time spent in literacy activities;
- ★ historical background;
- ★ children's perceptions of their teachers;
- ★ nature and importance of reading;
- ★ how a child should behave when an adult is speaking;
- ★ the desirability of answering when unsure;
- ★ the amount of competition or cooperation displayed to peers; and
- ★ the amount of control a child is to assert over his or her own destiny (Raphael et al. 2001; Reyhner and Garcia 1989).

*Cultural discontinuity* describes the internal conflict a student can experience when a disparity occurs between the cultural and social values and activities taught at home and those promoted at school. For example, in some cultural groups, parents and teachers expect a literal account of what students remember. Other cultural groups expect students to explain reasons that underlie what occurred. Still others encourage a child to embellish the story by adding people and actions that were not a part of the story.

When reading specialists and teachers value the richness of struggling readers' cultural differences, they assist them to reach higher levels of literacy success (Cazden 1994; Heath 1983; O'Neill 1991). For example, many struggling readers do not nod their heads or make responses such as "um-hmm" when listening to their teachers. As a result, their teachers may think that these readers are not concentrating or understanding, so they persist in explaining and re-explaining the same point. Some of these students then interpret the teacher's tendencies to dwell on the same point as "talking down" to them, and they become insulted (Hilliard 1993; Ladson-Billings 1995).

Similarly, in an ethnographic study of a California school located in an agricultural/suburban community, Matute-Bianchi (1986) found that approximately half of the students of Mexican descent rejected patterns of traditional literacy instruction such as participating in class discussions, carrying books from class to class, asking teachers for help in front of peers, and making it obvious that they were expending effort to do well in school. In



these students' minds, to participate in both the dominant school culture and their own Chicano culture was not possible.

For another example of cultural discontinuity, in many African-American communities, children are not asked questions to which the parent or caretaker already knows the answer. While children from Anglo households are used to questions like "Where is your nose?" or "Who did we read about today as well as last week?" which are common question types in school, African American students may not answer because they could be ridiculed by peers.

Some struggling readers from certain non-Anglo cultures learn *globally*, meaning they don't learn as well when information is presented in pieces. They profit from seeing the full picture first—e.g., flipping through and skimming a book before reading it, or seeing samples of completed writing before they begin their own. They may also process information

orally. For some students, information isn't concrete until they have responded orally in some way; others need to repeat what the teachers say—and this can be disconcerting to teachers who are accustomed to silence when they are talking.

In summary, every child comes to school in the security of his or her culture, and in his or her mind, the world is a "very small place, complete in itself, and perfect in its completeness" (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines 1988). These diversities bring important new obligations and opportunities to use the special talents each child has developed through his or her culture.

### Students from Urban Cultures

Distinct socially-related attributes of inner city youth have been identified. Students raised in crowded inner cities, regardless of their cultural heritage, profit from instruction that emphasizes their sophisticated imaginations, performance-based abilities, preferences to work with others, oral skills, and game-like activities. For example, a chance to serve as a group leader in charge of a literacy activity will be esteemed by many urban struggling readers and will help build their reading motivation. Opportunities to tell about important events in their lives as well as the freedom to exercise their imaginations as they respond to various texts may also increase their literacy abilities.

For instance, Nicholasa Mohr, a Puerto Rican children's author who has lived in New York City's barrio (Spanish Harlem), in the Bronx, and on the Lower East Side, attributes her success with literacy to the nurturing power of her imagination. In an interview (Zarnowski 1991, 213), Mohr reminisced as follows:

*"During those lean times, when the severe economic problems my family faced seemed too*

*much of a burden on me, I turned to my creative ability. I used my imagination and was able to create something interesting and pleasing where previously there had been a sense of despair. After such a creation, life would seem a little better than before.”*

Zarnowski (1991) recommends that teachers share these kinds of anecdotes with inner-city readers and discuss the importance of literacy for people who have fewer material items in their lives than others. Although the cultural group depicted in Mohr’s works is Hispanic, the inner-city experiences will be familiar to most urban children. Therefore, when they read books in which Hispanic literary figures are central characters—students can discuss what part of their own experiences are universal, and which of those reported by Mohr are unique to urban life.

### Teaching Strategies and Lessons for Students with Cultural Differences

The following research-based teaching strategies and lessons have proven to advance the reading abilities of struggling readers who come from diverse cultural heritages or inner-city settings.

- ★ Read books about *characters who come from cultural and socioeconomical conditions that are similar to the students’* and who overcome obstacles through reading. Several lessons that can be used to infuse such literate cultural models into a classroom appear in Block & Mangieri (2002). Books that contain African American, Hispanic, and Asian heroes are included in Figures 3.3 & 3.4.
- ★ In the first weeks of school, ask all students to describe the dates and histories of cultural events that are important for their families. When each specific date arrives, teachers have planned literacy-based events that re-enact the significance of that day. For example, struggling readers from that cultural group read books and present research reports to the class about that event and why it is important to them.
- ★ Less accomplished readers can make “I” Books using the pattern provided in Figure 3.5. In these little books, students describe themselves either by drawing a picture to complete each of the squares or by writing the words they want with assistance from the teacher. Teachers introduce this project by pointing out the values of learning literacy. Students can understand this concept more rapidly when they create their first book to express their own ideas or feelings.
- ★ Family story projects are activities in which *parents tell a story about something they have never told their child before*. During the evening, the struggling reader writes that story in his or her journal. Alternatively, parents can write the story and ask the teacher to read it with their child. This story enables parents to share a personal interest and literacy experience with their child without having to leave their home or purchase a book. It has been demonstrated that this activity significantly increases the literacy of struggling students from diverse cultural environments (Jordan, Snow, and

*Every child comes to school in the security of his or her culture, and in his or her mind, the world is a “very small place, complete in itself, and perfect in its completeness.”*

*Figure 3.3 - Books That Represent Orally Rich  
Home Cultures and/or African American Ethnic  
Background Experiences*

### Primary

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later) – Elizabeth Howard     | Ragtime Tumpie – Alan Schroeder  |
| Bright Eyes, Brown Skin – Cheryl Hudson and Bernette Ford         | The Talking Eggs – Robert San Souci  |
| The Calypso Alphabet – John Agard                                 | Tar Beach – Faith Ringgold   |
| Carver: A Life in Poems – Marilyn Nelson                          | Tell Me a Story Mama – Angela Johnson  |
| Do Like Kyla – Angela Johnson                                     | The Train to Lulu's – Elizabeth Howard   |
| The Drinking Gourd – F.N. Monjo                                   | The Village of Round and Square Houses – Ann Grifalconi                          |
| Everett Anderson's Goodbye – Lucille Clifton                      | We Keep a Store – Ann Shelby   |
| Flamboyant – Arnold Adoff   | What a Morning! The Christmas Story in Back Spirituals – John Langstaff (Editor) |
| Flossie and the Fox – Pat McKissack                               | When I am Old with You – Angela Johnson  |
| Grandpa's Face – Eloise Greenfield                                | Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ear – Verna Aardema                               |
| Honey, I Love – Eloise Greenfield                                 |  |
| Jafta – Hugh Lewin  |  |
| Jamaica's Find – Juanita Havill                                   |  |
| Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World – Mildred Pitts Walters |  |
| Matthew and Tilly – Rebecca Jones                                 |  |
| Me and Nessie – Eloise Greenfield                                 |  |
| Moja Means One – Muriel Feelings                                  |  |
| Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters – John Steptoe                       |  |
| Nettie Jo's Friend – Pat McKissack                                |  |
| Osa's Pride – Ann Grifalconi                                      |  |
| The Patchwork Quilt – Valerie Flournoy                            |  |

### Intermediate

|   |
|---|
| Anthony Burns: The Defeat and Triumph of a Fugitive Slave – Virginia Hamilton |
| Cousins – Virginia Hamilton   |
| In the Beginning: Creation Stories From Around the World – Virginia Hamilton  |
| Jackie Robinson – David Adler   |
| Nathaniel Talking – Eloise Greenfield   |
| The People Could Fly – Virginia Hamilton                                      |
| Rosa Parks – Eloise Greenfield  |
| Spin a Soft Black Song – Nikki Giovanni                                       |
| Under the Sunday Tree – Eloise Greenfield                                     |

### Figure 3.4 - Books That Represent Hispanic and Asian Cultures

#### Primary

Amigo – Byrd Baylor  
 Arroz Con Leche – Lulu Delacre  
 Coolies – Yin  
 Dance of the Animals – Pura Belpre  
 Hello Amigos! – Tricia Brown  
 The Lady of Guadalupe – Tomie DePaola  
 Las Navidades – Lulu Delacre  
 Once in Puerto Rico – Pura Belpre  
 Tonight is Carnival – Arthur Dorros  
 Uncle Nacho's Hat – Harriet Rohmer  
 Yagua Days – Cruz Martel

#### Intermediate

Baseball in April and Other Stories – Gary Soto  
 Cuentos! Tales From the Hispanic Southwest – José Griego y Maestas and Rudolfo A. Anaya  
 Esperanza Rising – Pam Muñoz Ryan  
 Going Home – Nicholasa Mohr  
 The Hispanic Americans – Milton Meltzer  
 The Most Beautiful Place in the World – Ann Cameron  
 Rituals of Survival: A Woman's Portfolio – Nicholasa Mohr  
 A Single Shard – Linda Sue Park  
 Stories from el Barrio – Piri Thomas  
 Taking Sides – Gary Soto

Porche 2000). It also enables teachers to root future instruction in the culture that the story illustrates, and it raises struggling readers' self-concept, motivation, and value for literacy.

- ★ Struggling students from diverse cultural and economic settings *increase their literacy by writing about their lives*. In one effective lesson, teachers assign students to write their own autobiographies, including the important parts of their lives and descriptions of their abilities that they value. Then, teachers pair each student with a partner. They ask each student to write his partner's biography. In these biographies, the writers are to report the abilities and qualities of their partner that they appreciate. Then, the partners share the autobiographies and biographies with each

other. As a follow-up, teachers can ask students to discuss why differences existed and to write about what they learned about themselves and their abilities.

Additional resources for struggling readers from diverse cultural settings appear at the end of this chapter.

### TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)

Although Spanish is the predominant second language represented in schools, more than 20 other home languages may be present in a single school (Numbers and Needs 1991). The gap between second-language speakers and their English-speaking peers widens increasingly

### *Figure 3.5 Diagnosis and Assessment*

#### **Finding the Degree to Which Individual Struggling Readers' Home Literacy Culture Supports Literacy Achievement**

Directions: During the first week of school, ask students to complete this assessment tool, which embraces their social and cultural richness. Count the number of times literacy is listed and record that number. Later in the year, ask students to write a second "I" Book. Compare the number of times literacy-related items are mentioned to the number from the first week of school.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Page 1</p> <p>At home, I like to _____.</p>         | <p>Page 2</p> <p>I can _____.</p>                      |
| <p>Page 3</p> <p>The books I read are about _____.</p> | <p>Page 4</p> <p>In my room at home, I have _____.</p> |

throughout the school years. One reason this occurs is because less effective teachers typically do not expect ESL students to answer in complete sentences or make inferences (Brookhart and Rusnak 1993). The National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning has identified several principles to guide struggling ESL readers to literacy success (Moll 1999).

- ★ **Principle 1.** Bilingualism is an asset and should be fostered in students.
- ★ **Principle 2.** There is an ebb and flow to children's bilingualism. It is rare for both languages to be equally effective in all children.
- ★ **Principle 3.** There are different cultural patterns in language use among bilingual students.

★ **Principle 4.** For some bilingual students, code switching, which is the interchanging of two different languages in a single sentence, is a normal language phenomenon.

★ **Principle 5.** Bilingual children come to learn a second language in many different ways based on the number of opportunities their teachers make available to them to speak both languages in the classroom, and how individually motivated they are to learn both English and their first language.

★ **Principle 6.** Language must be used to communicate meaning; responses to students' oral expressions, whether in their first language or English, must acknowledge the meaning they have conveyed.

★ **Principle 7.** Language learning flourishes best in a language-rich classroom.

- ★ **Principle 8.** Children should be encouraged to experiment with language.
- ★ **Principle 9.** Paying particular care to the wording of questions, the pace of a lesson, and the strategy used to activate prior knowledge will significantly increase students' achievement in learning their first language and English.
- ★ **Principle 10.** All classroom activities should engage bilingual students' "funds of knowledge."

Funds of knowledge refer to resources and experiences available to bilingual students outside of school. Research has shown that when teachers tap into English language learners' funds of knowledge, both their oral language and their academic achievement will accelerate. Students whose teachers translate each learning experience into knowledge with real-world examples enable bilingual students to visualize incidents in their life outside of school and to express these mental images during reading lessons.

### Teaching Strategies and Lessons for Students Learning English as a Second Language

It has been demonstrated that the following lessons significantly increase the literacy abilities of struggling students who are learning English as a second language.

- ★ Teachers can assess the level at which second-language speakers can read English

by asking these students to *write a list of ten English words and analyzing the vowel/consonant writing to detect overgeneralizations*. Also, by ascertaining which vowel sounds in English don't exist in each student's native language, the teacher will be able to coach second-language learners in the vowel sounds they need.

- ★ Struggling ESL readers need literacy activities that build their (a) *English sight-word knowledge* presented in Figure 3.6, (b) *semantic and syntactical English language clue use* as presented in Figure 3.7, and (c) *phonic generalizations* as presented in Figure 3.8.
- ★ ESL students *enjoy reading books printed in both their first language and English with an English-speaking friend*. Before the first tutoring session, teachers demonstrate to the pairs of students how to read together by distributing copies of a book printed in one language on one page with the same text printed in English on the facing page. Students begin a page by reading one line in the ESL student's first language and then the corresponding line in English. They stop and ask each other what the line means, proceeding in this manner to the end of the page. The English-speaking students then read the complete page in English alone, allowing the ESL students to refer silently to the text in their first language or in English, whichever they can read most effectively. The ESL students describe what they comprehended. After all separate pages have been read in English once, the partners

*Research has shown that when teachers tap into English language learners' funds of knowledge, both their oral language and their academic achievement will accelerate.*



read the full book together in English and discuss the meaning of the book as a whole. Evaluating pairs at the end of every three-week period is valuable for recording the number of books read, the number of new English words learned, and the increases in comprehension that have occurred.

- ★ Because ESL students tend not to perform as well on high-stakes state and norm-referenced standardized tests of comprehension, a 30-minute portion of reading instruction each week should be spent in small groups, with intensive instruction in the following comprehension strategies. Use books from *Figure 3.4* or *3.5* that specifically teach American historical particulars in *English*, to instruct students how to:

- ☆ make inferences,
- ☆ attend to details,
- ☆ interpret figurative language,
- ☆ draw on evidence from disparate parts of the text as well as on their personal experiences of the social world represented in the texts,
- ☆ attend to authors' writing styles,
- ☆ establish a purpose,
- ☆ recognize story grammar,
- ☆ identify paragraph functions,
- ☆ summarize by deleting duplication, condensing similar idea, restating main points into fewer words, removing irrelevant details,

- ☆ image, and,

- ☆ metacognite.

During these sessions, group leaders (teacher, peer, trained volunteer, or upperclass school mate) should repeatedly model their thinking processes. These demonstrations will be most powerful when the group leader points to specific sentences, words, and paragraphs in books when he or she is using distinct comprehension processes to obtain a clear, richer meaning.

- ★ After several weeks of comprehension instruction, ESL students (and each of the special populations described in this chapter) will benefit from the additional supports described in *Figure 3.9*. These supports are self-assessments to be placed beside books and all textbooks when struggling students read alone silently. *Figure 3.9* focuses all struggling readers' minds on the purpose of understanding what they are reading, and provides an opportunity for struggling readers to reflect upon and write about how and what they comprehended after they finished reading.

## CONCLUSION

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A child's failure to learn to read will have life-long ramifications. The need to bring struggling readers up to grade level and to help them develop or restore their love of reading is therefore an urgent matter worthy of the immediate attention of administrators, teachers, and parents alike. With the guiding principles and practical lesson suggestions outlined in this chapter, teachers will have tools at their disposal to craft a classroom environment that supports the needs of all of

## *Figure 3.6 - Diagnosis and Instructional Interventions To Build Sight Word Knowledge*

**Diagnosis:** Ask students to read the words on a sight word list (e.g. a Dolch word list). Students should be able to read 100 words by the end of kindergarten, 200 by the end of first grade and 300 by the end of second grade. If a student is less accomplished than desired, the following Tier 3 and 4 instructional intervention can be initiated.

**1. For younger struggling readers, create activities.** Provide an experience for a student, talk about the experience, have the student dictate a story about the experience and read the story.

**2. Use visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile experiences.**

- ★ Print unknown words on index cards.
- ★ Tell students to look carefully at each word as you hold it up and pronounce it.
- ★ Then ask them to close their eyes and picture the word.
- ★ Have students try to write the word from memory.
- ★ Last, show each index card to the students again for comparison with the original word.

**3. Label objects.** Label objects around your classroom and have students attach the printed word to the object. Have students create picture dictionaries or folders: They can cut pictures from magazines and newspapers; paste them into a book or inside a folder using a separate page for each letter, then label the pictures.

**4. Create word banks.** Word banks are student-selected collections of words they want to learn to recognize at sight. When a student identifies a word she wants to learn, the teacher writes it on an index card. This index card is placed on a ring or in a box as the student's own personal collection.

**5. Have students make their own fishing pole game.** All the students need is a string and piece of Velcro (or a magnet) tied to the string for the pole. They can make word cards shaped like fish, with Velcro (or paper clips) fastened to the head area of the fish. Using the fishing pole, the student catches a fish and reads the word printed on it.

**6. Have students locate words in newspapers.** Ask students to locate words in newspapers and create stories from words found in articles, headings or ads.

## *Figure 3.7 - Diagnostic and Instructional Interventions to Build Semantic and Syntactical Context Clue Use*

**Diagnosis:** Display 10 pictures. Present 10 sentences to students, leaving out a word in each. Students must select a picture that correctly completes the sentence. Discuss why the specific picture was selected. If a student misses 3 or more, offer the instructional interventions listed below. For example:

Pictures: a cat, a dog, a car

We drove to the store in a \_\_\_\_\_.

**Diagnosis:** Selecting words to complete a series of sentences (grades 2-12). Write 3 sentences, each with a word missing, and show the students 3 different words or phrases to be used in completing the sentences. Be certain all 3 terms begin with the same letter. Read the sentences to the students, then have them select the word that properly completes each sentence. Example:

Words: fruit, forty-yard dash, football

1. We played \_\_\_\_\_ at the park.
2. We ate \_\_\_\_\_ for dessert.
3. We ran the \_\_\_\_\_ for the track team.

If students do not get all 3 correct, offer the following instructional interventions.

### **1. Supply missing words in sentences.**

Have the students read sentences with a word missing. They should then enter words into the blank spaces and tell how they knew the correct choice in each case. Example:

Our car is \_\_\_\_\_.

- red
- blown
- crying

### **2. Supplying missing words that contain the same initial consonant.**

Give students a sentence with a word missing, but supply an initial consonant for the missing word. Students must supply an appropriate word that begins with that initial consonant. Then ask them to write a second sentence that could follow the first one, also using the word in the blank. Then ask the students to tell you how they knew that sentence would make sense.

The dog b\_\_\_\_\_ at the gray cat.

**3. Homograph sentences.** Write pairs of sentences that contain homographs (words that are spelled the same but pronounced differently). Then encourage students to use context as they read the pairs of sentences while pronouncing the homographs correctly.

**4. Silent reading time.** Provide silent reading time so that students can practice reading words in context. Students may want to engage in buddy reading or read with their reading specialists beside them during this time. Instruct the readers to stop and discuss each time they decode an unknown word using semantic and syntactical context clues. The readers' partners (or the specialists) are to write down the words decoded correctly by semantic and syntactical clues.

### *Figure 3.8 - Teaching Specific Phonic Generalizations or Phonetic Elements*

- ★ Select the phonic element you wish to teach.

- ★ Tell your students the name of the phonic element you will be teaching them, and write the letters that stand for it on the board.

Th      th

- ★ Write a list of words containing the element. Pronounce the words for students. Then have the students pronounce the words along with you while they listen to the sound being taught.

their                  think  
thump                Thanksgiving

- ★ Ask students to contribute additional words that contain the same sound.
- ★ Finally, have students listen as you say words. Some of the words should contain the sound; some should not. Have students identify those words containing the sound.

- ★ Play **Word-Vowel Bingo**. To do so, make bingo cards that contain words with blank spaces where the vowels belong. Instead of using blank chips for markers, students use markers with vowels and vowel combinations printed on them. As a word is read, students spell the word on their card, using the appropriate vowel or vowel-combination marker.

b\_\_\_\_d      b\_\_\_\_t      e      a      oa

l\_\_\_\_te      m\_\_\_\_t

- ★ Play **Vowel Checkers**. Place words containing the vowel sounds on which you are working on the spaces where students move the checkers. If a student hops over or lands on a space, the student must think of another word that contains the same vowel sound.

- ★ Play **Bingo**. Give students bingo cards with different consonants on them. As you read a word, the student covers the appropriate consonant heard at the beginning of the word. (This activity can be expanded to include consonants at the end or middle of words).

- ★ Play **Riddles**. For example, follow a review of the hard and soft sounds of c and g, you might say, "I am thinking of something that begins with the sound of a hard g. It has four legs. It has horns, and it can be found on a farm. It likes to eat just about anything. What is it?" (Answer: goat)

### Figure 3.9 - Comprehension Strategies Assessment Forms

Here are two types of self-assessment forms that can be adapted in many ways by changing the strategies evaluated. Use them separately on different days to provide opportunities for students to express their abilities in their own words.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Book title \_\_\_\_\_

#### Comprehension Strategies

Underline all the strategies you used today to help yourself understand the book you are reading. Circle the strategy you used the most.

I thought about what I already knew.

I made predictions and read to find out if they came true.

I reread what I didn't understand.

I made pictures in my head.

I asked someone to explain what I didn't understand.

2. Give an example of how you used one of the strategies you underlined or circled.

---



---



---

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Book title \_\_\_\_\_

#### Comprehension Strategies

1. What strategies did you use today to help yourself understand the book you are reading?

---



---

2. Explain how one of the strategies you listed helped you understand something in the book.

---



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Source: Adapted from L. Rhodes (1994), *Windows into Literacy: Assessing Learners K-8*, p. 102.  
Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

their readers, including those who struggle. Administrators must, in turn, support their teachers, allowing them the flexibility to address the individual needs of their students who may have diverse learning styles. This means prioritizing resources for reading programs, including providing instructional resources for all types of learners, getting paraprofessional, volunteer or other assistants into the classroom, and providing excellent faculty development opportunities for teaching staff. With a concerted effort on a school-wide level, struggling readers will have the best opportunity to become reading success stories.

## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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### Special Reading Approaches for Struggling Readers:

Center for Success in Learning, 1700 Preston Road, Suite 400, Dallas, TX 75202

Dunn & Dunn Learning Center, 1276 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, New York, New York 10036

HOTS Program, Dr. Stanley Pogrow, School of Education, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 61790

Slingerland Multisensory Approach to Language Arts, The Slingerland Institute, 1 Bellevue Center, 411 198<sup>th</sup> Avenue, N.E., Bellevue, WA 98004

Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes, Corporate Headquarters, 416 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

The Aylett Royal Cox Institute, 4111 North Central Expressway, Suite 201, Dallas, TX 75204-2197

Child Development Division, Dyslexia Laboratory, Scottish Rite Hospital for Crippled Children, 2222 Welborn Street, Dallas, TX 75219

### Support for Parents Of Students With Learning Disabilities

Learning Disabilities Association, 4156 Library Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234

### Books about Learning Problems

Finding a Friend – Zilpha M. Booth

He's My Brother – Joe Lasker

My Name is Brain Brian – Jeanne Betancourt

My Name is Not Dummy – Elizabeth Crary

A Special Kind of Sister – Lucia B. Smith

Summer of the Swans – Betsy Byars

Take Wing – Jean Little

Will the Real Gertrude Hollings Please Stand Up? – Sheila Greenwald

## RESOURCES FOR READING MATERIALS THAT EMBRACE STUDENTS' CULTURAL AND SOCIAL RICHNESS

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The following references can increase your knowledge about specific cultures.

***Southeast Asian Refugee Youth: An Annotated Bibliography.*** Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Project, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55401.

**Los Angeles County Public Ethnic Resource Centers: *The American Indian, Asian Pacific, African American, Chicano*.** Los Angeles County Public Library, ERIC ED 298 962.

**Vietnamese Culture Kit.** Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Research Institute for Studies in Education, Ames IA, 50013, ERIC ED 149 602.

**A Manual for Teachers of Indochinese Students.** Intercultural Development Research Association, San Antonio, TX 78284, ERIC ED 205 663.

**Some Hints to Work with Vietnamese Students.** Arizona State Department of Education, Phoenix, AZ 85026, ERIC ED 133 383.

**Teaching Multicultural Literature in Grades K-8.** Edited by Violet J. Harris. Christopher Gordon Publishers, Norwood, MA 02062

**Multicultural Review.** Greenwood Publishing Group, 88 Post Road West, P.O. Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881-5007. (A journal with reviews of multicultural children's literature, "dedicated to a better understanding of ethnic, racial, and religious diversity").

**Multicultural Publishers Exchange.** P.O. Box 9869, Madison, WI 53715; 1-800-558-2110. (Publisher of books by and about people of color).

**African Imprints Library Services.** 410 West Falmouth Highway, P.O. Box 350, West Falmouth, MA 02574. (Provides recent children's books available from 20 African nations.)

**Hispanic Books Distributor.** 1665 W. Grant Road, Tucson, AZ 85745. (Selections are

evaluated according to subject matter, literary quality, and format, with publications ranging from preschoolers to middle school readers, as well as resource books. Also has a *Hispanic Books Bulletin* to which you can subscribe.)

**The Kiosk.** 19223 DeHavilland Drive, Saratoga, CA 95070; 408-996-0667 (Publishes games, posters, diplomas, bookmarks and stationery in several languages.)

**Mariuccia Iaconi Book Imports.** 1110 Mariposa, San Francisco, CA 94107; 415-285-7393. (Publishes Spanish language records and books for children, including a "big book" series.)

**World Wide Games.** Colchester, CT 06415. (Exceptional handcrafted games from around the world).

**Center for Southeast Asia.** 260 Stephens Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94270.

**Indochinese Materials Center.** U.S. Department of Education, Region VII, 601 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Kansas City, MO 64106.

**Southeast Asian Learning Project.** Long Beach Unified School District, 701 Locust Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90813.

**Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.** School of Languages and Linguistics, Georgetown University, Washington, DC 20009.

**Tundra Books of Northern New York.** P.O. Box 1030, Plattsburgh, NY 12901. (Specializes in Canadian, French/English bilingual books for children.) ★

# *Charlotte's Web*

*"Is there anything in the universe more beautiful and protective than the simple complexity of a spider's web."*

*- E.B.White*

It is no wonder the story of *Charlotte's Web* earned author Elwin Brooks White (or E.B. White as he is known) a special place in the hearts of many—both young and old. His fondness for spiders no doubt allowed his keen imagination to soar and create a wonderful story of two unlikely friends, Wilbur the pig and Charlotte the spider.

The pig and the spider are good friends. The pig was afraid he would be eaten for Christmas dinner. The spider saves him by spinning webs of words. A favorite classroom read, Derrick, age 8, says the kids in his class like this book because the "animals all talk" and "help each other out."

In the eyes of a 42-year old "kid," Mike, *Charlotte's Web* is a story one will remember. "The interaction of the animals and their playful personalities are details I remember from my childhood and was a favorite I shared with my own children."

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E. B. WHITE





## *Grade Two Book List*

Abiyoyo

A Christmas Carol

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible,  
No Good, Very Bad Day

Charlotte's Web

Elaine and the Flying Frog

The Five Chinese Brothers

In a Pumpkin Shell

The Labors of Hercules

Ramona Quimby

Red Fox and His Canoe

## *Chapter 4 - Faculty Development - Hire and Inspire a Quality Team*

Charter schools are goal-oriented organizations. The word *accountability* with all of its implications, crops up every time charter schools are discussed. And while the focus on student outcomes is the bottom line, charter schools must establish criteria and set goals for the front line—teachers—as well. Teacher quality accounts for a “larger portion of the variation in student test scores than all other characteristics of a school” (Goldhaber 2002). Yet there are very few aspects of teacher quality (such as where teacher candidates received their education or how that institution saw fit to educate them) that schools can control *except* that they hire the best teachers they can find and continually supply them with opportunities to refine their skills. Charter schools, because of their flexibility, may be more able than most traditional public schools to draw the best teachers from various sources and then support them with meaningful professional development programs that align with the goals of the school.

This chapter will discuss where charter schools administrators and organizers can find the right teachers for their organizations and how best to support both beginning teachers (using induction programs) and experienced teachers (using professional development programs). We also provide a “teacher readiness quiz” that demonstrates the level of knowledge those who teach reading should possess (*Figure 4.1*). Finally, for the purpose of creating a meaningful professional development program for primary grade reading/language art teachers, we provide examples of the domains of teacher knowledge relevant to reading instruction.

## WHO SHOULD CHARTER SCHOOLS HIRE?

Once a charter school has decided upon its mission and the goals it must meet to fulfill that mission, the next step is to hire the staff to meet those goals. The National Research Council's report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, outlined the fields of knowledge in which educators, both pre-service and in-service, must be well grounded in order to teach reading effectively. These areas of knowledge, widely confirmed by other experts in the fields of education research and literacy education, are:

- ★ an “understanding of the nature of language that is firmly based on linguistic research about phonological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and rhetorical structures;”
- ★ an understanding of the process of producing and understanding spoken and written language;
- ★ an understanding of the alphabetic principle and “the ways in which oral and written language contrast and support each other;”
- ★ an understanding of child development that “focuses on oral language development, emergent literacy development, and the interaction of development and instruction affecting the processing of alphabetic print and getting meaning from it;” and
- ★ coursework and practical experience that teach future educators “how to choose among, create, and work with texts and activities so as to best support children’s learning and monitor their progress, providing additional activities that challenge

or assist individual children as needed” (Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1998).

A study conducted in 2001, reinforced findings by Louisa Cook Moats from 1994 (Bos et al. 2002). Many teachers are still confused about the differences between phonological awareness and phonics and would be unable to teach reading explicitly to children who are struggling readers. It is important to note that this study, *What Preservice and Inservice Teachers Believe and Know About Early Reading Instruction*, also found that teachers of all experience levels expressed positive attitudes toward explicit instruction in the mechanics of language acquisition; it’s just that many of them do not possess sufficient knowledge of concepts of the English language to be able to teach it to all children.

For an administrator charged with the responsibility of hiring the teaching staff, a clear vision of what each teacher is required to know to teach subject matter is imperative. Should



*Researchers in Tennessee found that the effects of teacher quality – good or bad – persisted for years after a student had a particular teacher.*

reading teachers have a strong background in literature? Should their knowledge of phonemic awareness be demonstrable? These are just two examples of the many questions that administrators have to answer. Researchers Dale Ballou and Michael Podgursky conclude in their 1999 study, *Teacher Training and Licensure*, that principals and superintendents have access to the best information about teacher candidates and school needs, and that the most progress towards student achievement will be made if they make personnel decisions that are in the best interest of the school. Indeed, Ballou and Podgursky state that “no one in public education is in a better position to decide which teacher is right for which school.”

While it is helpful to those hiring teachers to know that two of the strongest indicators of a teacher’s ability are subject matter expertise (e.g., a degree in literature) and strong verbal ability (as evidenced by high SAT scores) (Abell Foundation 2001; Goldhaber 2002) and that a candidate should know what phonemic awareness means, it is often simply not enough information to go on. Many charter school principals require more than diplomas or certification as evidence of ability. The Einstein Montessori School in Florida, for instance, requires that teachers have both a degree in the subject area they will be teaching and experience using that degree as well. Schools such as the Harlem Day Charter School in New York and the Rapoport Academy in Texas require that teacher candidates demonstrate their competency by teaching classes that the

principals observe and evaluate before a position is offered.

Charter school hiring flexibility often includes the latitude to seek qualified teachers from backgrounds that traditional public schools cannot consider. Because they assumed the mantle of accountability, charter schools in some states are relieved of the requirement that they hire only traditionally trained and/or licensed teachers or teachers who are members of a professional union. Where it is legally permitted, many charter school administrators identify the ability to hire uncertified teachers as “an important source of recruitment flexibility” (Podgursky and Ballou 2001). While the evidence is not yet overwhelming, Goldhaber and Brewer conclude in their 1999 report, *Teacher Licensing and Student Achievement*, that students of teachers who come from alternate routes “do at least as well as pupils of traditionally licensed teachers.” And while Goldhaber and Brewer focused their research on math and science for their report, they determined that teachers with either a subject area degree (e.g., math or science, rather than education) or subject area certification, outperformed teachers without any subject matter preparation. This may be true for teachers in all other subject areas, reading included.

Nearly every state in the country now has alternate certification programs. And over the last decade or so, in response to massive teacher shortages, several programs have been created to encourage people from different

backgrounds to enter the teaching profession (e.g., Teach for America and Troops to Teachers). According to a study by Feistritz (2001), many of those who approach teaching from alternate routes share certain characteristics. For example, they:

- ★ are older;
- ★ are people of color;
- ★ are male;
- ★ have academic degrees other than education; and
- ★ have experience in an occupation other than teaching.

In addition, studies indicate that teachers who come from alternate routes generally have high retention rates which may be because:

- ★ they are older, more experienced individuals;
- ★ their preparation for certification probably included intensive, field-based, in-classroom training; and
- ★ they have continual guidance through a mentor or master teacher (Feistritz 2001).

Because research indicates that many teachers who come through alternate routes are making a “definitive decision to teach...and have a strong commitment to helping young people learn and develop” (NCEI 2002), the characteristics in both of the above lists may bear special consideration by charter schools in urban settings or that have a high percentage of minority students.

The preceding discussion focusing on alternate sources of teacher candidates is not designed to indicate that any one kind of teacher training or experience is paramount to another. The point is that good teachers come from various educational and experiential backgrounds; it is up to the school administrator to hire the best and the brightest. And since charter school administrators often *can* hire teachers from outside the norm, it may be advantageous for them to take a close look at qualified individuals from all backgrounds.

Organizers, administrators, board members, and parents are well-advised to determine, within the context of the school’s goals, what credentials and abilities will be required of the school’s faculty and the methods by which potential candidates are evaluated against those standards. All efforts in this regard will have lasting positive effects on both the educational environment and the quality of instruction offered to students.

## SUPPORTING A TALENTED FACULTY

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Having hired a teaching staff that complements the school’s mission, the best way to retain effective and enthusiastic teachers is to support them. Because most school faculties are composed of both new and experienced teachers, support will necessarily take two forms. Programs which support inexperienced teachers, such as induction or mentoring programs, can make the difference between the continuity of a consistent staff and the controlled chaos brought on by the yearly replacement of large numbers of teachers. Professional development programs for all teachers—beginning and experienced—have been shown to improve teachers’ perceptions

## Figure 4.1 - Language Knowledge Evaluation

(Answer Key and Glossary at the end of this chapter)

1. How many speech sounds are in the following words? Remember that the speech sounds may not be equivalent to the letters. For example, the word *spoke* has four phonemes: /s/, /p/, /ō/, and /k/. Write the number of phonemes in the blank to the right of each word.

thrill \_\_\_\_\_

ring \_\_\_\_\_

shook \_\_\_\_\_

does \_\_\_\_\_

fix \_\_\_\_\_

know \_\_\_\_\_

sawed \_\_\_\_\_

quack \_\_\_\_\_

2. In the following words, indicate the letters and letter combinations that correspond to each speech sound in the word. For example, the word *stress* has five phonemes, each of which is represented by a letter or letter group: s / t / r / e / ss. Now try these:

best \_\_\_\_\_

fresh \_\_\_\_\_

scratch \_\_\_\_\_

though \_\_\_\_\_

laughed \_\_\_\_\_

middle \_\_\_\_\_

chirp \_\_\_\_\_

3. For each word on the left, determine the number of syllables and the number of morphemes:

|            | Syllables | Morphemes |
|------------|-----------|-----------|
| bookworm   | _____     | _____     |
| unicorn    | _____     | _____     |
| elephant   | _____     | _____     |
| believed   | _____     | _____     |
| incredible | _____     | _____     |
| finger     | _____     | _____     |
| hogs       | _____     | _____     |
| telegram   | _____     | _____     |

Source: L. C. Moats (2000). *Speech to Print – Language Essentials for Teachers*.  
Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing

4. Read the first word in each line and note the sound that is represented by the underlined letter or letter cluster. Then select the word or words on the line that contain the same sound. Underline the words you select.

|                   |          |         |        |          |
|-------------------|----------|---------|--------|----------|
| a. <u>p</u> ush   | although | sugar   | duty   | pump     |
| b. <u>w</u> eigh  | pie      | height  | raid   | friend   |
| c. <u>d</u> oes   | miss     | nose    | votes  | rice     |
| d. <u>i</u> ntend | this     | whistle | baked  | batch    |
| e. <u>r</u> ing   | sink     | handle  | signal | pinpoint |

5. A closed syllable is one that

---

An open syllable is one that

---

6. Write a definition or explanation of the following:

a. Consonant cluster

---

b. Consonant digraph

---

c. Prefix

---

d. Why is phonemic awareness important?

---

e. How is decoding related to reading fluency and comprehension?

---



7. Underline the letters that stand for the schwa sound (some words have more than one):

telephone

agenda

along

precious

imposition

unless

8. Underline the consonant blends (not all words have blends):

knight

climb

wreck

napkin

squished

springy

9. When is *ck* used in spelling?

---

10. What letters signal that a *c* is pronounced /s/?

---

11. List all of the ways to spell “long o.”

---

12. List all of the ways to spell the consonant sound /f/.

---

13. When adding a suffix to a word ending with silent *e*, what is the spelling rule?

---



of their own efficacy (US ED 2000b) and student achievement (Rényi 1996).

### New Teacher Mentoring

In September 2001, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) issued a policy brief, *Beginning Teacher Induction: The Essential Bridge*. While this document concerns itself largely with programs at the state level, it makes several important points about the ways that schools can support new teachers whether they are recent college graduates or mature individuals who have come to teaching as a second career. In general, the brief recommends that new teachers be provided “a hands-on opportunity to link the theory of instruction learned in their teacher preparation programs with the practice of classroom teaching.” The AFT lists five characteristics of effective induction programs:

- ★ *All beginning teachers participate* whether they are licensed through traditional or alternate means, especially teachers with “emergency” certification.
- ★ *All new teachers are assigned a qualified mentor* who should be matched for grade level and subject area and who should be given a reduced teaching load in order to make it possible for them to spend time with those they are guiding.
- ★ *New teachers should participate in the induction program for at least one year and possibly two.* This gives them an opportunity to experience all the facets of teaching—lesson planning, managing a classroom, adjusting to meet student needs, learning to interact effectively with families, grading, etc.—under the watchful eye of a mentor.
- ★ *Beginning teachers should have reduced teaching loads* so that they can spend time observing other teachers, working with their mentors, conferring with colleagues, and reflecting on their own teaching.
- ★ *All new teachers should be reviewed* by their mentors and this review could be a decision-making factor for full certification and retention by the school.

Charter schools may be most effective in implementing these types of programs because they often can schedule the workday so that both the teacher and the mentor have the time to participate in the program. They can also use volunteers and classroom aides creatively to provide support for participants.

### Professional Development

While a 1996 survey found that teachers rank their own teaching experience as the most important influence in developing their competence (Feistritzer 1999), the massive

amount of new knowledge relating to how people learn to read means that it is imperative that teachers continually be exposed to the latest information, opportunities to explore what it means to their students, and ways in which it can inform their instructional practice. Research indicating that there is a direct correlation between in-school professional development (PD) and student achievement is emerging. For both novice and experienced teachers, it appears that sustained and in-depth teacher learning results in improved student learning (Rényi 1996; US HHS 2000).

In 2000, the Learning First Alliance (LFA) published *Every Child Reading: A Professional Development Guide*. This document calls for professional development to take place in the following context:

- ★ Everyone who affects student learning should be involved.
- ★ Student standards, curricular frameworks, textbooks, instructional programs, and assessments should be closely aligned with one another.
- ★ Sufficient time should be allotted for participation both during the work day and throughout the school year.
- ★ The expertise of colleagues, mentors and outside experts should be accessible and engaged as often as necessary.
- ★ Strong instructional leadership should be present.
- ★ Sufficient funding and a commitment to long-range planning should be present.

Designing an appropriate professional development plan is no small task but charter schools may have an advantage over traditional public schools. The act of creating a new school—deciding goals for student achievement, choosing the curricula to achieve those outcomes, etc.—sets the stage whereby a meaningful PD plan that aligns with those goals can also be created early in the process with buy-in from all concerned members of the school community.

When the staff at The Accelerated School in Los Angeles (TAS) was in the initial stages of goal setting they asked themselves what they wanted their students to know, how they intended to get students there, and what they would do to foster creative, critical, and independent thinkers. The answers to these questions framed their work from choosing the curriculum to deciding what kind of support they needed to meet their goals. Using the creativity which often typifies charter schools, TAS entered into a partnership with a local university to develop a customized PD plan which aligned with the goals of the school and the needs that teachers perceived while they were working with their students.

Keeping goals in sight during the planning process is imperative; trying to do too much with a professional development plan can be as detrimental as doing too little. School-wide PD plans should include such topics as classroom management, planning instruction units, and

*Research indicating that there is a direct correlation between in-school professional development (PD) and student achievement is emerging.*

interacting effectively with student families, but a good PD plan will also focus on subject area material for each discipline. For teachers who are involved in teaching reading and language arts in the primary grades, the areas prescribed in the LFA report that should be the focus of a long-range PD plan are:

- ★ phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, and concepts of print;
- ★ the alphabetic code;
- ★ fluency and automaticity;
- ★ vocabulary;
- ★ text comprehension;
- ★ written expression;
- ★ spelling and handwriting;
- ★ screening and continuous assessment to inform instruction; and
- ★ motivating children to read and develop their literacy horizons.

The following *tables 4.2 through 4.9*, created by the Learning First Alliance, correspond to the first eight of these domains and further describe how teacher knowledge translates to student achievement.

## CONCLUSION

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There is no more important element of a school—charter or otherwise—than the individuals who will teach. The teacher hiring process must be as well thought out as the process by which curricula and textbooks are chosen. Administrators charged with this responsibility can consider individuals from various backgrounds and hire the highest caliber teachers available. Once hired, it is important that schools create an environment for success for new and experienced teachers by supplying them with abundant opportunities to gain new information, to refine existing knowledge, and to reflect on their practice; in short, to hone the skills that will translate into effective teaching and successful learning. In every facet of developing a teaching staff, charter schools are imbued with flexibility that they can use to their advantage. ★

For additional examples of how charter schools incorporate professional development into their programs, please read the school profiles in Chapter 6. In addition, a planning tool called *Professional Development: Learning from the Best; A Toolkit for Schools and Districts Based on Model Professional Development Award Winners* can be found on the CD accompanying the *Reading Adventure* (or on-line at [www.ncrel.org/pd/toolkit.htm](http://www.ncrel.org/pd/toolkit.htm)). This step-by-step planner, created by two of the educational laboratories established by the U.S. Department of Education, contains numerous examples, checklists, and activities to guide the implementation of an effective PD program.

*Table 4.2 - Phonemic Awareness, Letter Knowledge, and Concepts of Print*

| <b>Teacher Knowledge</b>   | <b>Teacher Skills</b>  | <b>Possible Professional Development Experiences</b>   |
|--|--|--|
| Know the speech sounds in English (consonants and vowels) and the pronunciation of phonemes for instruction. | Select and use a range of activities representing a developmental progression of phonological skill (rhyming; word identification; syllable counting; onset-rime segmentation and blending; phoneme identification, segmentation, and blending). | Practice phoneme matching, identification, segmentation, blending, substitution and deletion.  |
| Know the progression of development of phonological skill.   |  | Order phonological awareness activities by difficulty level and developmental sequence.  |
| Understand the difference between speech sounds and the letters that represent them.                         | Use techniques for teaching letter naming, matching, and formation.  | Practice and analyze letter-sound matching activities (identifying how letters and letter groups are used for representing speech sounds). |
| Understand the causal links between early decoding, spelling, word knowledge, and phoneme awareness.         | Plan lessons in which phoneme awareness, letter knowledge, and invented spelling activities are complementary.   | Observe and critique live or videotaped student-teacher interactions during phonological awareness and alphabet instruction.               |
| Understand the print concepts young children must develop.   | Teach concepts of print during shared reading of big books.  | Role-play the teaching of print concepts during interactive reading aloud.   |
| Understand how critical the foundation skills are for later reading success.                                 | Have ability to monitor every child's progress and identify those who are falling behind.  | Discuss children's progress, using informal assessments, to obtain early help for those in need of it.                                     |

*Table 4.3 - Phonics and Decoding*

| <b>Teacher Knowledge</b>  | <b>Teacher Skills</b>  | <b>Possible Professional Development Experiences</b>  |
|---|--|---|
| Understand speech-to-print correspondence at the sound, syllable pattern, and morphological levels.                                 | Choose examples of words that illustrate sound-symbol, syllable, and morpheme patterns.                                    | Practice various active techniques including sound blending, structural word analysis, word building, and word sorting. |
| Identify and describe the developmental progression in which orthographic knowledge is generally acquired.                          | Select and deliver appropriate lessons according to students' levels of spelling, phonics, and word identification skills. | Identify, on the basis of student reading and writing, the appropriate level at which to instruct.                      |
| Understand and recognize how beginner texts are linguistically organized—by spelling pattern, word frequency, and language pattern. | Explicitly teach the sequential blending of individual sounds into a whole word.   | Observe, demonstrate, and practice error correction strategies.   |
| Recognize the differences among approaches to teaching word attack (implicit, explicit, analytic, synthetic, etc.).                 | Teach active exploration of word structure with a variety of techniques.   | Search a text for examples of words that exemplify an orthographic concept; lead discussions about words.               |
| Understand why instruction in word attack should be active and interactive.   | Enable students to use word attack strategies as they read connected text.   | Review beginner texts to discuss their varying uses in reading instruction.   |

*Table 4.4 - Fluent, Automatic Reading of Text*

| <b>Teacher Knowledge</b>  | <b>Teacher Skills</b>   | <b>Possible Professional Development Experiences</b>  |
|---|---|---|
| Understand how word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension are related to one another. | Determine reasonable expectations for reading fluency at various stages of reading development, using research-based guidelines and appropriate state and local standards and benchmarks. | Practice assessing and recording text-reading fluency of students in class.   |
| Understand text features that are related to text difficulty.                                   | Help children select appropriate texts, of sufficiently easy levels, to promote ample independent as well as oral reading.  | Organize classroom library and other support materials by topic and text difficulty; code for easy access by students, and track how much children are reading. |
| Understand who in the class should receive extra practice with fluency development and why.     | Use techniques for increasing speed of word recognition.  | Use informal assessment results to identify who needs to work on fluency.<br><br>Devise a system for recording student progress toward reasonable goals.        |
|   | Use techniques for repeated readings of passages such as alternate oral reading with a partner, reading with a tape, or rereading the same passage up to three times.                     | Conduct fluency-building activities with a mentor teacher.  |

*Table 4.5 - Vocabulary*

| <b>Teacher Knowledge</b>   | <b>Teacher Skills</b>  | <b>Possible Professional Development Experiences</b>   |
|--|--|--|
| Understand the role of vocabulary development and vocabulary knowledge in comprehension.   | Select material for reading aloud that will expand students' vocabulary.   | Collaborate with team to select best read-aloud books and share rationales.  |
| Have a rationale for selecting words for direct teaching before, during, and after reading.  | Select words for instruction before a passage is read.   | Select words from text for direct teaching and give rationale for the choice.  |
| Understand the role and characteristics of direct and contextual methods of vocabulary instruction.  | Teach word meanings directly through explanation of meanings and example uses, associations to known words and word relationships. | Devise exercises to involve students in constructing meanings of words, in developing example uses of words, in understanding relationships among words, and in using and noticing uses of words beyond the classroom. |
| Know reasonable goals and expectations for learners at various stages of reading development; appreciate the wide differences in students' vocabularies. | Provide for repeated encounters with new words and multiple opportunities to use new words.  |  |
| Understand why books themselves are a good source for word learning.   | Explicitly teach how and when to use context to figure out word meanings.  | Devise activities to help children understand the various ways that context can give clues to meaning, including that often clues are very sparse and sometimes even misleading.                                       |
|  | Help children understand how word meanings apply to various contexts by talking about words they encounter in reading.             | Use a series of contexts to show how clues can accumulate.   |



*Table 4.6 - Text Comprehension*

| <b>Teacher Knowledge</b>   | <b>Teacher Skills</b>   | <b>Possible Professional Development Experiences</b>  |
|--|---|---|
| Know the cognitive processes involved in comprehension; know the techniques and strategies that are most effective, for what types of students, with what content. | Help children engage texts and consider ideas deeply.   | Role-play and rehearse key research-supported strategies, such as questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and using graphic organizers.   |
| Identify the typical structure of common narrative and expository text genres.   | Choose and implement instruction appropriate for specific students and texts.   | Discuss and plan to teach characteristics of both narrative and expository texts.   |
| Recognize the characteristics of "reader friendly" text.   | Facilitate comprehension of academic language such as connecting words, figures of speech, idioms, humor, and embedded sentences.   | Consider student work and reading behavior (written responses, oral summaries, retellings, cloze tasks, recorded discussions) to determine where miscomprehension occurred and plan how to repair it.                               |
| Identify phrase, sentence, paragraph, and text characteristics of "book language" that students may misinterpret.  |   |   |
| Appreciate that reading strategies vary for specific purposes  | Communicate directly to children the value of reading for various purposes.   | Interpret the effectiveness of instruction with video and examples of student work.   |
| Understand the similarities and differences between written composition and text comprehension.  | Help students use written responses and discussion to process meaning more fully.   | Practice leading, scaffolding, and observing discussions in which students collaborate to form joint interpretations of text.   |
| Understand the role of background knowledge in text comprehension.   | Preview text and identify the background experiences and concepts that are important for comprehension of that text and that help students call on or acquire that knowledge. | Discuss and plan to teach ways of helping students call on or acquire relevant knowledge through defining concepts, presenting examples, and eliciting students' reactions to the concepts in ways that assess their understanding. |

*Table 4.7 - Written Expression*

| <b>Teacher Knowledge</b>  | <b>Teacher Skills</b>  | <b>Possible Professional Development Experiences</b>   |
|---|--|--|
| Understand that composition is a recursive process of planning, drafting, and revising.               | Organize writing program to support planning, drafting and revising stages before publication.   | Examine student work at various stages of the writing process and identify strengths and weaknesses.   |
| Know the value and purpose of teacher-directed and student-directed assignments.                      | Include writing daily as part of the classroom routine, employing a variety of tasks and modes.  | Participate in shared writing and personal writing in response to various assignments.   |
| Understand the role of grammar, sentence composition, and paragraphing in building composition skill. | Teach sentence and paragraph awareness, construction, and manipulation as a tool for fluent communication of ideas.                        | Practice several approaches for building sentence-and paragraph-level mastery, such as sentence combining, analysis, and elaboration, and coherent linking of sentences in paragraphs. |
| Know benchmarks and standards for students at various stages of growth.                               | Generate and use rubrics to guide and evaluate student work.   | Work with a team to achieve reliability in evaluating student work.  |
| Understand that different kinds of writing require different organizational approaches.               | Teach several genres through the year, such as personal narratives, fictional narratives, descriptions, explanations, reports, and poetry. | As a team, teach each genre and evaluate the results with peers.   |
| Understand the value of meaningful writing for a specific audience and purpose.                       | Promote student sharing and publication of student writing for a suitable audience.  | Host an author's conference.   |

*Table 4.8 - Spelling and Handwriting*

| <b>Teacher Knowledge</b>   | <b>Teacher Skills</b>   | <b>Possible Professional Development Experiences</b>   |
|--|---|--|
| Describe and identify the progression in which spelling knowledge is gained.                                     | Tailor instruction to students' developmental levels in spelling.                                     | Give and analyze the results of a developmental spelling inventory.                              |
| Understand the similarities and differences between learning to read and learning to spell.                      | Coordinate the timing and sequence of spelling lessons to complement instruction in word recognition. | Develop time line, scope, and sequence for teaching spelling in relation to the reading program. |
| Understand the organizing principles of the English spelling system at the sound, syllable, and morpheme levels. | In instruction, emphasize concepts and principles of the spelling system.                             | Practice explaining, illustrating, and providing meaningful practice with spelling concepts.     |
| Understand the relationship between transcription skills and spelling and writing fluency.                       | Use techniques to build fluency, accuracy, and automaticity in transcription to support composition.  | Practice teaching self-correction, dictation, think aloud, proofreading, and other strategies.   |

*Table 4.9 - Assessment to Inform Instruction*

| <b>Teacher Knowledge</b>  | <b>Teacher Skills</b>  | <b>Possible Professional Development Experiences</b>  |
|---|--|---|
| Understand that assessments are used for various purposes, including determining strengths and needs of students in order to plan for instruction and flexible grouping; monitoring of progress in relation to stages of reading, spelling, and writing; assessing curriculum-specific learning; and using norm-referenced or diagnostic tests appropriately for program placement. | Use efficient, informal, validated strategies for assessing phoneme awareness, letter knowledge, sound-symbol knowledge, application of skills to fluent reading, passage reading accuracy and fluency, passage comprehension, level of spelling development, and written composition. | Participate in role-play of assessment after modeling and demonstration with surrogate subjects. Receive feedback in role-play until skills of administration and scoring are reliable. |
| Select a program of assessment that includes validated tools for measuring important components of reading and writing.   | Screen all children briefly; assess children with reading and language weaknesses at regular intervals.  | Administer assessments and review results with team for purpose of instructional grouping.  |
| Know the benchmarks and standards for performance.  | Interpret results for the purpose of helping children achieve the standards.   | Evaluate the outcomes of instruction and present to team.   |
| Understand importance of student self-assessment.   | Communicate assessment results to parents and students.  | Develop or select record-keeping tools for parents and students.  |

## *Answer Key to Figure 4.1 - Language Knowledge Evaluation*

1. How many speech\_sounds are in the following words? Remember that the speech sounds may not be equivalent to the letters. For example, the word *spoke* has four phonemes: /s/, /p/, /o/, and /k/. Write the number of phonemes in the blank to the right of each word.

|                 |                |                |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| thrill <u>4</u> | ring <u>3</u>  | shook <u>3</u> |
| does <u>3</u>   | fix <u>4</u>   | know <u>2</u>  |
| sawed <u>3</u>  | quack <u>4</u> |                |

2. In the following words indicate, the letters and letter combinations that correspond to each speech sound in the word. For example, the word *stress* has five phonemes, each of which is represented by a letter or letter group: s / t / r / e / ss. Now try these:

|                       |                           |                            |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| best <u>b/e/s/t</u>   | fresh <u>f/r/e/sh</u>     | scratch <u>s/c/r/a/tch</u> |
| though <u>th/ough</u> | laughed <u>l/au/gh/ed</u> | middle <u>m/i/dd/le</u>    |
| chirp <u>ch/ir/p</u>  |                           |                            |

3. For each word on the left, determine the number of syllables and the number of morphemes:

|            | Syllables | Morphemes |
|------------|-----------|-----------|
| bookworm   | <u>2</u>  | <u>2</u>  |
| unicorn    | <u>3</u>  | <u>2</u>  |
| elephant   | <u>3</u>  | <u>1</u>  |
| believed   | <u>2</u>  | <u>3</u>  |
| incredible | <u>4</u>  | <u>3</u>  |
| finger     | <u>2</u>  | <u>1</u>  |
| hogs       | <u>1</u>  | <u>2</u>  |
| telegram   | <u>3</u>  | <u>2</u>  |

Source: L. C. Moats (2000). *Speech to Print – Language Essentials for Teachers*.  
Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing

4. Read the first word in each line and note the sound that is represented by the underlined letter or letter cluster. Then select the word or words on the line that contain the same sound. Underline the words you select.

|                  |             |              |              |          |
|------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| a. <u>push</u>   | although    | <u>sugar</u> | duty         | pump     |
| b. <u>weigh</u>  | pie         | height       | <u>raid</u>  | friend   |
| c. <u>does</u>   | miss        | <u>nose</u>  | votes        | rice     |
| d. <u>intend</u> | this        | whistle      | <u>baked</u> | batch    |
| e. <u>ring</u>   | <u>sink</u> | handle       | signal       | pinpoint |

5. A closed syllable is one that

contains a short vowel sound spelled with one letter and ends in a consonant.

An open syllable is one that

contains a long vowel sound spelled with one vowel letter that ends the syllable.

6. Write a definition or explanation of the following:

- a. Consonant cluster

A consonant cluster is two consonants that appear together in a word, with each retaining its sound when blended.

- b. Consonant digraph

A consonant digraph is a letter combination corresponding to one unique sound.

- c. Prefix

A prefix is a Latin or Greek bound morpheme (meaningful part), added before a root or base word, that changes the meaning of the whole word.

- d. Why is phonemic awareness important?

Phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are composed of individual sounds. We need this skill in order to associate sounds with letters and manipulate sounds to blend words during reading.

- e. How is decoding related to reading fluency and comprehension?

Decoding words aids in the development and improvement of word recognition. When children are able to recognize words quickly and accurately, reading fluency improves.

7. Underline the letters that stand for the schwa sound (some words have more than one):

telephone  
precious

agenda  
imposition

along  
unless

8. Underline the consonant blends (not all words have blends):

knight  
napkin

climb  
squished

wreck  
springy

9. When is *ck* used in spelling?

*The spelling ck is used when a /k/ sound follows a stressed, short (lax) vowel.*

10. What letters signal that a *c* is pronounced /s/?

*e, i, or y following the c*

11. List all of the ways to spell “long o.”

*o, oa, ow, oe, o-consonant-e, ough*

12. List all of the ways to spell the consonant sound /f/.

*f, ff, gh, ph*

13. When adding a suffix to a word ending with silent *e*, what is the spelling rule?

*Drop the e if the suffix begins with a vowel; keep the e if the suffix begins with a consonant.*

## *Glossary*

**Closed Syllable** A syllable ending with a consonant; e.g. *him*, *mud*.

**Consonant Digraph** Written letter combination that corresponds to one speech sound but is not represented by either letter alone, such as *th* or *ph*.

**Morpheme** The smallest meaningful unit of language.

**Open Syllable** A syllable ended by a long vowel; e.g. *go*, *he*.

**Phoneme** A speech sound that combines with others in a language system to make words.

**Prefix** A morpheme that precedes a root or base word and that contributes to or modifies the meaning of a word.

**Schwa** A nondistinct vowel found in unstressed syllables in English.

**Syllable** Unit of pronunciation that is organized around a vowel; it may or may not have consonants before or after the vowel.



# *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

The fourth Harry Potter book, the Goblet of Fire, is a suspenseful story of Harry Potter and a Triwizard Tournament. Harry and another student from his school represent the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. These students, along with two students from other schools must participate in three tasks. Judges vote to see which player will win each round and who will win the overall contest.

In the first round, Harry has to face a dragon and try to get the dragon's golden egg. In the next task, Harry has to dive underwater in a lake in front of the school to rescue someone at the bottom. The last task is a maze with all different obstacles like spiders and animals.

When asked who won the contest, Jason, age 10, replied, "You will have to read it for yourself." Read as part of a class program, Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), Jason particularly liked this book in the Harry Potter series. "It was cool how they described characters in the book—like the spider, lion and other things. It was a very imaginative book. I thought it was really neat how the wizards cast their spells and I wondered what it would be like to be a wizard."



## *Grade Three Book List*

Alice in Wonderland

Dinosaurs Before Dark

Grandpa's Teeth

Harry Potter Series

If You Sailed on the Mayflower

Jackie Robinson and the Story  
of All-Black Baseball

Jason and the Golden Fleece

Paddle-to-the-Sea

There's a Hamster in My Lunchbox

A Wrinkle in Time

## *Chapter 5 - Literacy Assessment - Linking Testing and Instruction*

For many people, the most important goal of an elementary school—charter or otherwise—is to ensure that its students learn to read proficiently. How do the various constituencies of any school determine whether that goal is being met? In a word: assessment. All schools assess their students and themselves in one way or another. Even though the need to assess for accountability purposes may be extremely important to a charter school, most members of charter school communities agree that the need to assess student achievement in order to inform instruction is a top priority. When assessment is aligned with instruction, both students and teachers benefit (Valencia 1997). When students benefit, positive accountability results will follow.

Everybody involved with a charter school—from organizers to students—is affected by the assessment process, and they need to be informed of the results. In *Understanding Authentic Classroom-Based Literacy Assessment*, Sheila Valencia points out that “assessments are used to report to school boards, state agencies and parents; to evaluate program effectiveness; to monitor student learning and adjust teaching strategies;...to evaluate student growth over time; and to engage students in self-evaluation.” Obviously, “one type of assessment cannot meet the needs of all audiences” (Valencia 1997). A complete, well-thought out set of assessments includes various methods from standardized skills tests to alternative or authentic assessments (Charter Friends 2001).

In this chapter we will examine the different forms of reading assessment, describe how they are used, and discuss their value to the various members of the charter school community.

## THE TWO FACES OF ASSESSMENT

### Formal assessments

There are two types of assessments: formal and informal. *Formal assessments* range from standardized tests, to exams that publishers create to complement their curricula, to teacher-generated end-of-unit tests.

Standardized tests can be administered either by schools or by individual teachers. There are two kinds of standardized tests.

- ★ *Norm-referenced tests* compare a student's score against the scores of a sample group of students who have already taken the test. These tests rank a student in terms of achievement of the sample group. Scores are usually reported as percentile ranks. For example, a student who scores in the 68<sup>th</sup> percentile has scored higher than 68 percent of the test takers in the norm group.
- ★ *Criterion-referenced tests* compare a student's achievement against a pre-set standard for acceptable achievement. This test measures whether a student has mastered a body of knowledge. The performance of other students is irrelevant. The student's score is usually expressed as a percentage.

Each type of standardized test serves a different purpose and provides different kinds of information about a student. *Figure 5.1* compares norm-referenced tests and criterion-referenced tests to show the characteristics of each.

If assessment is to inform instruction in a way that is both valid and useful, it is important to choose instruments that provide the kind of information that is needed. A 1989 report

published by the American Institutes for Research, *Understanding Achievement Tests: A Guide for School Administrators*, examines the benefits and limitations of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests as an aid to making appropriate selections. *Figure 5.2* summarizes this report.

Numerous standardized tests for evaluating literacy achievement—norm-referenced and criterion-referenced—have long track records of use and reliability. *Table 5.5* at the end of this chapter provides an overview of the tests most widely used.

A study of 29 reading assessment instruments specifically for K-3 was conducted in 2002 by the Assessment Committee of a Reading Academy created by the U.S. Department of Education. The report, *An Analysis of Reading Assessment Instruments for K-3*, was “designed to provide state and local educational agencies assistance on the selection and use of reading instruments for kindergarten through grade three.” Numerous matrices are included that indicate which instruments can be used as diagnostic, screening, or progress-monitoring tools to evaluate five fundamental reading skills: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. A brief sample of the report is included in *Figure 5.3*; the entire report can be found at <http://idea.uoregon.edu/assessment>.

### Informal assessment

*Informal assessment* includes a variety of activities such as teacher observations of student performance and group projects. Many of these activities come under the heading of “authentic,” also known as “alternative,” assessment. Authentic assessments are measures that teachers develop using their expertise and experience. They are called “authentic” because

*Figure 5.1 - Formal Assessment Test Comparisons*

|                      | <b>Criterion-Referenced Test</b>  | <b>Norm-Referenced Test</b>   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Standard             | <p>Performance standards</p> <p>Student achievement is compared to a preset standard of expected achievement; performance of others not taken into account</p>      | <p>Norm-group standards</p> <p>Student is ranked relative to the achievement of other students</p>  |
| Purpose              | <p>To find out if each student has achieved specific skills or concepts</p>   | <p>To compare each student to the achievement of other students in broad areas of knowledge</p> <p>To show differences between high and low achievers</p>   |
| Content              | <p>Assesses the specific skills of a curriculum as identified by state standards, teachers, and curriculum specialists</p>  | <p>Assesses broad skill areas taken from textbooks, curriculum guides, state and national standards, and opinions of content experts</p>  |
| Item Characteristics | <p>Multiple choice and open-ended items</p> <p>Each skill tested by minimum of four items</p> <p>Items that test a given skill are equivalent in difficulty</p>     | <p>Multiple choice</p> <p>Each skill usually tested by fewer than four items</p> <p>Items vary in difficulty to discriminate between high and low achievers</p> <p>Items measure a range of skills across grade levels</p>                            |
| Scoring              | <p>Compares each student to a preset standard of expected achievement</p> <p>Achievement reported for specific skills</p> <p>Score expressed as percent correct</p> | <p>Compares each student to a norm group; score based on comparison to the norm</p> <p>Usually, achievement reported for broad skill areas; however, some tests report specific skills</p> <p>Score expressed as a percentile or grade equivalent</p> |

Figure 5.2 - Understanding Achievement Tests

| Type of test         | Benefit  | Limitation   |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Norm-referenced      | Allows schools to analyze the progress of large groups of students<br><br>Gives schools a basis for examining an individual student's general performance  | Inappropriate for following an individual student's progress on specific skills or for identifying specific strengths or weaknesses in a specific subject area<br><br>Assess a relatively narrow range of desired educational outcomes<br><br>Norms are quickly outdated |
| Criterion-referenced | Measures whether a school has attained curricular objectives<br><br>May be appropriate for diagnosing students' strengths and weaknesses within a given subject area<br><br>Can help schools plan instructional programs | Do not provide meaningful norms<br><br>Must be revised periodically to reflect current educational objectives<br><br>Require a great deal of testing time  |

their content and implementation are derived from real classroom-based work that has its own value in addition to its value as an assessment. In other words, while a traditional method of classroom testing might take the form of a multiple-choice quiz prepared by the teacher for students to take after reading a story, an authentic assessment might find the teacher asking the students to write a short report summarizing the story in their own words. Often, because critical thinking and problem-solving skills are used in completing these tasks, as much emphasis is placed on the process required to complete the assessment as on the product created.

Authentic assessment takes numerous forms—exhibits, group projects, oral presentations, portfolios, experiments, and reports.

The point of assessing students in this manner is that the “task being assessed is one that could be worthwhile for a student to do as an instructional activity” (Valencia 1997). For reading/language arts teachers authentic assessment might also include requiring students to perform tasks that resemble real world reading and writing including, for example:

- ★ reading real texts,
- ★ writing about meaningful topics,
- ★ discussing books,
- ★ keeping journals,
- ★ writing letters, and



- ★ editing a piece of writing so that it becomes meaningful to a reader (Valencia 1997).

These tasks probably are familiar since they are identical to the kinds of activities which lead to skilled readers. Using these assessments allows students to practice getting information from text, gain fluency while reading, learn to organize their own writing, and refine their vocabulary. At the same time, they allow teachers to gauge students’ ability to accomplish the tasks.

EVERYBODY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Elementary school organizers and school boards recognize that the central skill their students need to master is the ability to read. Without that skill, the acquisition of additional knowledge in any subject area will be difficult to achieve. Accordingly, when designing

assessment plans, school officials should ensure that the reading goals of the school are clearly articulated and that curricula and assessments align with those goals. There should also be a means to communicate the results of assessment to parents. Because formal, standardized tests are well-suited to inform local and district school boards, state policy makers, and curriculum planners (Stiggins 2001), they are likely to be included as part of the assessment system. The overall scores on standardized tests are one of the ways charter schools determine whether or not they are meeting the goals of their accountability plan.

Disaggregating the results of standardized tests can also yield important information for school boards and administrators. By separating the data according to subgroups (e.g., grade, gender, English proficiency), schools can learn important information about whether or not their long-term programs, such as reading curricula, are working (Love 1998). Charter

Figure 5.3 - Kindergarten: Diagnostic Assessment

Component: PA=Phonemic Awareness; P=Phonics; F=Fluency; V=Vocabulary; RC=Reading Comprehension

| Assessment Tool                                       | Component |   |   |   |    |
|---|-----------|---|---|---|----|
|   | PA        | P | F | V | RC |
| Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) | ✓         |   |   |   |    |
| Early Reading Diagnostic Assessment (ERDA)            |           |   |   |   |    |
| Letter Recognition                                    |           | ✓ |   |   |    |
| Phonological Awareness                                | ✓         |   |   |   |    |
| Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)                      |           |   |   |   |    |
| Language  |           |   |   | ✓ |    |
| Listening   |           |   |   | ✓ |    |
| Vocabulary  |           |   |   | ✓ |    |
| Word Analysis   | ✓         |   |   |   |    |

See the web site <http://idea.uoregon.edu/assessment> for the full report.



schools are generally able to make meaningful and swift responses based upon the information they learn. For instance, if a school learns that, over time, the scores of students learning English as a second language (ESL) remain essentially the same on a reading skills test, it can alter its long-term approach to educating ESL students. Based upon results from standardized tests, some charter schools have arranged to provide additional opportunities for instruction and practice in reading, writing and phonemic awareness for struggling or disadvantaged students. Administrators have relieved teachers from lunchroom duty, have reallocated resources so that additional classroom aides can be hired, or have asked parent volunteers to assist in helping teachers in the classroom.

As valuable as the information learned from standardized tests may be, these tests cannot bring into focus the kind of information that teachers need in order to adjust their teaching strategies in a timely manner. Day-to-day classroom-based assessments—formal and informal—meet those needs more effectively (Stiggins 2001). Assessment plans that incorporate informal assessments of student progress in reading give teachers and administrators additional, and often more timely, data to evaluate teaching methodologies and learning environments and to make appropriate adjustments.

A good assessment plan includes whatever forms are most appropriate to assess the skills a school asks its students to achieve. It also determines how the information will be shared and used. The Harlem Day Charter School, for example, instituted a plan during its first year that was designed to inform the school community—principal, teachers, and parents—about the progress of each and every student.



At the beginning of the school year, the school uses standardized tests to establish benchmarks for new students. Then, the teachers generate weekly reports using reading software. These reports are reviewed by the principal and the teachers to determine the skills each student needs to work on. The test results are also sent home so that parents are always up-to-date on their child's progress. Teacher-generated assessments are used regularly throughout the year to help guide teachers in their approach to each child. Finally, end-of-year tests are administered to measure students' growth over the school year and to determine whether students have mastered the specific material taught.

Charter school *principals* have the opportunity to set the tone for how assessment is viewed and valued at their school. Setting the bar high for student achievement means setting the bar high for teacher performance. In his report, *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools*, Samuel Casey Carter notes the approach of the Healthy Start Academy charter school (K-4) in North Carolina. Tom

Williams, the principal, believes that “assessment drives achievement.” He values the results of the achievement tests his students take because the results “enable him to benchmark his school’s yearly progress and compare his program against a national standard.” But his commitment to assessment does not stop there. In his words: “It’s what you do with the results, not the excuse you make to cover for them.” Upon finding that the entire first grade scored in the 48<sup>th</sup> percentile on a standardized test, he encouraged teachers to discard their curricula and focus solely on reading and mathematics. Those same students, when tested in the second grade, scored in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile in all subjects (Carter 2001).

Because charter school *teachers* are the front line for instruction, they are also the front line for student assessment. According to Wilma Miller in her book *Assessment Techniques for Reading Assessment*, “Assessment can be defined as gathering information to meet the particular reading needs of a child.” It is therefore important that teachers are adept at using both formal and informal means of assessment to gather the data that will inform not only their long-term educational plan for their students but also their daily instruction.

As discussed in Chapter 2, those students who learn to read proficiently by the end of third grade stand the best chance of graduating from high school and maintaining a life-long interest in reading. The only way to make sure that all students can do this is to assess children early and often and to adapt teaching strategies specifically to the needs of each child. The Learning First Alliance maintains in its *Every Child Reading* professional development guide that “ongoing assessment of children’s reading behavior and writing products” should lead to flexible instructional strategies. By observing

students as they work and evaluating their work-products carefully, teachers can learn important information that will help organize their instruction to “facilitate the reading development of most children.” Skills that teachers should possess in order to perform this kind of assessment include the ability to:

- ★ use efficient, informal, validated strategies for assessing phoneme awareness, letter knowledge, sound-symbol knowledge, application of skills to fluent reading, passage reading accuracy and fluency, passage comprehension, level of spelling development, and written composition;
- ★ screen all children briefly; assess children with reading and language weaknesses at regular intervals; and
- ★ interpret results for the purpose of helping children achieve standards (Learning First Alliance 2000).

Not all readers learn to read at the same pace nor do they learn all the necessary skills in exactly the same order. Therefore, it stands to reason that not all children in the same grade will be reading at the same level. The level and type of assessment chosen by a teacher should align with the child’s age and the level of skill the child possesses (Shepard, Kagen and Wurtz 1998). Children who are just beginning to read or those who are struggling readers may require assessment that is more elementary and that determines whether they possess early reading skills. To assess student progress through the developmental stages of early reading (up through approximately grade 4), a framework such as the following (*Figure 5.4*) derived from the work of Dr. Sebastian Wren of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory can be useful.

*Figure 5.4 - Developmental Stages of Early Reading*

| Developmental Segment  | Assessment Goal   | Example Skill Assessment Questions   |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Language comprehension | To determine what kind and how much meaning a child derives from the spoken word  | <p>Can a child follow verbal instruction?</p> <p>Can a child retell a story presented orally in her own words?</p>   |
| Background knowledge   | To measure a child's general knowledge of facts about the world   | When presented with a setting (e.g. farm) or process (e.g. buying food), what relevant information can a child supply about it?  |
| Concepts about print   | <p>To evaluate early attempts at writing for knowledge about the way print is organized</p> <p>To observe the manner in which children handle books</p> | <p>Does the child's writing start at the top of the page?</p> <p>Is the "writing" in horizontal lines which appear to "move" from left to right?</p> <p>Are the "words" separated by space or attempts at punctuation?</p> <p>Does the child know where the cover is?</p> <p>Does the child hold the book upright?</p> <p>Does the student appear to have a understanding that printed words represent spoken words?</p> |
| Letter knowledge       | To determine the extent of a child's familiarity with the letters of the alphabet   | <p>Can the student name letters on a page fluently?</p> <p>Can the child differentiate numbers from letters?</p> <p>Does the child recognize upper- and lower-case letters?</p> <p>Does the child separate consonants from vowels?</p>   |

FIGURE 5.4 CONT.

| Developmental Segment  | Assessment Goal   | Example Skill Assessment Questions  |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Alphabetic principle   | To determine whether a child understands that letters in written words represent phonemes in spoken words   | <p>When asked to write a spoken word, does the student attempt to represent each sound with a letter (whether or not the representation is correct) or a whole word with a single symbol?</p> <p>If presented with a long written word and a short written word, can the student match the written word with the spoken word (based upon the number of sounds he hears, not the ability to read the word)?</p>    |
| Phonological awareness | To determine a child's ability to recognize that words are made up of sounds  | <p>Does a child recognize words that rhyme?</p> <p>Does a child recognize alliteration?</p> <p>Can a child break a word into syllables (e.g. What are the two parts of the word PENCIL?)?</p> <p>When presented with a word broken into its sounds can a child blend the sounds into the appropriate word?</p>  |
| Phoneme awareness      | To determine whether a child is aware that spoken words are composed of phonemes (the specific sound created by a letter or combination of letters) | <p>Can a child identify the number of phonemes in a spoken word?</p> <p>Can a child successfully rearrange the sounds in one word to make a new word (e.g. What would PIN be if you took out the /p/ sound? What would PIN become if you added /s/ to the beginning?)?</p> <p>Can a child successfully identify the same phoneme in two different words (e.g. Which sound do the words GAME and PLAY share?)?</p> |

FIGURE 5.4 CONT.

| Developmental Segment     | Assessment Goal  | Example Skill Assessment Questions   |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Automatic fluent decoding | To evaluate a student's ability to pronounce familiar and unfamiliar words   | <p>Can the student read familiar words out of context, whether they are regular or irregular?</p> <p>Can the student pronounce unfamiliar words of varying length and difficulty quickly and easily?</p> <p>Can the student match a spoken word with a written word?</p> <p>When reading aloud, is each word pronounced correctly?</p> <p>How much does a child struggle with word naming?</p> |
| Vocabulary                | To determine a child's knowledge of the meaning of words   | <p>Can the child provide names for items in an illustration?</p> <p>Can a child provide a word for an orally presented definition?</p> <p>Can a child pick out the word that doesn't belong in a list (e.g. cow, horse, pig, fish)?</p>  |
| Reading comprehension     | To determine the level of meaning a child is able to extract when reading text; to determine a child's ability to evaluate the purpose of text | <p>After completing a reading assignment, can students correctly answer specific questions about text content?</p> <p>Can the child answer inferential questions implied by a text?</p> <p>Does the student recognize different genres and types of text?</p>  |

Assessment is not a stand-alone activity. Once a teacher learns what skills a child possesses and what skills he or she is struggling to master, the teacher needs to put the information to use. For instance, if after using questions like those above, a second-grade teacher has determined that a child has demonstrated sound phonemic awareness and phonological skills but is struggling with word naming and stumbling over familiar words, he or she would want to work on the child's ability to decode text automatically and fluently. Among other possible strategies would be to ensure that the child is reading independent level text, since fluency can be developed when students are given ample opportunity to practice their reading with a high degree of success (US ED 2001).

Reading and language arts teachers use the results of their assessments to guide their teaching strategies and to keep both *students* and *parents* informed. Comparing children to national norms, local educational goals, and even to their peers is useful in many ways, but it is also important to compare children to themselves (Caldwell 2002) and to let them and their parents know what kind of progress they are making. Teachers and parents should “compare a child’s work to his own work earlier in the year: [their] reference point should be the child’s work” (Johnson 1992 in Caldwell 2002). Teachers at the Benjamin

Franklin Classical Charter School in Franklin, Massachusetts capitalized both on that belief and the flexibility afforded them by the administrator of their school. Realizing that the “standard-issue” report card they had been using simply did not communicate their assessment process or their student’s progress, they developed a new format for their report cards. The report cards are customized by grade and reflect the specific literacy skills that teachers assess. The result is a report card that allows the teacher to provide valuable and detailed information to parents and students about what skills each child has mastered on the reading continuum and what skills need special attention.

## CONCLUSION

Because the ability to read is central to the education process, the ability of educators to assess the progress of emergent readers is critical. Without adequate and meaningful assessment, teachers will be hampered in determining what to teach to meet the educational needs of their students. Testing should provide information for the teacher, the parents and the school so that they can meet the needs of their students. Charter schools present numerous opportunities to use assessment to their students’ best advantage. ★

### *Informal Assessment References*

The following is a list of publications that contain useful sample checklists, worksheets, and other practical information about informal assessment measures.

- ★ *Alternative Assessment Techniques for Reading and Writing* by Wilma H. Miller
- ★ *Authentic Reading Assessment: Practices and Possibilities* by Sheila W. Valencia, Elfrieda H. Hieber, and Peter P. Afflerbach, Editors
- ★ *Reading Assessment: A Primer for Teachers and Tutors* by JoAnne Schudt

*Table 5.5 - Standardized Tests at a Glance*

| Name of Test   | Age Group    | Grade Level       |
|--|--------------|-------------------|
| <b>Academic Achievement</b>                            |              |                   |
| <b>General Tests</b>                                   |              |                   |
| California Achievement Tests (CAT/5)                   |              | K-12              |
| Diagnostic Screening Tests                             |              |                   |
| ★ Achievement (DSTA)                                   |              | K-13              |
| ★ Language (DSTL)                                      |              | 1-13              |
| ★ Math (DSTM)  |              | 1-10              |
| ★ Reading (DSTR)                                       |              | 1-JC              |
| ★ Spelling (DSTS)                                      |              | 1-12              |
| Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)                      |              | K-8               |
| Metropolitan Achievement Tests (MAT7)                  |              | K-12              |
| Peabody Individual Achievement Test – Revised (PIAT-R) |              | K-12              |
| Stanford Achievement Test Series                       |              |                   |
| ★ The Stanford Achievement Test (SAT)                  |              | 1-9               |
| ★ The Stanford Early School Achievement Test (SESAT)   |              | K-1               |
| ★ The Test of Academic Skills (TASK)                   | 5-19         | 9-CC              |
| Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)            |              | K-12              |
| <b>Reading Tests</b>                                   |              |                   |
| <b>Comprehension Tests</b>                             | 7-0 to 17-11 |                   |
| Test of Reading Comprehension – 3 (TORC-3)             |              |                   |
| <b>Diagnostic Reading Tests</b>                        |              |                   |
| Diagnostic Reading Scales                              |              | 1-7               |
| Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty (DARD)          |              | Nonreader – 6     |
| Gates-McKillop-Horowitz Reading Diagnostic Tests       |              | 1-6               |
| Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test 4 (SDRT4)             | 5-90         | 1.5-13.0          |
| Woodcock Diagnostic Reading Battery (WDRB)             | Adults to 75 |                   |
| Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests – Revised (WRMT-R)      |              | K-CS              |
| <b>Oral Reading Tests</b>                              | 6-6 to 17-11 |                   |
| Formal Reading Inventory (FRI)                         | 7-0 to 11-18 | 1-12              |
| Gray Oral Reading Test, Third Edition (GORT-3)         |              |                   |
| Standardized Reading Inventory (SRI)                   |              | Reading Level < 8 |
| <b>Written Language Tests</b>                          | 7-0 to 17-11 |                   |
| Test of Written Language – 3 (TOWL-3)                  | 6-0 to 18-11 |                   |
| Test of Written Spelling – 3 (TWS-3)                   |              |                   |

Source: *Accountability – A Practical Guide to Assessment for Evaluating Student Performance. The Florida Charter*

| Group Administered | Individually Administered | Criterion Referenced | Norm Referenced |
|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
|                    |                           |                      |                 |
| ✓                  |                           |                      | ✓               |
|                    |                           |                      |                 |
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| ✓                  | ✓                         |                      | ✓               |

School Resource Center at the University of South Florida. Adapted by permission.





# *Island of the Blue Dolphins*

*Island of the Blue Dolphins* is the incredible story of a girl, Karana, who lived alone on an enchanted island located in the Pacific Ocean. Karana's tribe was forced to leave the island after the Alutes killed most of the men in the tribe. When the tribe was set to leave, Karana's little brother was not on the boat. Karana jumped off and swam to the island to stay with her brother. Soon after she was abandoned, her brother was killed by a pack of wild dogs. She was all alone on the island for 18 years.

The book earned praise from Ryan, Christie, and Juanita, age 12. "The book really appealed to us. The book was so exciting we had to read a couple of chapters ahead. We just couldn't put the book down. We bought a copy of the book to read again and again. We also read the sequel and drew pictures of her, which helped to visualize the story."



## *Grade Four Book List*

Cheyenne Rose

Dead Man in Indian Creek

Gulliver's Travels

James and the Giant Peach

Jumanji

Little Women

Mr. Potter's Pet

Prairie School

Robinson Crusoe

Sounder

## *Chapter 6 - Steps to Success: Nine Charter Schools with Great Reading Programs*

Success stories within the charter school community are abundant. In this chapter, we focus on nine charter schools from across the nation that have experienced exceptional success in their elementary reading programs. Some of the schools have a multi-year track record, while others are in their first year or two of operation, but all are showing positive results.

In this chapter, we have profiled the following schools, sharing their experiences, their programs, and the steps they took to achieve success:

- ★ The Accelerated School, Los Angeles, California
- ★ The Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School, Franklin, Massachusetts
- ★ Benjamin Franklin Charter School, Mesa, Queen Creek, and Gilbert, Arizona
- ★ Cherry Creek Academy, Englewood, Colorado
- ★ Cross Creek Academy, Byron Center, Michigan
- ★ Einstein Montessori School, Gainesville, Florida
- ★ Friendship Edison Public School, Washington, D.C.
- ★ Harlem Day Charter School, New York, New York
- ★ Rapoport Academy Charter School, Waco, Texas

While each of these schools employs creative and diverse approaches in its reading programs, several common themes emerged during our interviews. At a number of schools, we were struck by the high levels of cooperation and consultation among teacher and administrators that were focused on student-specific needs. There was also a common commitment to finding the appropriate reading curriculum for their students, which for some schools meant quickly terminating programs that had proven unsuitable and instituting a new one before students lost ground. We also noted that all schools emphasized on-going professional development, prioritizing budgets and resources for teacher development programs with adequate depth and expertise. And, finally, all the schools were keenly focused on accountability for student achievement and shared a philosophy that the flexibility inherent in charter schools empowers them to do whatever it takes to make every child's story a success story.



## *The Accelerated School*

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

There's no mistaking the enthusiasm staff and students at The Accelerated School in Los Angeles (TAS) feel when they share their school's story. It's no wonder: students are motivated, teachers are empowered, parents are involved, test scores are up and books are everywhere. Clearly, this is an educational community people want to be a part of and one in which every member of the community makes an important contribution. Part of the school mission is to position itself as a center for student and community learning and many of its programs are designed to "equip, inspire and guide children and families of South Central Los Angeles to educational and career success." It is this approach coupled with high achievement that led *TIME Magazine* to select The Accelerated School in Los Angeles as one of its "2001 Schools of the Year."

Established in 1994 by Johnathan Williams and Kevin Sved, two teachers familiar with the Accelerated School model, the first year saw 40 K through 4 students walk through its doors. Today, the school population is up to 263 students in grades K through 8 with a waiting list of 1,200. The student body is representative of the area in which TAS operates, South Central Los Angeles: 59% of the students are Latino, 39% are African American and 2% are other (Asian and white). More than 90% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. While the majority of families at this school are characterized by researchers as "working poor," they are still very much a part of The Accelerated School community. Parents agree

to attend parent meetings and regularly complete monthly volunteer hours. In addition, they are represented on the Board of Trustees, have a presence on the school governing board, and regularly participate in *ad hoc* committees to work on specific challenges the school is facing.

The core of the Accelerated School design, developed by Dr. Henry Levin at Stanford University, is to treat all students as gifted. This goal is supported by three keys: unity of purpose, empowerment coupled with responsibility, and building on strengths. For The Accelerated School, establishing a framework for learning started with the questions the original staff asked themselves: What do we want students to know and how do we get there? How do we foster creative, critical and independent thinkers? In answering these questions, the staff made the decision to go with a literature-rich program to create and nurture a student body of readers. Instead of using a basal reading program, the school opted to use Junior Great Books for K through 5, which is supplemented in K through 2 with Zoophonics. With this combination the school ensures that students are given both a solid grounding in phonics and many opportunities to broaden their horizons and hone their skills as thinkers. In addition, teachers are asked to show a connection to reading in all academic areas. In math, for example, students may begin the class with a pre-reading activity: they will make predictions about problems they

are working on or identify both new and familiar vocabulary in the material the teacher is presenting.

*"For The Accelerated School, establishing a framework for learning started with the questions the original staff asked themselves: What do we want students to know and how do we get there? How do we foster creative, critical and independent thinkers?"*

The school prides itself on the number of opportunities it supplies for children to read and to adopt the habit of making books an integral part of their lives. Reading is central to everything they do at the school. "Reading is a fundamental academic skill," says Faynessa Armand, the Curriculum Coordinator at TAS. To that end, a key focus of the school is to build in-school and at-home libraries. There are plans to have a library of 500 books in each classroom over the next few years. In addition, the school creates a minimum of four opportunities during the school year when students can obtain books for their personal libraries, often for free. TAS has entered into

partnerships with several programs, including America Reads, Reading Is Fundamental, Inc., and the Joint Educational Partnership at the University of Southern California, so that students gain additional opportunities to read, discuss and own literature.

Independent reading is also an important part of the process. Kindergarten and first-grade students are expected to read ten minutes per day outside of the reading required for classwork. Students in grades 2 through 8 are expected to read for one additional hour per day. Parents sign a contract requiring them to read at home with their children and report the title of the book to the teacher. Recognizing that, for various reasons, not all parents may be comfortable with this requirement, the school offers workshops to show parents how to read with their children. For instance, the school encourages parents who do not speak English or who are most comfortable in their native language to read in that language. Teachers at TAS know that research has shown that being read to in their family's first language demonstrates important general concepts about reading that makes learning to read in English a more navigable process for young children.



A TAS STUDENT WORKING WITH A RIF VOLUNTEER.



A TAS STUDENT ENJOYS A QUIET MOMENT READING CHARLOTTE'S WEB.



Research also informs the assessments employed by The Accelerated School and how the school uses the information. Teachers use frequent and varied means of assessing student progress. K through 5 students are tested at the beginning, middle and end of the school year to assess various concepts for various age groups. For K through 2 they assess phonemic awareness, phonics, and comprehension skills; for grades 3 through 5 they assess vocabulary, writing, decoding, and comprehension. Several standardized tests are administered at various times during the year including the Stanford 9 and a California writing assessment for grades 4 and 5. Finally, teachers use daily and/or weekly classroom-based assessments such as quizzes, end-of-unit exams, anecdotal records, and running records. The result is that teachers are well-informed about the progress of all of their students on specific skills. Any student who is found deficient in a skill necessary to proficient reading is referred to the Intervention Coordinator before an underdeveloped skill can turn into a serious challenge.

Test scores over the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years indicate that TAS' approach to reading is working. Second grade language scores jumped 21 percentile points in one year, and fourth grade reading and spelling scores increased by 21 and 24 points, respectively. Teachers feel that one of the reasons they have been able to achieve the present level of success is because of their ability to collaborate with each other, which is in part a function of the school population size and in part a function of the school design. Teachers participate in both selecting and implementing the reading program.

TAS also functions on the premise that the whole child is important—mind and body—and

so both should be trained. A unique feature of TAS' physical education program is a yoga component that the children love and that they find enhances their ability to concentrate. The yoga program is designed to increase student awareness of body, mind, self, and community.



TAS STUDENTS SHARING BOOKS DURING AN INFORMAL READING SESSION.

In the end, it may be the sense of community that The Accelerated School works so hard to foster that contributes most to the success of its students. Teachers functioning as integral parts of the decision-making and teaching processes working with students and parents who are encouraged to be contributing and productive members of a dynamic educational experience create a powerful formula for achievement. ★

*"The teachers actually listen to you and you don't find that in other schools around here."*

*- Zachary, 13 (TIME "Schools of the Year 2001" article)*



## THE ACCELERATED SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

|                               |   |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
|-------------------------------|---|------------------|-----|----------|-----|-------|----|----------------|----|--------------------|-----|-------------------|----|
| <b>Date Founded:</b>          | 1994  |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Principal:</b>             | Mr. Johnathan Williams and Mr. Kevin Sved, Co-directors   |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Charter Authorizer:</b>    | Los Angeles Unified School District   |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Grades Served:</b>         | K-8   |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Enrollment:</b>            | 263   |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Teacher/Student Ratio:</b> | 1:20 (K-3); 1:29(4-8)   |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Average Class Size:</b>    | 25  |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Student Body Profile:</b>  | <table> <tr> <td>African American</td><td>39%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Hispanic</td><td>59%</td></tr> <tr> <td>White</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Asian American</td><td>2%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Free/Reduced Lunch</td><td>90%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Special Education</td><td>0%</td></tr> </table> | African American | 39% | Hispanic | 59% | White | 0% | Asian American | 2% | Free/Reduced Lunch | 90% | Special Education | 0% |
| African American              | 39%   |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| Hispanic                      | 59%   |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| White                         | 0%  |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| Asian American                | 2%  |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| Free/Reduced Lunch            | 90%   |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| Special Education             | 0%  |                  |     |          |     |       |    |                |    |                    |     |                   |    |

### Test Scores and Improvement Areas:

*Stanford Achievement Test, 9th Edition (SAT 9) results*

|                 | Second Grade |      | Third Grade |      | Fourth Grade |      | Fifth Grade |      |
|-----------------|--------------|------|-------------|------|--------------|------|-------------|------|
|                 | 2000         | 2001 | 2000        | 2001 | 2000         | 2001 | 2000        | 2001 |
| <b>Reading</b>  | 44           | 48   | 45          | 46   | 66           | 54   | 45          | 49   |
| <b>Language</b> | 38           | 59   | 53          | 54   | 41           | 58   | 58          | 56   |
| <b>Spelling</b> | 53           | 62   | 52          | 56   | 29           | 53   | 45          | 52   |

### School Philosophy:

- ★ All students treated as gifted
- ★ Community
- ★ Unity of purpose
- ★ Empowerment coupled with responsibility
- ★ Building on strengths
- ★ Collaboration



## *Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School*

FRANKLIN, MASSACHUSETTS

Temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity and humility—in his autobiography, Benjamin Franklin identified these virtues as the basis for his plan for self-improvement. Over two hundred years later, in a middle-class Massachusetts town named for him, Franklin's words provided the answer for some parents who were searching for an element missing in their children's education. The founding parents of the Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School (BFCCS), in Franklin, Massachusetts, envisioned and created a school in which teachers attended to the development of their children's character, as well as to academics.

As it happened, the belief that the school community should constantly promote character education became one of the "Four Pillars" on which BFCCS bases its mission. The

Four Pillars are the beliefs that (1) parents are the primary educators of their children, (2) curriculum should follow the Core Knowledge Sequence, (3) students at all levels should participate in community service and (4) character education should be integrated into all aspects of education. According to the school's principal, Ruth Gass, the clarity of this mission is a critical factor in the school's success.

*Benjamin Franklin Classical is one of the first charter schools in Massachusetts to have its charter renewed through 2005.*

With its nationally-recognized character education program, BFCCS has received several grants to develop its program and create materials that can be distributed to other schools interested in starting new programs for character education. Focusing on the four cardinal virtues—justice, temperance, fortitude and prudence—students at Ben Franklin are sure to receive recognition when they act in a way that typifies one of these virtues. This recognition may occur informally when a teacher stops them in the hallway to point out their virtuous behavior or it may involve a formal commendation at the next school-wide "Forest of Virtues" assembly. Either way, the student has constant positive reinforcement. Just ask one BFCCS parent who said, "When my child proudly called to tell me that he was commended at the school assembly, I knew that this is what cell phones were made for!"



CELEBRATING BEN FRANKLIN'S BIRTHDAY WITH A BIOGRAPHY OF THE SCHOOL'S NAME SAKE.

BFCCS Principal Ruth Gass has a philosophy about teachers and curriculum: she believes in providing her teachers with a strong framework and letting them build on it. In fact, she attributes the school's success in large part to the flexibility allowed to teachers. The reading teachers at BFCCS (with the assent of the Board) chose Open Court Reading to supplement the overall Core Knowledge curriculum. In the words of K through 2 Coordinator Elizabeth Henderson, "the Open Court program is so rich in content, we could be teaching language arts all day long." With flexibility and the appropriate curriculum, teachers have the tools to address the needs of all children, whether they are visual, auditory or tactile learners.

Working in teams under the leadership of one of three coordinators, the reading and language arts teachers meet regularly to share ideas and to develop benchmarks for skill mastery by grade. BFCCS teachers also have control over their classroom budgets, as well as budgets for professional development, association memberships, and trade and research periodicals. In all respects, they are encouraged to keep up with scientific research and other

developments in their areas of expertise. Recent reading test results indicate the BFCCS approach is working. On the English/Language Arts portion of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exam administered in the spring of 2002, BFCCS fourth-graders outperformed their peers in each of the 15 school districts from which BFCCS draws its students. On the fourth-grade math portion of the same exam, the scores at BFCCS were the highest of any school district in the state.

*"I like the closeness of this school, the small size and small classes. It's the best way to learn. I have nothing to hide from anyone here, so I can concentrate on more important things."*

*- Student, Dana G.*

Assessment at BFCCS has many meanings. In addition to multiple external assessment exams, the reading teachers make use of many internal assessment tools, including the extensive reading comprehension component of Open Court Reading, as well as Marie Clay's "running records" from Reading Recovery. They are also encouraged to develop their own assessment tools and to share results with the other teachers. Parent volunteers in the classroom afford the teachers the time to devote individual attention to those students needing it. Student assessments and progress reports are shared regularly with parents by telephone and in parent-teacher conferences. Students needing intervention receive support from the reading specialist, classroom aides, and volunteer tutors.



FOURTH GRADE AND KINDERGARTEN  
"READING BUDDIES" PROGRAM.

In a nutshell, Ben Franklin is a place where parents have used the charter school model to

*Teacher flexibility means that when BFCCS teachers complained that traditional report cards were not adequate to describe to parents their assessment process or the student's progress, the administration invited them to design new report cards that work. The result—within just a few weeks, teachers had developed report cards that are customized by grade and tuned to the specific skills assessed.*

## Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School

### Kindergarten Report of Student Progress - School Year 2000-2001

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

**Emerging:** The student shows some understanding of this goal. He/she requires frequent support.

**Practicing:** The student is acquiring skill toward this goal. He/she can work independently some of the time. The student requires support.

**Refining:** The student demonstrates skill toward this goal. He/she can work independently most of the time. The student requires some support.

**Achieving:** The student demonstrates competence on this goal. He/she is able to work on this goal in an independent and efficient manner.

Key: NA = Not applicable for term. M = Modified grade

#### Literacy

##### **Reading Strategies**

- ★ Recognizes uppercase letters
- ★ Recognizes lowercase letters
- ★ Discriminates initial sounds
- ★ Discriminates rhyming sounds
- ★ Associates correct sounds with letters
- ★ Understands left to right progression

##### **Comprehension**

- ★ Recalls events and details of story
- ★ Arranges events in sequences

##### **Oral Communication**

- ★ Recognizes uppercase letters
- ★ Recognizes lowercase letters

##### **Written Communication**

- ★ Writes uppercase letters
- ★ Writes lowercase letters
- ★ Prints first and last name
- ★ Beginning to spell phonetically

prioritize the elements that they feel are essential for their children's education. Within the framework of the "Four Pillars," teachers are encouraged to take the initiative to implement the program in the way that they feel works best. Students are encouraged to

develop their whole person, including their academics, their character and their sense of self-worth. As one Ben Franklin student so aptly put it, "The school not only works on developing the size of your brain, but also the size of your heart." ★

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN CLASSICAL CHARTER SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

|                               |                                       |     |  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----|--|
| <b>Date Founded:</b>          | September 1995                        |     |  |
| <b>Principal:</b>             | Ruth Gass                             |     |  |
| <b>Charter Authorizer:</b>    | Massachusetts Department of Education |     |  |
| <b>Grades Served:</b>         | K-8                                   |     |  |
| <b>Enrollment:</b>            | 372                                   |     |  |
| <b>Teacher/Student Ratio:</b> | 1:14                                  |     |  |
| <b>Average Class Size:</b>    | 22                                    |     |  |
| <b>Student Body Profile:</b>  | African American                      | 1%  |  |
|                               | White                                 | 97% |  |
|                               | Asian American                        | 1%  |  |
|                               | Free/Reduced Lunch                    | 0%  |  |
|                               | Special Education                     | 18% |  |

### Test Scores and Improvement Areas:

#### California Achievement Test, March 2001

| Current Grade | Mean Percentile for Reading |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 1             | 80                          |
| 2             | 92                          |
| 3             | 94                          |
| 4             | 92                          |
| 5             | 84                          |

*Showing scores for students taking test under regular test conditions.*

### School Mission

To assist parents in their role as primary educators of their children by providing the children with a classical academic education integrated with sound character development and community service.



## Benjamin Franklin Charter School

MESA, QUEEN CREEK, AND  
GILBERT, ARIZONA

The ripple effect of success at the Benjamin Franklin Charter School (BFCS) is being felt far beyond the school's three campuses in Mesa, Queen Creek, and Gilbert. The district schools in these Arizona towns have had to make big changes to address parent demands and to retain the students who have not already flocked to these charter schools for their education. The result is an entire public elementary school system (charter schools and district schools) that has made critical changes to improve the quality of its students' education. This, perhaps, is the very definition of a charter school success.

The Benjamin Franklin Charter School was opened in 1995 by Arizona state legislator, Eddie Farnsworth, along with two other local businessmen, who all had grave concerns about the direction the public schools were taking—weakening curricula, low test scores, low morale and increasing gang violence. As it turned out, he was not alone in his concerns nor were they new. Mr. Farnsworth's vision for a charter school would build upon a foundation laid in the mid-70's by a group of parents who

had lobbied for and succeeded in opening an "alternative" district school with a back-to-basics curriculum in the Lehi neighborhood of Mesa, Arizona. Using the cutting-edge Arizona charter school law, Mr. Farnsworth would improve on this alternative, creating a school with more flexibility, more opportunity for parent involvement, and smaller campuses.

The Mesa campus was the first campus to open with about 175 students in grades K through 3 in 1995. Now, each of the school's three campuses has between 300 and 500 students with the Mesa and Gilbert campuses serving grades K through 6 and the Queen Creek campus serving grades K through 8. The student populations at the BFCS campuses are between 10 and 20 percent minority, and between 3 and 25 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. The students are accepted on a first-come-first-served basis, and the three campuses have waiting lists totaling over 500 students.

The reading program at BFCS is part of an overall back-to-basics curriculum. Following

*Ben, a BFCS student, struggled with restlessness and poor grades from the beginning. By second grade, Ben's frustration, anxiety and tension had escalated to the point where Ben was demonstrating aggressive and harmful behaviors. When a special education plan was developed by a multi-disciplinary team along with Ben's parents, his aggressive behaviors subsided. He began smiling and identifying his own needs. Over the course of a year, his 70 phonogram monthly test scores went from 44 incorrect answers down to only 5. Ben's reading fluency (of a twelve-sentence passage) went from 13 minutes to 2 minutes and 25 seconds.*

the lead of the "alternative" school that had been created in the mid-70's, the teachers and governing board elected to use the Spalding Method reading program outlined in *The Writing Road to Reading*, by Romalda Spalding. This program is a total language arts approach, which provides explicit, sequential, multi-sensory instruction in spelling, writing, and listening/reading comprehension. According to Principal Debra Stoddard, internally-tracked test scores over the past 20 years have validated the choice of the Spalding Method as an effective program.

BFCS students devote three hours of their school day to reading and related skills. The curricula chosen for other subjects, even math, also include a lot of reading. The Spalding Method is supplemented with Open Court Reading (an older version of the program now in reprint), materials from Harcourt Brace, and booklists for independent and teacher reading. While teachers have flexibility in how the curriculum materials are delivered, they must

follow the school's stringent time analysis which dictates how many minutes are spent on each subject each day. Teachers are instructed to model their thinking processes for students and to read aloud to their students daily, modeling and encouraging a love of reading.

To say that student progress in reading and language arts is assessed frequently at BFCS would be an understatement. In addition to annual pre-tests and post-tests for essential skills, the school administers two state-mandated standardized tests and a privately contracted standardized test. Each month students also undergo testing in the 70 phonograms, the Morrison-McCall Spelling program and the McCall-Crabbs Reading Comprehension program. These scores are tracked at the student, classroom, school and, where feasible, district levels. The upshot of all this testing? The students learn to master test-taking skills and according to Ms. Stoddard, "The kids don't suffer from any testing anxiety."



EACH DAY AT BEN FRANKLIN STARTS WITH THE FLAG CEREMONY AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE "CORE VIRTUE" WORD OF THE DAY.

Individual help and tutoring with teachers is arranged either before or after school or during recess for children needing extra help based on the on-going the assessments. Teachers also use the Spalding materials to guide how test scores should be used to modify instruction.

*"I reentered the teaching field with enthusiasm, but also with a bit of trepidation. ... Having left college years earlier feeling very unprepared to teach reading, I was thrilled at the prospect of receiving specific training to enable me to be the best teacher possible. After two weeks of intensive Spalding training, I entered the classroom with a method of teaching that was very precise and direct."*

*- Linda, BFCS third-grade teacher*

Teachers come to BFCS with and without actual classroom experience, but all are certified. All are required to take the first Spalding program training course, which includes 44 hours of instruction over the summer or during a semester. Teachers staying on past the first year take the first Spalding course again for reinforcement and later are given the opportunity to take the second Spalding training course. In addition, new teachers are assigned to experienced mentors who provide guidance and support throughout the school year. Teachers also receive support when teachers from different grade levels meet in "child study teams" to share ideas about the needs of a particular student. Finally, quarterly training meetings are held for teachers at all three campuses.

It seems that this professional training and support for teachers has made BFCS a great place to work and a great place to learn. Student success stories are plentiful, including the story about the little boy "Tim" who came to BFCS having been adopted from an orphanage in Thailand. He spoke little English and had serious physical problems stemming from malnutrition. After two years of instruction, with a devoted teacher and a carefully crafted individual education plan, Tim was reading and writing at the second grade level.

Then, there was "Bobby" who joined BFCS in the third grade spelling slightly below average and reading slightly above average. His parents knew that in the right environment he could do better. At the end of the third-grade Spalding curriculum, Bobby's spelling grade level had increased four and one-half grade levels, and his reading increased two grade levels. In the words of Bobby's teacher, "The joy of learning was evident in Bobby as he thrived in our program. Bobby's story is just one of many, as our students excel with curriculum that sets them up to achieve!" ★

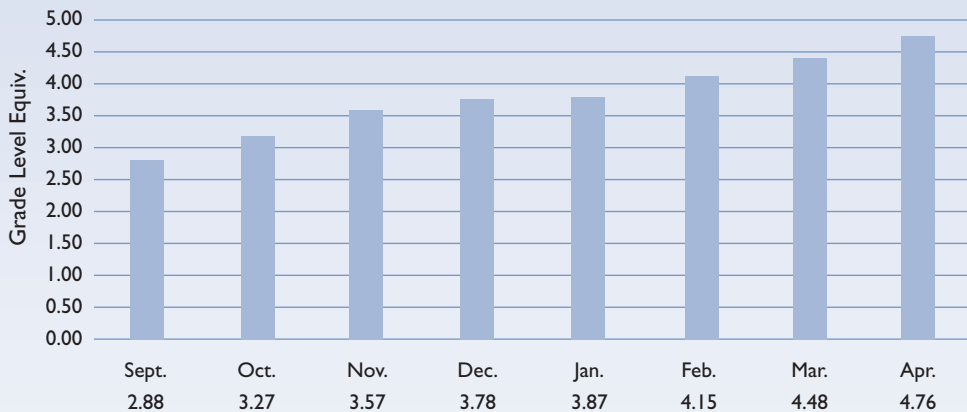


## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN CHARTER SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Date Founded:</b>          | Mesa campus – September, 1995<br>Queen Creek campus – September, 1996<br>Gilbert campus – September, 1997 |
| <b>Principal:</b>             | Debra Stoddard, Mesa campus<br>Sherion Jackson, Queen Creek campus<br>Jack McLeod, Gilbert campus         |
| <b>Charter Authorizer:</b>    | Arizona State Board for Charter Schools   |
| <b>Grades Served:</b>         | K-6, Mesa campus<br>K-8, Queen Creek campus<br>K-6, Gilbert campus  |
| <b>Enrollment:</b>            | About 525 at each campus  |
| <b>Teacher/Student Ratio:</b> | 1:30  |
| <b>Average Class Size:</b>    | 30  |

### Test Scores and Improvement Areas

**McCall Crabbs Reading - Grade 2 Average Progress (Based on 7 years data)**



### School Philosophy

To emphasize the teaching of basic skills and information and to

- ★ Train the intellect
- ★ Teach skills
- ★ Instill a sense of pride in and respect for self, others and country
- ★ Equip students with the necessary skills to be decision makers and problem solvers
- ★ Prepare students for the world outside by challenging them to compete for achievement of standards in the classroom
- ★ Develop an atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance of all students regardless of physical appearance and culture



## *Cherry Creek Academy*

ENGLEWOOD, COLORADO

"We have to offer families something extraordinary if we expect them to drive past their neighborhood schools twice a day to attend our school, some as long as a 45 minute drive each way," said Donna Fitzgerald, the Director of Cherry Creek Academy in Englewood, Colorado. That challenge is significant given that Cherry Creek Academy is located in the highest rated school district in the state. With 450 students enrolled in grades K through 8, a waiting list of nearly 1,300 students, and kindergarten students reading and writing at a third grade level, Cherry Creek Academy is clearly meeting the challenge.

Like many other charter schools, Cherry Creek Academy was formed by a group of concerned elementary school parents who wanted a

different education model for their children. Reading was central to the initial meetings of the school organizers as they sought to adopt a curriculum that was rich in phonics instead of the whole language teaching method used by the district. In addition, the parent group wanted a different model for the overall school curriculum; one that was adopted school-wide and offered students consistency from year to year, rather than what they considered to be a "fragmented" classroom-based curriculum.

To help identify options for school curricula, a subcommittee of parents was formed to undertake an extensive review of alternatives. This parent group, none of whom were educators, conducted a disciplined review of program options, all with an eye toward



CHERRY CREEK ACADEMY 8TH GRADE TRIP TO WASHINGTON, DC – SPRING 2002

identifying programs that met the larger group's interest in phonics and a structured, interconnected school-wide curriculum. The committee identified Core Knowledge as the basis of their overall program. Core knowledge provides each student with an extensive knowledge of relationships and specific facts with which to think and function in our literate with society. For a reading program, the group selected Open Court Reading, a research-based reading program with a systematic phonics program. The school supplements instruction with Core Knowledge textbooks, novels that are used in conjunction with the Core Knowledge program, the Riggs Spelling program, and Junior Great Books.

"Seat time per year" was also important to the founders and they structured a program that provides 154 more hours of instruction per year than local schools—a schedule that translates to an extra full year of instruction over the kindergarten through grade eight time period. The extra time in the classroom is



SHANNON G ACCEPTS THE STATE TOP ESSAY AWARD FOR GRADES 6-8 AT THE STATE CAPITOL IN FEBRUARY 2002. THE AWARD WAS PRESENTED BY SENATOR JOHN ANDREWS. JOINING THE CEREMONY ARE HER PARENTS, HER TEACHER, MRS. BACHMAN, AND THE DIRECTOR OF CHERRY CREEK ACADEMY, MRS. FITZGERALD.

paying off. Just six years after their 1995 opening, Cherry Creek Academy was the recipient of the John Irwin Colorado Schools of Excellence award from the Colorado Department of Education. This award of excellence is granted to schools for outstanding achievement on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). Ninety-eight and one hundred percent of Cherry Creek Academy's 4th and 5th graders, respectively, scored proficient and above on the state exam.

*CCA media specialist, Judy Sauerteig, is the author of Science to Go, published by Libraries Unlimited, Inc. The activity book is designed to integrate science and literacy. Sample activities are included in activities section of this guide.*

When asked about the factors that lead to the success of Cherry Creek Academy students, Principal Donna Fitzgerald says, "It all has to do with the values highlighted by our mission statement—motivated children and responsible parents working together with dedicated teachers and quality education. Core Knowledge is so complete. Our teachers pay close attention to assessment results and provide students with supplemental assistance as needed." Teachers are also able to recommend students to receive free after-school or summer tutoring.

Parents play a very important role at Cherry Creek Academy, as evidenced by their extraordinary commitments. First, they commit to transport their child to school each day! Second, parents volunteer at least 40 hours per year to the school. "Many parents volunteer in the classroom and often support the classroom teacher and paid teacher assistants with

phonemic awareness support for younger students," said Fitzgerald. Parents also sign a parent contract and commit to read aloud to their child at least two hours per week.

*"I will read to my child no less than two hours per week and supervise my child's homework to assure that all assignments are completed on schedule."*

*- Parent Contract Excerpt*

Information and communication are also important at Cherry Creek. Standardized tests are administered three times a year, with results used to inform parents and guide program instruction. Additionally, weekly progress reports are provided to any parent who requests them. Report cards are issued quarterly. Cherry Creek issues letter grades on daily assignments, tests, and report cards. Students quickly learn the correlation between good study habits and grades and are rewarded for excellent achievement. To supplement the information included on quarterly report cards, mid-quarter reports are issued regularly. A "Monday letter" is shared with parents weekly to inform them about the upcoming classroom activities and instruction. Teachers are observed and offered feedback on a regular basis.

All of the effort being made by students, families, teachers, and administrators can be observed through the superior student achievement. Students who in the fall were reading at the 1.5 grade level were reading at the 3.5 or 4.0 level by the end of the school year. Ninety percent of first-graders are reading at the fourth grade level. As a challenge to further stretch performance, Cherry Creek Academy has set a goal to achieve a state rating

of "excellent" for its 6th, 7th, and 8th grade reading programs—to match the honor it received this year for its kindergarten through grade five reading programs. Additionally, through a parent referral, the school recently entered into an arrangement with Costco Wholesale Club to place employee volunteers, who are then trained in phonemic awareness, in classrooms for a six week one-on-one tutoring program.

Underlying all the past success, as well as the goals for future success, is the school's philosophy of expectations. When asked about this Ms. Fitzgerald said, "We attribute our success to the fact that we have high expectations for students and we ask a lot from them. In return, we provide students the materials and resources to achieve." ★

*"An eel is an amphibian. Eels are very dangerous. The ribbon moray eel, which is found in the Pacific Ocean, has front nostrils that look like leaves."*

*- Excerpt from the Animal World  
report written by Derek, 3rd grade.*

## CHERRY CREEK ACADEMY SNAPSHOT

|                               |                              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Date Founded:</b>          | School opened September 1995 |
| <b>Principal:</b>             | Donna Fitzgerald             |
| <b>Charter Authorizer:</b>    | Cherry Creek School District |
| <b>Grades Served:</b>         | K-8                          |
| <b>Enrollment:</b>            | 450                          |
| <b>Teacher/Student Ratio:</b> | 1:25; 1:19 with aides        |
| <b>Average Class Size:</b>    | 25                           |
| <b>Student Body Profile:</b>  | African American 2%          |
|                               | Hispanic 3%                  |
|                               | White 92%                    |
|                               | Asian American 3%            |

### Test Scores and Improvement Areas:

#### Colorado Student Achievement Program –

*Percentage of Students Scoring "Proficient or Above" on State Reading Exam*

| Grade     | School Setting | % "Proficient or Above" |
|-----------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 3rd Grade | School         | 82%                     |
|           | District       | 81%                     |
|           | State          | 72%                     |
| 4th Grade | School         | 98%                     |
|           | District       | 75%                     |
|           | State          | 63%                     |
| 5th Grade | School         | 100%                    |
|           | District       | 77%                     |
|           | State          | 64%                     |

#### Iowa Test of Basic Schools – Grade 4

*Mean Percentile Rank and Percent Above National Average*

|               | Average % Rank | % Above National Average |
|---------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| School        | 81%            | 90%                      |
| District      | 71%            | 72%                      |
| National Norm | 50%            | 50%                      |

### School Philosophy

- ★ Emphasis on phonics instruction in reading using literature-based program
- ★ Exceptional staff and administration
- ★ Relationship between good study habits and good grades – letter grades serve as measurement
- ★ Uniforms
- ★ Longer school day and year
- ★ Parental involvement and governance
- ★ Free after-school and summer tutoring



## Cross Creek Charter Academy

BYRON CENTER, MICHIGAN

Bruce Bradford, Principal of the Cross Creek Charter Academy, was a few minutes delayed in joining our morning telephone interview. As it turns out, he was busy on the playground where the kids had named him Captain of the ship that was landing at Ellis Island that morning. Who can blame him for his reluctance to "disembark" from this exciting reenactment and come inside?

In real life, Mr. Bradford runs a tight ship at Cross Creek Charter Academy in Byron Center, a rural area of West Michigan near the school districts of Kentwood, Wyoming, Caledonia and Byron Center. Motivated by local and state-wide deficiencies in overall performance of students in public schools, Mr. Bradford and the Cross Creek parents embarked on a journey to realize the Cross

Creek mission, which is focused on character-based education, strong curriculum, high expectations and mastery of basic skills. Although only five years old, the school is already producing sound academic results and high parent satisfaction levels.

Cross Creek was founded in 1997 by the National Heritage Academies, a for-profit education management organization. Its charter was granted by Central Michigan University, the primary sponsor of charter schools in Michigan. The school opened with 113 students enrolled in kindergarten through fifth grade and, today, has almost 500 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Led by Mr. Bradford, who has 30 years experience in traditional public education, a five-member Board governs the school. National Heritage Academies manages the school under an annual contract providing for curriculum, marketing, human resources, and development services.

*I, the undersigned parent, understand and agree with the mission of the Cross Creek Charter Academy: "Working in partnership with parents and community, the Cross Creek Academy will offer a challenging, character-based education. By providing a strong curriculum and an atmosphere of high expectations, students can master basic skills and realize full academic potential in preparation for higher education and life-long learning."*

*- Excerpt from Cross Creek Parent Contract*

National Heritage Academies developed the school curriculum around a back-to-basics approach emphasizing reading and mathematics. Using the E. D. Hirsch Core Knowledge Sequence as a base for the curriculum, Cross Creek uses Open Court Reading as its reading series, because it dovetails closely with the back-to-basics philosophy. The Open Court program allows for teacher customization, and teachers can supplement the curriculum with additional resources through their own discretionary budgets. "With less bureaucracy in the teaching

programs," says Mr. Bradford, "our teachers have a sense of ownership and feel less alienated and disconnected."

Cross Creek has made a conscious decision to assign a high priority to its reading programs. Students spend 6.5 hours each day in the classroom, a longer school day than is required by state law. The extra time is devoted largely to reading and language skill development. The Cross Creek reading teachers are all required to attend on-going Open Court training in teaching phonics. In addition, a reading specialist supports teachers in the classroom working with students on a one-on-one or small group basis. First-graders who are "at risk" in reading are assigned to a para-professional tutor to help them along.

Cross Creek students are assessed regularly through formal and informal testing. On first enrollment, the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT), a standardized, national norm-referenced assessment tool is administered to determine the new student's reading ability level. This test is also administered at the end of the student's first year to gauge progress during the year. Thereafter, the MAT is

administered once a year. When comparing April, 2001 results of the MAT in reading to the April, 2000 results, Cross Creek students averaged one year and two months progress, putting the school right on track with respect to its stated annual goals.

Students at Cross Creek must also take the state-required Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) exam. The reading portion of this exam is administered in the fourth grade. For the past three years, the percentage of Cross Creek students passing the exam has exceeded the Michigan state average. During the 2001 – 02 school year, the State of Michigan gave Cross Creek a "Golden Apple Award" for outstanding achievement on the fourth and fifth grade MEAP in reading, writing, math and

*In the 2001–02 school year, Cross Creek was one of 19 schools in West Michigan to receive the state's "Golden Apple Award" for outstanding achievement on the state-mandated exam (MEAP) in reading, writing, math and science for the previous two years.*



CROSS CREEK CHARTER ACADEMY AND THE GOLDEN APPLE AWARD.



science for the two previous school years. The award includes a grant of \$50,000, a portion of which Cross Creek is using to develop curriculum enhancements appropriate for its "gifted and talented" students.

Parents of Cross Creek students are also committed to supporting the school's stated priorities. A vast array of volunteer activities are organized by a designated volunteer coordinator and parents have their own designated room at the school to meet and perform their volunteer duties. Parents are urged to spend at least 20 hours each year at the school tutoring students in reading, supervising at lunch and on the playground and serving on parent committees. Teachers, freed from lunch and recess duty, use the time to plan, attend meetings and spend time with students who need extra help.

Parents are clearly pleased with how Cross Creek is serving their children. The school has consistently had a very high rate (98.5% in the

2000–01 school year) of parental attendance at parent-teacher conferences. In addition, in response to a survey of parents in the spring of 2001, over 96% of parents responded that they agreed the school was delivering on its promises of academic excellence, parental involvement and moral guidance.

*"It is especially important to me that we are able to work as a team with the teachers and administration to provide the best education possible."*

*- Cross Creek Parent*

The Cross Creek synthesis of excellent academics, parental involvement and high expectations is a charter school recipe for success. In the words of Principal Bradford, "We don't accept mediocrity here. We have the potential to change the whole face of this community and maybe the country by providing a good educational program in our school." ★



LANGUAGE ARTS STUDENTS AT CROSS CREEK ENGAGED IN SPIRITED DISCUSSION.



QUIET READING TIME IN A CROSS CREEK CLASSROOM.



## CROSS CREEK CHARTER ACADEMY SNAPSHOT

|                               |                             |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Date Founded:</b>          | May 1997                    |
| <b>Principal:</b>             | Bruce Bradford              |
| <b>Charter Authorizer:</b>    | Central Michigan University |
| <b>Grades Served:</b>         | K-8                         |
| <b>Enrollment:</b>            | 498                         |
| <b>Teacher/Student Ratio:</b> | 1:14.7                      |
| <b>Average Class Size:</b>    | 19                          |
| <b>Student Body Profile:</b>  |                             |
|                               | African American 2%         |
|                               | Hispanic 2%                 |
|                               | White 96%                   |
|                               | Free/Reduced Lunch 11.6%    |
|                               | Special Education 10.3%     |

### Test Scores and Improvement Areas:

**Metropolitan Achievement Test (MET-7)** School Year 2000–01 Grade Level Equivalent Scores

| Grade                                    | Overall Development |
|--|---------------------|
| 1  | 2.9                 |
| 2  | 4.2                 |
| 3  | 5.3                 |
| 4  | 6.4                 |
| 5  | 8.0                 |
| 6  | 8.4                 |
| 7  | 8.9                 |
| 8  | 10.3                |
| <b>School Average Grade Level Growth</b> | <b>1.2</b>          |

### School Moral Focus

Respect, Perseverance, Self-Control, Gratitude, Integrity, Courage, Compassion, Wisdom, Civility, and Encouragement

*The moral focus is central to the Cross Creek Charter Academy classroom. Each month a different character quality is emphasized. Teachers discuss this quality with the students, model it, and encourage students to demonstrate it as well. The moral focus is integrated with literature and other subject matter in an effort to make it as relevant to daily living as possible.*

- Excerpt from Cross Creek Parent/Student Handbook

When a young Paul Orfalea (the founder of Kinkos) heard his classmates read out loud, to him it was as if "angels whispered words in their ears" (Morris 2002). To the students at Einstein Montessori School it may seem almost as if they have found their own angels in Zach Osbrach, the founder and director of the school, and his faculty. Mr. Orfalea, Mr. Osbrach and most of the Einstein Montessori students have dyslexia (as does between 15 and 20 percent of the general population, by some estimates). What all of these individuals share are both the frustration of struggling without succeeding in a traditional public school and the inexpressible relief of finding somebody who believed they could succeed and who showed them how.

Mr. Osbrach believes that many children who encounter reading, writing and spelling problems that are not a result of a disability or a sensory impairment are underserved by traditional public schools. His own experience as a dyslexic in the public school system was terribly frustrating and led him to feel as an adult that he was "unemployable." Because of this, he found the most rewarding professional

*"Thank you for the Einstein School. At least look at what you started. It was sort of hard for me. I was teased sometimes for no good reason, and I felt like an outcast . . . This school, not only gave me hope, it saved my life!"*

*- Ashley, student*

path was to establish his own company (which he did several times with repeated success). Then, several years ago, he learned that there are effective strategies that can help people with information processing deficiencies learn how to read. It was a galvanizing moment. His background as a successful entrepreneur despite his dyslexia, coupled with his knowledge that many dyslexics have overcome it to become highly successful, became the motivation to start a charter school for children with language processing difficulties.

Zach Osbrach opened the first Einstein Montessori School (EMS) in 1999; a second school will open in 2003. The name of this school is meant to be symbolic. Albert Einstein

***Well-known people thought to have dyslexia:***

*Scott Adams, "Dilbert" creator*

*Whoopi Goldberg, actor*

*Florence Haseltine, M.D., Ph.D., National Institutes of Health*

*Jay Leno, host of The Tonight Show*

*Craig McCaw, founder of McCaw Cellular*

*Charles Schwab, founder & chairman of Charles Schwab & Co.*

*Wendy Wasserstein, playwright*

is thought to have been a dyslexic whose contributions to science might not have been realized had his parents not sought the right learning environment for him. Dr. Maria Montessori's name represents an approach to education (revolving around the Socratic principle) which is hands-on, multi-sensory and which urges teachers to teach by asking. These symbols mesh well with the mission of the school which is "...to continue to learn from each other, from the education community, from the community at large and from each child and parent who crosses our threshold because we are a learning organization."

The school started with 54 students from schools around the Alachau County and is now at full capacity with nearly 100 students in grades 3 through 8. Although originally designed to be a K through 6 school, the staff realized early on that trying to fill classes in grades K through 2 would be difficult for two reasons. First, since dyslexia can be difficult to diagnose, most school systems don't identify dyslexic kids that early. Second, because EMS is considered a special school, parents are reluctant to send their children there for their early years.

How is the Einstein Montessori School structured to foster learning in a population for which most approaches have already failed? To start with, the school does not use the phrase "learning-disabled," a label that Mr. Osbrach feels has done a disservice to his students in their previous schools. Additionally, since all of the students at this school need special attention in some area of learning, there is no need to put them into "special needs" classrooms which in traditional schools also include emotionally or mentally handicapped children. Finally, all staff and administration work very hard to help the students see themselves as learners. As one parent wrote to

the Director, "For many of the children at the Einstein Montessori School, my son included, learning and succeeding are long forgotten experiences." The staff recognizes that the main achievements for these students, and perhaps the ones that will serve them best throughout their lives, are a renewed sense of self-confidence and a rekindled desire to learn.

The Director's philosophy in hiring teachers for this school, garnered from his experience building successful businesses, is that you should hire experts to do the job and then support them in their efforts. His goal is that all teachers will have subject-area expertise (often a master's degree) and certification in education. It is Mr. Osbrach's belief that teachers who have demonstrated mastery in their field of study are uniquely qualified to communicate their subject matter because their enthusiasm and deep knowledge enables them to engage students who became disconnected from the learning process while in traditional public schools. In addition, all of the LiPS® classroom teachers must be able to demonstrate that they are well-grounded in phonemic awareness skills. These skills will be the basis of much of what they do to help students overcome their reading difficulties. Finally, and arguably the most important aspect of the teaching process at the Einstein Montessori School is that, as Mr. Osbrach states, the teaching staff is required to find "the best method or methods that work for each child" and then is continually trained to meet that goal.

*"I can only say without hesitation that Einstein has been instrumental in helping my bright, funny daughter achieve her own unique 'human potential' and Einstein Montessori's effect on her life has been little short of miraculous."*

*- Janis, parent*

Students at EMS are tested to determine which part of language they have difficulty processing. Then teachers "blend different methodologies in a way that is not done in regular public schools" to create the best setting for learning for each child. To that end, the school uses several programs to develop the language processing skills of its students including the Lindamood Bell Phoneme Sequencing® Program (LiPS®), The Nancibell® Visualizing and Verbalizing® for Language Comprehension and Thinking Program, and the Wilson Reading program (which is based on the Orton Gillingham approach). The school will implement the Lindamood Bell Seeing Stars® program in the 2003 school year.

The LiPS® program is the cornerstone of the EMS instructional model. This class is taught by two speech therapists and an aide in a classroom with a teacher-student ratio of 1:6. Here children are taught to become aware of their mouth actions when they speak and that becomes the means of verifying sounds within words. The Nancibell® Visualizing and Verbalizing® program seeks to improve language comprehension by stimulating concept imagery. The Seeing Stars® program will help students develop their phonemic awareness skills and increase their sight word vocabulary and their spelling skills.

Finally, the Wilson Reading System, which was developed for children in third grade and beyond, is used to teach students fluent decoding skills using a "sound tapping" procedure.

At the Einstein Montessori School, computers are a key tool to defray some of the debilitating frustration and embarrassment that the students have experienced in traditional school settings. While the staff is careful that students use the computer as a tool not a crutch, they recognize that for some students it can be the difference between success and failure. At this school, students can use computers to learn the meaning of unknown or unrecognized words by highlighting them on the screen. They can compose papers for language arts classes on the computers by using voice recognition programs and they can use spelling and grammar check to verify their work.

The approach at the Einstein Montessori School is having a wonderful effect. By all accounts, parent satisfaction is high and the staff is utterly committed to the program, but, as one member of the board of directors stated, "... the greatest rewards are the positive changes in self-esteem, social behaviors, academic achievement and reading abilities that the majority of the students have made." ★



AN EMS STUDENT PRACTICING WORD RECOGNITION SKILLS USING SPECIALIZED SOFTWARE.

## EINSTEIN MONTESSORI SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

|   |                                  |                                 |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Date Founded:</b>                                | 1999                             |                                 |
| <b>Principal:</b>                                   | Zach Osbrach, Director           |                                 |
| <b>Charter Authorizer:</b>                          | Alachua County School Board      |                                 |
| <b>Grades Served:</b>                               | 3-8                              |                                 |
| <b>Enrollment:</b>                                  | 97                               |                                 |
| <b>Teacher/Student Ratio:</b>                       | 1:6                              |                                 |
| <b>Average Class Size:</b>                          | 17 (grades 3-5); 16 (grades 6-8) |                                 |
| <b>Student Body Profile:</b><br>(elementary grades) | African American                 | 21.4%                           |
|   | Hispanic                         | 7.1%                            |
|   | White                            | 64.3%                           |
|   | Other                            | 7.1%                            |
|   | Free/Reduced Lunch               | 54.8%                           |
|   | Special Education                | 80% of the students have an IEP |

### Test Scores and Improvement Areas

#### Woodcock Reading Master Test – Revised (WRMT-R)

|                         | December 2000<br>grade level equivalent | May 2001<br>grade level equivalent | Total<br>5-month gain* |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Grades 2 &amp; 3</b> | 2.4                                     | 3.0                                | .6                     |
| <b>Grade 4</b>          | 3.4                                     | 4.0                                | .6                     |
| <b>Grade 5</b>          | 3.7                                     | 4.2                                | .5                     |

\* Students enrolled at EMS for three years posted average annual gains of 1.175 years compared to .41 years at their prior schools.

### School Mission

- ★ To treat all children, parents, and staff members as dignified individuals who are laden with potential and worthy of respect
- ★ To seek out potential, foster growth, and search until we find solutions
- ★ To continue to learn from each other, from the educational community, from the community at large and from each child and parent who crosses our threshold



## *Friendship Edison Public Charter School - Chamberlain Campus*

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The largest elementary school in Washington, D.C.—the Chamberlain Campus of Friendship Edison School—becomes a very quiet place at 8:30 every morning when 900 students all hone their reading skills at the same time. Using the Success for All reading curriculum and organizing all students by ability, the school turns its attention to the skill from which all academic progress derives—the ability to read well. Every teacher teaches reading, and all subject matter is grist for the reading mill.

Recognizing that at least some of the at-risk students in D.C. required a different formula from traditional public schools, the Edison Schools (an education management company) and Friendship House (a community development organization) formed a partnership to open four schools in the area. The Chamberlain campus opened in 1998 with students from across D.C., nearly all of whom were African American and qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. Positive academic gains were achieved very soon. The Chamberlain campus saw a gain of 23 percentile points on the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-9) after the first four years of operation (Spring 1998 to Spring 2002). Jerlys Stewart, the Reading Coordinator for the Chamberlain campus, attributes the success of the school and its students to both the unique structure of the Edison schools design and to the Success for All (SFA) reading program.

The Chamberlain campus, like all other Edison schools, is organized into "houses," which

fosters a "small school within a large school" atmosphere. At this campus, the houses are named after prominent African Americans (e.g. Thurgood Marshall and Mary McLeod Bethune). There are approximately 100 students per house with three classroom teachers and one lead teacher. The students and teachers remain together for three years at a time, which promotes a sense of community and continuity which serves these students very well. Teachers come to know the students strengths and weaknesses and use that information to create an effective learning environment. In addition, an extended school year and an extended school day (in comparison to other D.C. area schools) add critical educational time and reduce the loss of knowledge normally attributed to long summer vacations.

*Jerlys Stewart, the Reading Coordinator for the Chamberlain campus, attributes the success of the school and its students to both the unique structure of the Edison school design and to the Success for All reading program.*

The SFA reading curriculum adds another layer of consistency to the student's experience because it is taught in a prescribed manner by teachers at both of the Friendship elementary schools (and at Edison schools across America). Students transferring from one Friendship school to another or to any Edison school usually make smooth transitions and lose little

knowledge in the process. Further, since parents and students are well-informed by the school staff about the curriculum and the kind of participation expected of them, the entire school community meets with greater success. The heart of the SFA program, however, is not only in its consistency, but also in its attention to phonemic awareness instruction and lots of exposure to reading and writing.

At the beginning of the school year, all students are assessed and placed in the appropriate level reading group. Edison teachers find that children achieve faster if they are placed at level rather than having to continually play catch up. Students are subsequently tested every eight weeks to insure that the reading material they are exposed to on a daily basis is at the right level of challenge for them. Reading period can, and often does, include whole group reading and comprehension exercises, partner reading, and small group work. Students who read below grade level also receive mandatory tutoring. To complement the daily reading

program, K through 2 students are required to complete 15 book reports per year and students in grades 3 through 5 are expected to complete 25 book reports per year.

In addition to the in-class reading and writing, often the competitions and celebrations held at the school revolve around reading and writing. Recently, the Chamberlain campus held a well-attended and fiercely-contested poetry "slam" and oratorical competition. Students recited original poetry and prose or delivered excerpts from speeches by such notables as Maya Angelou or Frederick Douglass. Winners in each category won cash prizes (donated by a local philanthropist) and all participants were treated to lunch and received a certificate of award for their presentation. Another popular event was a curriculum night held for parents, as an opportunity for them to see the environment in which their children are learning and to learn more about what the teachers are teaching. The house with the highest level of participation by parents won a



THE FRIENDSHIP EDISON PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL KINDERGARTEN CLASS



movie and popcorn day (with movies piped directly into the classroom via the closed-circuit television system).

Enhancing family literacy is an essential part of the mission of the Friendship Edison schools. The Chamberlain campus offers after school programs for parents to prepare for their GED, free childcare while they study and free books to bring home to augment their children's libraries. Families of students in third grade receive computers for home use. Summer programs include both summer school and an enrichment program offered to students at no cost to their families.

Parental and community support is critical to all schools and the Chamberlain campus is

*Edison teachers find that children achieve faster if they are placed at level rather than having to continually play catch up.*

no different. Although volunteerism is not required, because of the bond between the school and the families of students that attend it, parents regularly assist the school by helping out in the classroom, by accompanying classes on field trips and by performing clerical work in the school offices. Local support of the school's efforts to engage children in learning include theater arts programs with the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Dance Theater of Harlem and programs which bring local university students and retired teacher volunteers into the classrooms to give additional reading practice to students who need it.

Students, staff and families alike feel good about Chamberlain and the learning that is happening there. Enthusiasm rings from their voices when they speak about the school. It should, because this formula—high expectations and a structured and nurturing environment—is showing results! ★



CHAMBERLAIN STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN LIVELY BOOK DISCUSSION.



STUDENTS BENEFITING FROM ONE-ON-ONE TUTORING.



## FRIENDSHIP EDISON PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

|                               |   |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
|-------------------------------|---|------------------|-----|----------|----|-------|----|-------|----|--------------------|-----|-------------------|----|
| <b>Date Founded:</b>          | 1998  |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Principal:</b>             | Dr. John Pannel   |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Charter Authorizer:</b>    | D.C. Public Charter School Board  |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Grades Served:</b>         | K-5   |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Enrollment:</b>            | 900   |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Teacher/Student Ratio:</b> | 1:15  |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Average Class Size:</b>    | 28  |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| <b>Student Body Profile:</b>  | <table> <tr> <td>African American</td><td>99%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Hispanic</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr> <td>White</td><td>0%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Other</td><td>1%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Free/Reduced Lunch</td><td>90%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Special Education</td><td>8%</td></tr> </table> | African American | 99% | Hispanic | 0% | White | 0% | Other | 1% | Free/Reduced Lunch | 90% | Special Education | 8% |
| African American              | 99%   |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| Hispanic                      | 0%  |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| White                         | 0%  |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| Other                         | 1%  |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| Free/Reduced Lunch            | 90%   |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |
| Special Education             | 8%  |                  |     |          |    |       |    |       |    |                    |     |                   |    |

### Test Scores and Improvement Areas:

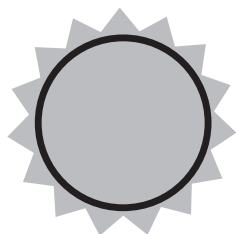
*Stanford Achievement Test, 9th Edition (SAT 9) reading results*

| Grade | Fall 98 | Spring 02 | Multiyear Gain | Spring 01 | Spring 02 | Single Year Gain |
|-------|---------|-----------|----------------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| 1     | 35      | 82        | 47             | 56        | 82        | 26               |
| 2     | 31      | 66        | 35             | 40        | 66        | 26               |
| 3     | 25      | 56        | 31             | 35        | 56        | 21               |
| 4     | 20      | 45        | 25             | 37        | 45        | 8                |
| 5     | 16      | 50        | 34             | 43        | 50        | 7                |

### School Fundamentals

- ★ Organized for every student's success
- ★ Better use of time
- ★ Rich and challenging curriculum
- ★ Teaching methods that motivate
- ★ Assessments that provide accountability
- ★ Professional environment for teachers
- ★ Technology for an information age
- ★ Partnership with families
- ★ Tailored to community
- ★ Advantages of system and scale

- From [www.edisonschools.com](http://www.edisonschools.com)



## *Harlem Day Charter School*

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

High standards and high hopes—these are two phrases that characterize the new Harlem Day Charter School (HDCS). In partnership with Sheltering Arms Child Services, a nonprofit daycare and medical services provider to foster children, the school opened its doors in September 2001 to 50 students in kindergarten and first grade. Its goal is to ensure that all of its students exceed the standards set by the State of New York. Because the New York exams are not administered until the fourth grade, it's too early to tell if the school met that goal this year although initial indications look good. The hope is that a different and more rigorous approach to education will make a life-long difference to these inner-city students.

*This school combines the tremendous vision of its dedicated founders, a strong educational program and a commitment to accountability to help parents and children in Harlem create a better future for themselves.*

- George E. Pataki  
Governor, State of New York

Although it is set in Harlem, this school draws students from four out of the five New York City boroughs. Parents who work in the area surrounding the school and who choose this school for its high academic standards are also pleased to find that an extended school day makes it possible for them to drop their children off before work and pick them up after work. HDCS is open at 7:00 a.m. for the

breakfast program and also runs program from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m. The extended-day program offers educational practice in all subject areas through games, activities, and remediation. This kind of attention to the demographics of its client base is just one of the things that make this school special.

When planning the school, the organizers paid attention to two important ideas: they wanted character education to be an important component of the educational process and they wanted overall a strong academic base. To meet the character education requirement, organizers chose Core Knowledge as the overall curriculum. For the reading program, the school organizers initially decided to use both the Waterford Early Reading Program (WERP) and a basal reading program. Through the course of the school year, the teaching staff decided the basal reading program was not well-suited to their student's needs. With the flexibility and openness inherent to charter schools, the staff worked collaboratively to find another program. Ultimately, the school adopted the Family Academy Reading Program—a balanced literacy program developed by a charter school—in addition to WERP. WERP is a technology and phonics-based literacy program grounded in research into literacy acquisition. Created by the nonprofit Waterford institute, WERP aims to overcome any obstacles to literacy development regardless of the level of literacy that students demonstrate upon attending school or their primary language. Upon

instituting WERP at the Harlem Day Charter School, the Waterford Institute administered a pre-test and found, unfortunately, that nearly 80 percent of the students had not been adequately exposed to literacy. In order to ensure that all of their students started with a solid base of necessary literacy skills, they placed them all at Level 1 of the Waterford Program. By the end of the school year, the Director was able to report that 100 percent of the first grade was well into Level 2 and nearly half of the kindergarten was using Level 2.

While one of the focal points of WERP is the use of computers to customize instruction and



HDCS KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS WORKING HARD ON THE WATERFORD EARLY READING PROGRAM

assessment for each individual child, one of its strengths is that it also supplies both teachers and children and their families with abundant materials to support classroom learning. In kindergarten alone, WERP supplies the teachers with guidebooks, songbooks, videos, audio CDs, cassettes and copies of all of the Sing A Rhyme and Read With Me books that the children receive. Kindergarten students and

their families are provided with 26 Sing a Rhyme and 26 Read With Me books to keep at home. In addition, four videos are sent home with each student including: ABC's and Such, Nursery Songs & Rhymes, Letter Sound Songs, and Sing Around The World. Parents are urged to use these materials to support not only the skills acquisition of children attending HDCS, but also to encourage the development of early literacy skills in any other children in the family.

To support teaching at the Harlem Day Charter School, numerous forms of assessment inform instruction. To begin with, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is administered to new students at the beginning and end of the school year; continuing students are tested at the end of the school year. Along with yearly Waterford assessments, weekly reports are generated by the Waterford software and are reviewed by the teachers and the Head of School so that they know where each student is and where they need additional work (e.g. letter recognition, phoneme recognition, comprehension). After they are reviewed, the reports are sent home to keep parents up-to-date on their children's progress. The Head of School's door is always open to parents who wish to discuss these reports (or anything else regarding the school and their children's education, for that matter). In addition to computer-generated evaluations, teacher-generated assessments are given. At the end of the school year, both the ITBS post-test and the Core Knowledge reference tests are administered and the results of both tests are used as starting points for next year's teachers.

All in all, teachers have numerous kinds of information to use and they have both the latitude in the classroom and the support of the administration to do what they deem is most effective for each child. They have this support

because, in addition to holding college degrees, teachers applying for positions at HDCS must demonstrate classroom competency, whether they are certified or not, by teaching two 45 minute sessions to actual classes while the director observes them. After observing candidates, the Head of School is able to choose those individuals who have both a command of the subject matter and the ability to teach it. Once they are hired, all teachers are trained extensively in the Waterford program, Core Knowledge, and Every Day Math. Finally, all teachers participate in the professional development program. That includes classroom management, classroom design, language arts and literacy development, and other

educational development. A program coordinator is on campus at least three times per month to adapt the program to the needs of teachers as they arise. In addition, she regularly brings experts to campus for training in the curriculum and the programs that support it and in classroom management issues. The professional development plan also requires teachers to observe master teachers in their classrooms at a Manhattan elementary school on a weekly basis. Once again, with attention to detail, HDCS is trying to develop the staff in every area that will contribute to student success.

*HDCS is trying to develop the staff in every area that will contribute to student success.*



HDCS FIRST GRADE STUDENTS PERFORMING IN 2002 AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CELEBRATION

If the level of activity at the Harlem Day Charter School is one indicator of its eventual success then it seems a sure thing that students at the school are headed for a bright future. The school is alive with parent volunteers who help in the classroom, serve on the Parents Council and assist with special programs at the school. Students are absorbed in special projects such as creating school gardens and programs celebrating African American heritage. And maybe most critically, using numerous methods and materials, both teachers and students are highly focused on the skill that is critical to all other learning—the ability to read. ★

## HARLEM DAY CHARTER SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

|                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Date Founded:</b>          | 2001                               |
| <b>Principal:</b>             | Gwendolyn Stephens, Head of School |
| <b>Charter Authorizer:</b>    | State University of New York       |
| <b>Grades Served:</b>         | K-I                                |
| <b>Enrollment:</b>            | 50                                 |
| <b>Teacher/Student Ratio:</b> | 1:20 ( 1:10 with aides)            |
| <b>Average Class Size:</b>    | 15 (kindergarten); 20 (grade I)    |
| <b>Student Body Profile:</b>  | African American 94%               |
|                               | Hispanic 6%                        |

### School Mission

To use a partnership between educators, families, and community members to create a strong academic organization in which students learn skills in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and Spanish at levels that exceed the New York state standards. Students will be expected to achieve these high levels in an environment that values respect, compassion, critical thinking, and problem solving.



A FIRST-GRADE SCIENCE LESSON BRIGHTENS THE SCHOOL GARDEN



## Rapoport Academy

WACO, TEXAS

At the Rapoport Academy in Waco, Texas, 136 children are receiving a quality of public education one would not have previously thought possible on the "other side of the river." In 1998, dismayed by astonishingly low test scores in the local school district, Rapoport founders Nancy Grayson and Willa Jones set forth with a plan to offer some hope to parents and children in this economically-disadvantaged Waco community. Their mission—"to foster learning through rigorous academics as well as through activities that link concepts and content to experiences in an environment that stresses high expectations for students as well as parent and family involvement." In August of 1998, they opened Rapoport Academy to 32 pre-kindergarten through first grade students. Now serving grades pre-K through 5, it looks as though the Rapoport Academy is well on its way to fulfilling its mission.

*In the 2001-02 school year, Rapoport family and community members clocked over 4,400 hours of volunteer time at the school.*

Ms. Grayson and Ms. Jones, who both have teaching backgrounds (Ms. Grayson also has an advanced degree in social psychology and cognitive development), selected the Core Knowledge program (E.D. Hirsch) for Rapoport because of the curriculum's rich content and because, according to Ms. Grayson, "kids are motivated by content." Rapoport is one of only

12 schools in Texas and one of 100 nation-wide recognized as fully incorporating the Core Knowledge program. Ms. Grayson, whose commitment to and belief in her "kiddos" was unmistakable in our interview, believes in teaching using a developmental, rather than a remedial approach. Children are therefore tested on entry and placed in the appropriate grade by skill level. As a result, the Rapoport teachers have found that the children do not suffer from the low-self esteem created by always playing "catch-up" and instead are thriving and moving up in grade levels on their own.

Parents and family are an essential thread in the Rapoport community fabric. The school boasts a 100% parental involvement level—not surprising given the great lengths to which the Rapoport staff go to encourage participation. When their children are enrolled, Rapoport parents commit to read with or to their child every night, to spend time every semester at the school and to attend four parent-teacher conferences each year. In return for this commitment, Rapoport offers its support to parents in many ways. Parents visiting the school at breakfast or lunchtime are offered a free meal and the school hosts parenting programs in which parents are taught parenting and behavior skills and ways to tutor their children at home. In addition, the school holds "Parent Academies," nighttime events in which students teach their parents a science experiment and discuss books that all have read. Parents also receive frequent phone calls

regarding their child's progress and, when appropriate, teachers and administrators even make home visits.

When hiring teachers, Ms. Grayson looks for candidates who are certified and who are "optimistic and joyful in their approach to teaching." She has found that newly-certified teachers arrive at Rapoport ready to try new approaches and willing to ask for help when they need it. Teachers are granted the flexibility to customize teaching strategies for each student and are expected to take full advantage of this. Teachers are evaluated based on student performance and based on observation by the school's directors who are in the classrooms each day.

When it comes to the reading programs at the Rapoport Academy, teachers wield the ultimate influence. After researching available curricula, reviewing state-adopted measures and texts, and actually trying and discontinuing use of another reading program, the teachers agreed on McGraw-Hill Reading feeling that its phonics-based approach was particularly appropriate for their student population. The teachers in each grade then have flexibility to

*Rapoport kids hone their entrepreneurial skills at an early age. Beginning in first grade, each class develops a business proposal, opens the business, and closes the business after developing a business assessment. Once students reach seventh grade, they will use their business "profits" to invest in the stock market and gain a first-hand understanding of the national economy.*

supplement this core curriculum with other materials and texts depending on their students' needs. For grades K through 1, the teachers often supplement with Accelerated Reader and, for grades K through 3, with Reader's Theater in which students, using a microphone and tape recorder, read aloud to the group while the other students offer positive feedback and support to the "performers." Later, the students listen to and learn from their recordings.

Although the expectations of Rapoport teachers are great, they receive a lot of support from the administration at Rapoport. With their own discretionary budgets, teachers are able to purchase texts to supplement what is already available in their classrooms. A reading specialist on staff is available to work with teachers to address the needs of struggling students and to assist with curriculum development. Five teaching assistants allow the teachers to spend one-on-one and small group time with students who need some extra attention. Staff development is also a priority at Rapoport, which requires its teachers to attend state-sponsored reading training programs and Core Knowledge training each year.



READING SUCCESS IS ACCELERATED THROUGH SMALL GROUP WORK AND INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION.



Students at Rapoport are assessed for progress using a number of formal assessment tools. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is administered each August and May and the scores are used to determine individual instruction during the school year as well as determining how much ground a student may have gained or lost over the summer. Interestingly, Rapoport students often gain ground over the summer, which Ms. Grayson attributes to the fact that they are encouraged to attend a summer reading camp at the school to combat loss of reading and language skills over the summer. The Rapoport library also remains open during the summer offering story hours and borrowing privileges to students and other children in the neighborhood. Teachers supplement the formal assessments with informal measures checking reading fluency daily and customizing the prescription for each student. Older children are assessed frequently for progress in writing, and struggling students are assigned to volunteer tutors.

The Rapoport approach to teaching reading is yielding impressive results. When the school was founded in 1998, only about 30 percent of third-graders in neighborhood schools passed



KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS SHARE THE EXCITEMENT OF READING.

the reading component of the third grade Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). In the spring of 2001, 100 percent of the Rapoport third-graders passed this exam, as compared to 78 percent in the Waco district schools. The following year (spring 2002), 100% of these same students passed the fourth-grade TAAS in reading and writing. With this level of success it is easy to understand Ms. Grayson's eternal optimism. In her words, "We just need to get these kiddos reading; then they soar!" ★

*"Conrad" entered first grade functioning at early kindergarten level. With the help and support of family and consistency in the classroom, six months into first grade he is reading at second grade level!*

*"Duncan" entered 2nd grade unable to read common sight words. In his first 6 months of 2nd grade, with the help of the reading specialist and special education teacher, he has gained 2 grade levels in reading, is beginning to read 2nd grade materials. His confidence has increased and he loves reading!*



## RAPOPORT ACADEMY SNAPSHOT

|                               |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Date Founded:</b>          | August 1998                    |
| <b>Principal:</b>             | Nancy Grayson                  |
| <b>Charter Authorizer:</b>    | Texas State Board of Education |
| <b>Grades Served:</b>         | Pre-K - 5                      |
| <b>Enrollment:</b>            | 150                            |
| <b>Teacher/Student Ratio:</b> | 1:10                           |
| <b>Average Class Size:</b>    | 13                             |
| <b>Student Body Profile:</b>  | African American 95%           |
|                               | Hispanic 1%                    |
|                               | White 4%                       |
|                               | Free/Reduced Lunch 91.3%       |
|                               | Special Education 6%           |

### Test Scores and Improvement Areas:

#### Iowa Test of Basic Skills

| Grade Level      | Reading Score/Avg.<br>Fall 2001 | Language Score/Avg.<br>Fall 2001 | Reading Score/Ave.<br>Spring 2002 |
|------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Pre Kindergarten | NA                              | NA                               | NA                                |
| Kindergarten     | NA                              | K.0                              | NA                                |
| Grade 1          | 1.0                             | 1.0                              | 2.1                               |
| Grade 2          | 2.24                            | 1.74                             | 3.0                               |
| Grade 3          | 2.95                            | 2.4                              | 3.9                               |
| Grade 4          | 4.1                             | 3.9                              | 5.4                               |

These scores illustrate the trend to gain ground and be prepared at the start of each year. The beginning scores are generally better each fall.

#### STAR – Testing component of Accelerated Reader

| Grade Level  | Fall Range | Spring Range             |
|--------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Kindergarten | NA         | 2 students now 1.6 & 1.8 |
| Grade 1      | 0.5 to 2.1 | 0.7 to 4.2               |
| Grade 2      | 0.9 to 4.0 | 1.8 to 5.5               |
| Grade 3      | 1.8 to 3.2 | 2.8 to 5.1               |
| Grade 4      | 3.2 to 6.1 | 5.0 to 7.1               |

These scores illustrate the progress in reading made by the Rapoport students during the school year. These scores show the range for all students, including special needs.



# *Because of Winn Dixie*

Imagine the dream of writing your first novel and it earning a spot on the *New York Times* bestseller list, along with many other honors including the Newbery Medal, "the Oscar of children's books." For Jade, age 12, knowing that this was the author's first book and that it was receiving recognition made *Because of Winn Dixie* all the more interesting.

This story is about a ten-year old girl, India Opal Buloni, who moved to Florida with her father. She and her father were sad because her mom left them when Opal was three. Opal missed her mom very much.

Her father was a preacher at Open Arms Baptist Church (all the places seems to have funny names). One day her father sent her to the store for some food. While in the store she heard the manager yelling at a dog. Opal told him that the dog was her dog. She brought the dog home and named it Winn-Dixie, after the store.

"The book was fun to read," reported Jade. "Winn Dixie could smile and helped Opal meet new friends. Winn Dixie even got Opal's father to smile. The dog helped Opal to convince her father to tell her ten things about her mom. By the end of the story, Opal got over missing her mom. I thought this book was exciting and a fun book to read."



## *Grade Five Book List*

A Bird Came Down the Walk

Blue Willow

Bridge to Terabithia

The Cabin Faced West

Charley Skedaddle

Dolphin Named Bob

Little House on the Prairie

Sara, Plain and Tall

Sideways Stories from Wayside School

Uncle Tom's Cabin

## *Chapter 7 - Recommended Reading Activities*

We asked teachers and administrators of the charter schools profiled in this guide about the factors that make their schools successful. Many of them spoke about the extraordinary levels of teamwork and cooperation experienced within their school settings. Teachers in these schools had numerous opportunities to share challenges and success stories with one another—a process designed to help match expertise and resources to student-specific needs.

In this chapter, we extend this "circle of expertise and cooperation" to the charter school community by providing our audience with a compilation of supplemental reading activities that some of the charter schools profiled in Chapter 6 have found to be particularly effective in engaging students in reading.

Families also play a very important role in making charter schools successful. Parents are actively involved in the creation and governance of charter schools. In addition, charter schools often recognize the importance of forging effective partnerships with parents and try to help parents take an active role in their children's education. Through a partnership with Reading Is Fundamental, Inc., we are providing RIF's Family Reading Tips and "favorite selections" for at-home family activities designed to encourage and motivate children to read.

While each activity presented in this chapter includes a grade- or skill-level recommendation, the activities can be easily modified to be appropriate for children at different levels.

The compact disk accompanying this publication also includes these reading activities. The format has been changed slightly to allow teachers and others to easily reproduce the information and activities. We suggest that this chapter of *The Reading Adventure* be posted to a centralized computer that can be easily accessed by all reading/language arts teachers and parent volunteers.



*Supplemental Reading  
Activities Recommended  
by Charter Schools*





## READING ACTIVITY # 1

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**Activity Name:** *Science to Go – Fact and Fiction Learning Packs*

**Suggested Grade Level:** Sample activities are included for Kindergarten and Grade 3.

**Equipment/Resources Needed:** Learning packs as described below and the books listed in the attachments.

**Preactivity Requirement:** None.

**Description of Activity:** At the Cherry Creek Academy in Englewood Colorado, media specialist Judy Sauerteig designed a publication that provides independent student activities combining science and reading. Topics include the parts of the body, ecology, animals and insects, astronomy, meteorology, and others. The publication includes suggested fiction and nonfictions books for kindergarten through grade 3 on the various topics.

The school media center houses a collection of learning packs—each including a fiction and nonfiction book for the topic along with worksheets from *Science to Go* designed to develop comprehension and critical thinking skills. A parent information sheet is included with each pack to provide parents with a summary of objectives for the learning packs and tips on how to use the packs. At Cherry Creek Academy, the bags were decorated by a parent and then treated with Scotchgard™. The parent and student worksheets can be placed in clear protectors, or large storage bags can be used for multiple copies.

**Variations:** The activities we have included here are selected samples. The *Science to Go – Fact and Fiction Learning Packs* includes 15 topics for each grade level, for a total of 60 learning packs. This type of activity can be adapted for social studies, history, geography, as well as other subjects. In addition, in lieu of parent sheets, the activities can be modified so that students are encouraged to work through the activities on an independent basis or in small teams.

## PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

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Welcome to a fun way to help your student at home. These science packs have several important objectives:

- ★ to promote literacy;
- ★ to reinforce school curriculum;
- ★ to reinforce the importance of reading aloud with children;
- ★ to clarify and emphasize the difference between fiction and nonfiction;
- ★ to encourage nonfiction reading for enjoyment;
- ★ to extend and enrich lessons learned in the classroom;
- ★ to review lessons learned in the classroom; and
- ★ to provide parents with some structured activities to assist students.

Each packet includes two books, one fiction and one nonfiction, and an activity sheet for each. After reading the books aloud together, you may choose any or all of the activities depending on time and your own child. If this book sparks a discussion and that is all you have time for, that is wonderful. Please don't treat these like teacher-assigned homework.

Some of the activity sheets include information that may be of help to you. The grade and unit with which the books are integrated is indicated immediately following the heading.

One additional beneficial activity that supports the writing program would be to have the student write a summary of each of the books. A summary is a general statement of the theme of the book. It should be short and concise and not include details.

These activities are only suggestions to springboard for any other ideas that may be formulated by you or your student. If you create successful activities and you would like to share them with others, please write them up and return it with the learning pack.

Have fun and enjoy this special time with your child.

Source: *Science to Go: Fact and Fiction Learning Packs* by Judy Sauerteig. ©2001 Libraries Unlimited. (800)225-5800 or [www.lu.com](http://www.lu.com).

## HANDS

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### Human Body – Kindergarten

**TOPIC:** Hands

**NONFICTION:** *My Hands* by Alikei

**FICTION:** *Hanimations* by Mario Mariotti

### Nonfiction: Things to Make You Think

Read the nonfiction book. Remember that this is a true book and it is important to listen for the facts. Choose from the activities listed below or make up your own.

1. What finger games have you played?
2. Raise your right hand and wiggle your fingers.
3. Raise your left hand and wiggle your fingers.
4. Name your fingers on each hand.
5. How do fingernails help the hands and help us?
6. Which finger is very different from the other four? How?
7. Try to hold a pencil without using your thumb. Can you draw or write?
8. What is the largest part of your hand called?
9. What can you do with the palms of your hands?
10. Are you ambidextrous? Do you know anyone who is?
11. Are everyone's hands exactly the same? Why or why not?
12. Compare your family's hands. How are they alike and how are they different?
13. Count all the ways you use your hands during the next hour.
14. How can you take care of your hands so they can take care of you?
15. Close your eyes and touch different things around the house. Have an adult guide you around. How do your fingers and hands help you?

Source: *Science to Go: Fact and Fiction Learning Packs* by Judy Sauerteig. ©2001 Libraries Unlimited. (800)225-5800 or [www.lu.com](http://www.lu.com).

## HANDS

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### Human Body – Kindergarten

**TOPIC:** Hands

**NONFICTION:** *My Hands* by Alikei

**FICTION:** *Hanimations* by Mario Mariotti

### Fiction: Things to Make You Think

Read the fiction book. Remember that this book is a made-up story. Choose from the activities listed below or make up your own.

1. Which hand is the “crab” in the first picture?
2. How many hands are in the second picture?
3. Find the picture of the peacock. How many fingers do you see? How many thumbs?
4. What fingers make the ears of the black-and-white dog?
5. How many hands does it take to make the alligator? Which finger is the tongue?
6. What is used to make the spines on the porcupine?
7. Find the picture of the horse. What color is the horse’s mane?
8. Find the fangs on the yellow snake. What color are they?
9. What do you see on the page with the X-rays of the hands? Why do they look so scared?
10. How many people are needed to make the orange animal with the black spots?
11. Pick a hanimation that you like and write or tell a story about it.
12. Try to make the same shapes with your hands. Do not paint your own hands unless you ask an adult to help.
13. Shadow puppets are also fun to do. Shine a flashlight on the wall and use your hands to make different shapes on the wall. What did you make?
14. Trace your own hand and color a design on it just for fun.

Source: *Science to Go: Fact and Fiction Learning Packs* by Judy Sauerteig. ©2001 Libraries Unlimited. (800)225-5800 or [www.lu.com](http://www.lu.com).

## POLLUTION

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### Ecology – Third Grade

**TOPIC:** Pollution

**NONFICTION:** *Global Change* by Theodore P. Snow

**FICTION:** *The Berenstain Bears Don't Pollute (Anymore)* by Stan Berenstain and Jan Berenstain

### Nonfiction: Things to Make You Think

Read the nonfiction book. Remember that this is a true book and it is important to listen for the facts. Choose from the activities listed below or make up your own.

1. The Earth began about 4.5 billion years ago. Write down that number.
2. Life appeared 3.5 billion years ago. Write down that number.
3. What layer of gases allowed life to continue to grow and survive?
4. How do plants allow humans to survive?
5. What are some of the causes of “global change?”
6. Explain the greenhouse effect.
7. In what ways is carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere? Why is this harmful?
8. What might happen due to the greenhouse effect?
9. The ozone layer protects us from what kind of light?
10. Explain what CFCs are. How are they helpful and how are they harmful?
11. What is the worst thing that can happen to the water?
12. Why are heat and rain bad for water?
13. How are habitats being destroyed? Why is this bad?
14. What do people have to do in the future to protect our Earth?

Source: *Science to Go: Fact and Fiction Learning Packs* by Judy Sauerteig. ©2001 Libraries Unlimited. (800)225-5800 or [www.lu.com](http://www.lu.com).

## POLLUTION

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### Ecology – Third Grade

**TOPIC:** Pollution

**NONFICTION:** *Global Change* by Theodore P. Snow

**FICTION:** *The Berenstain Bears Don't Pollute (Anymore)* by Stan Berenstain and Jan Berenstain

### Fiction: Things to Make You Think

Read the fiction book. Remember that this book is a made-up story. Choose from the activities listed below or make up your own.

1. Do you think Professor Actual Factual is a good name for this character in the book? Why or why not? Can you think of another name?
2. Why does Papa think Bear Country is beautiful?
3. How is the animals' view of Bear Country different from Papa's view from the front porch?
4. The name Bearsonian Institution is copied from a real museum in Washington, D.C. Can you name it?
5. Who does Professor Actual Factual think is really endangered?
6. Why do you think the Professor needs an Actual Factualmobile? What kind of instruments might be in the van?
7. Why do you think it is hard to make grown-ups help with the pollution problem?
8. Explain the meaning of the three words the Professor teaches the cubs.
9. What do you do at your house to help with the pollution problem?
10. Papa's dream helps him to take action. What does he do?
11. What can you do about pollution?
12. Find out where recycling is being done: school? church? businesses? stores?
13. Make a sign of your own to promote Earth-friendly habits.
14. Why is it important for Papa Bear to plant a tree for every one that is cut down?

Source. *Science to Go: Fact and Fiction Learning Packs* by Judy Sauerteig. ©2001 Libraries Unlimited. (800)225-5800 or [www.lu.com](http://www.lu.com)

## READING ACTIVITY #2

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**Activity Name:** Rope Rhyme

**Suggested Grade Level:** First Grade

**Equipment/Resources Needed:** Jump ropes

**Preactivity Requirement:** Activities to introduce concept of rhyming to children such as reading Mother Goose rhymes and making up “silly words” to practice rhyming skills.

**Description of Activity:** This activity is designed to help children differentiate between words that rhyme and those that do not. The teacher or aide reads the poem *Rope Rhyme* by Eloise Greenfield aloud to the children. The children are grouped into pairs or teams of three (depending on the number of jump ropes available). After a second demonstration by the teacher, the children take turns jumping to the beat of the poem and reciting the words, with rhyming words being spoken louder than the other words in the poem. The beat, repetition and physical activity help many children understand this concept.

### *Rope Rhyme*

Get set, ready now, jump right in  
 Bounce and kick and giggle and spin  
 Listen to the rope when it hits the ground  
 Listen to that clappedy-slappedy sound  
 Jump right up when it tells you to  
 Come back down, whatever you do  
 Count to a hundred, count by ten  
 Start to count all over again  
 That's what jumping is all about  
 Get set, ready now, jump right out!

By: Eloise Greenfield

**Variations:** The Internet is a great resource for additional poems for this activity. For example, visit [www.gameskidsplay.net/jump\\_rope\\_rhymes/index.htm](http://www.gameskidsplay.net/jump_rope_rhymes/index.htm) for some ideas. There are also web sites designed to help older children write their own rope rhymes. This activity can also be modified to have children use maracas or other musical shaker toys to build their rhyming skills.

**Source:** Harlem Day Charter School, New York, New York.

## READING ACTIVITY #3

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**Activity Name:** Beat the Clock

**Suggested Grade Level:** Kindergarten

**Equipment/Resources Needed:** Clock, white board

**Preactivity Requirement:** Review vocabulary words for the week or day.

**Description of Activity:** The teacher selects a word and draws a line on the white board for each letter in the word. The students guess letters and if the guess is correct, the letter is added to the line on the white board. If a guess is wrong, the hand on the clock is advanced. A chart can be mounted to the wall to track the number of guesses for various words or “best times” for particular words.

**Variations:** The teacher or aide can begin the exercise with one or more letters in the word identified on the white board. This variation can help students more quickly identify the targeted words. Additionally, for older children phrases and sentences from reading material and books can be incorporated.

**Source:** Harlem Day Charter School, New York, New York.



## READING ACTIVITY #4

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**Activity Name:** Puzzle Time

**Suggested Grade Level:** Fourth and Fifth Grade

**Equipment/Resources Needed:** Teacher access to the Internet

**Preactivity Requirement:** The entire class reads the same book. Alternatively, there may be several book choices available and students select one of the teacher-recommended books.

**Description of Activity:** At Puzzlemaker.com teachers can create various types of puzzles to reinforce details of books read by students and build student vocabulary skills. Puzzlemaker.com allows teachers to create many different types of puzzles including Fallen Phrases, Letter Tiles, Cryptograms, Double Puzzles, Hidden Message, Mazes, and Word Searches.

**Variations:** Parent volunteers can assist teachers by developing the puzzles. Student-developed puzzles can also be used by the class with individual students or student teams selecting the book, leading the class through oral reading of the book, creating the puzzle, and providing instruction to the class on how to solve the puzzle. Finally, Puzzlemaker.com can be used to develop puzzles to build skills around sight words or words relating to a specific history or science lesson.

**Source:** Friendship Edison Public Charter School, Chamberlain Campus, Washington, D.C.

## READING ACTIVITY #5

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**Activity Name:** Building on Books

**Suggested Grade Level:** Fourth and Fifth Grade

**Preactivity Requirement:** The entire class reads the same book. Alternatively, there may be several book choices available and students select one of the teacher-recommended books.

**Description of Activity:** At the Friendship Edison Public Charter School, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students identified a number of activities to enrich their reading. The activities include:

- ★ acting out a favorite part of a book;
- ★ acting out or dressing up as a favorite character;
- ★ making collages of books that have been read;
- ★ comparing a book to the movie version of the book; and
- ★ creating meals based on books.

For example, after reading the book *Aunt Flossies Hats (and Crabcakes Later)*, several student activities can be introduced. Students can make hats of a made up person, then present that person to the class; students can make crabcakes; and the class can act out the book.

**Source:** Friendship Edison Public Charter School, Chamberlain Campus, Washington, D.C.

## READING ACTIVITY #6

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**Activity Name:** *Making Words: Multilevel, Hands-On Developmentally Appropriate Spelling and Phonics Activities*, by Patricia Cunningham and Dorothy Hall.

**Suggested Grade Level:** Primary Grades

**Equipment/Resources Needed:** Purchase of above book (\$10-\$15)

**Preactivity Requirement:** The book includes suggested warm-up lessons

**Description of Activity:** *Making Words* is a teacher resource book that walks children through various exercises to make words. For each lesson, usually 15 minutes long, children are provided letters and use these letters to make words. Students begin by making two-letter words and, by the end of the exercise, students have created 15 words, with the last word being 6-8 letters long. In early lessons children learn how one letter or vowel change can result in a new word. The activities are great tools for children needing assistance developing phonemic awareness. Spelling skills are also developed through the use of phonograms.

**Variations:** The activity book includes numerous options for modifying activities.

**Source:** The Accelerated School, Los Angeles, California.

## READING ACTIVITY #7

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**Activity Name:** Character Visits

**Suggested Grade Level:** Grades Three through Five

**Preactivity Requirement:** The class reads a book with interesting characters. The books suggested in the Appendix at the end of this book include favorite books for the charter school profiled in Chapter 6 and many would work well with this exercise.

**Description of Activity:** The teacher comes to school dressed as a character in a book read by the students. The teacher remains in character for the entire day and students have an opportunity to ask about the character's life and story.

**Variations:** Character Days can be added to the school's calendar. On these Character Days, students are encouraged to come to school dressed as a character in a recently-read book. Articles can be written for the school's newsletter on the best characters. Another variation is to invite local authors to visit the school.

**Source:** The Accelerated School, Los Angeles, California.

## READING ACTIVITY #8

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**Activity Name:** Our Country's Founders

**Suggested Grade Level:** Fourth and Fifth Grades

**Equipment/Resources Needed:** Primary and secondary research sources for the “candidates”

**Description of Activity:** As a spin-off to the American Revolution and U.S. Constitution segments of the history curriculum, students choose to read in depth about two prominent figures from the American Revolution, such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. Using primary source documents, as well as magazines, novels, picture books, and other secondary sources, the students learn about the two figures, their strengths and weaknesses, their political views, their personalities, etc. Once this initial research is done, the class has a “brain-storming” session in which they discuss the merits of each of the two characters as though they are candidates in a presidential election. After this group discussion, each student is asked to write a paragraph describing his or her opinion as to which candidate would make the best president and why. The class makes campaign posters supporting the candidates and participates in a mock election in which they cast their vote in a ballot box.

**Variations:** A corresponding exercise is to have students prepare a compare and contrast diagram on which they record how the two candidates may be alike and how they may be different.

**Source:** Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School, Franklin, Massachusetts.

## READING ACTIVITY #9

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**Activity Name:** Penguin in a Pouch

**Suggested Grade Level:** Kindergarten

**Equipment/Resources Needed:** Stuffed penguin

**Description of Activity:** The class adopts a stuffed penguin. “Penguin” accompanies a different child home each day. Families are encouraged to include Penguin in all activities, such as a special dinner, playing sports, visiting with relatives or friends, helping with chores around the house, etc. After the sleepover, the child brings Penguin back to class and, during morning work time, the child creates an illustration for one page of the “Penguin” book based upon the activities at the child’s home. Then, the child dictates (or writes) the words to be written on lined paper which will accompany his or her illustration. The child is encouraged to decide the proper grammar, syntax, capitalization, and punctuation. At circle time, the child shares his or her illustration with the class, recalling and communicating their story of Penguin’s visit. The class can then read the new “chapter” aloud as a group when it is complete. Finally, the illustrations and stories are bound into a notebook and the children are encouraged to return to their Kindergarten classroom in future years to revisit their creation.

**Variation:** A parent volunteer can photocopy each student-written “chapter” and create a bound book for each student’s personal library.

**Source:** Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School, Franklin, MA.

## READING ACTIVITY 1 □

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**Activity Name:** Working with Sight Words

**Suggested Grade Level:** Kindergarten

**Equipment/Resources Needed:** Highlighters, scissors, old newspapers, magazines, construction paper

**Description of Activity:** There are many useful and fun activities to reinforce sight words and build word recognition skills. Some suggestions include:

- ★ highlighting sight words in photocopied stories and having children use those words in a sentence;
- ★ cutting out sight words from old magazines and newspapers and making a collage; and
- ★ playing sight word bingo by creating various bingo cards with sight words on them. Give each child a bingo card. Pick sight words from a hat and call them out. The child with the most sight words identified on their card “wins.”

**Source:** Rapoport Academy, Waco, Texas and The Accelerated School, Los Angeles, California.

# *Family Tips and Activities*



THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP WITH  
READING IS FUNDAMENTAL, INC.



# Reading Is Fundamental®



**Supporting Young Readers: Tips From Reading Is Fundamental** is a collection of five tips for making literacy a fun and central part of family life. These tips are appropriate for motivating children of all ages to read and will be useful to the families in a charter school community.

**Supporting Young Readers: Activities from Reading Is Fundamental** is a collection of nine activities families can do together to incorporate reading, writing, and oral language into a range of everyday events. These activities are grouped into three broad developmental levels: children who are not yet reading, children who are just learning to read, and children who are able to read independently. However, many of the activities are appropriate for more than one of these groups.

You are encouraged to make as many copies of these tips and activities as you like, provided that the logo and copyright information are visible on each page.

## How teachers can use these sheets

Teachers may want to send the *Tips* sheet home with each child, with a suggestion that families keep the sheet in a central location and try to incorporate the ideas into the family's daily or weekly schedule.

Teachers may also wish to send the *Tips* sheet home along with the most appropriate *Activities* page or pages for each of their students, depending upon whether each student is not yet reading, has just learned to read, or is reading independently. They may also want to share these pages with families when they come in for parent-teacher conferences.

## How parents can use these sheets

Parents can keep the *Tips* sheet in a central location for easy reference. Each tip is designed to encourage parents to interact more with their children—through talking, singing, or reading. Parents may want to try focusing on one tip each week or each month, trying to incorporate the ideas into the family's daily or weekly schedule. For example, a parent might focus on providing new experiences by taking children along with them on errands one Saturday (going to the bank, post office, or hardware store, for example). Parents should budget more time for these errands so that children can explore these environments, ask questions, and learn more about what happens at each of these places in the community.

# Reading Is Fundamental®



Parents should use the *Activities* pages to spark their own imaginations about ways to incorporate literacy and language into family life. Parents may decide to turn some of these ideas into family traditions—for example, writing notes to go in their children’s lunch boxes. Other ideas, like making a scrapbook, may be fun to do together one rainy afternoon. However, we hope these activities are just the starting point for fun family together time.

A parent association or parent teacher organization may wish to take the lead in disseminating these materials to parents. In one of the organization’s meetings, participants can discuss these sheets in order to encourage greater parent literacy involvement at home. For example, participants can be grouped to discuss each *Activities* sheet, building on the three suggestions given by sharing their own examples and successes. This also serves to reinforce a shared understanding of the importance of family involvement in education. ★



## SUPPORTING YOUNG READERS: TIPS FROM READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

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Here are some of our most popular tips for helping children become successful, motivated readers.

### **Provide New Experiences**

New places and objects add to your children's vocabulary and can help them understand the stories you read together. You don't have to go far from home to inspire interest and curiosity. Visit the airport if your children are interested in airplanes. Go to a duck pond and point out the baby ducks or the flock of birds flying overhead. Stop at a construction site and watch the trucks. Pointing out details will sharpen your children's observation skills. And reading books about the things you've seen will help your children connect the stories with their own experiences.

### **Talk to Your Children**

Talking to your children is one of the most important things you can do to prepare them for reading. Your conversations will teach them new words and help them learn to *talk* to and *listen* to others. As reading experts will tell you, developing these language skills is the first step to learning how to read. Don't oversimplify your language or use "baby talk." Expand your children's phrases and simple ideas into longer, more complex sentences. Ask children open-ended questions that require thoughtful answers, and respond to their answers with additional questions. For example, when at the supermarket, ask your children how you should decide what line to choose at checkout. If they respond by saying that you should choose the shortest line, you can ask your children why people would get into an express lane that was longer than the other lines.

### **Read Daily**

It's never too early—or too late—to begin reading to children. All children, even infants and teens, can benefit from listening to you read aloud. Children who are read to are more likely to be better readers, better listeners, and better students. Set an example. Let your children see you with a newspaper in hand or curled up on the couch enjoying a book. They learn quickly that reading is important. And most of all, they learn that reading is fun!

### **Build Skills with Fun**

Have fun with your children—and help them learn—as you run errands, work around the house, and play together. Try rhyming and singing songs with repeating words or choruses. Even younger children can participate in "print spotting" (identifying familiar words and letters on signs, billboards, etc.) as part of riding in the car or on the bus. Ask older children to be on the lookout for words that use particular spelling patterns (e.g., -tion or -ing words). Expand reading for fun beyond books. All kinds of media—cereal boxes, restaurant menus and more—provide children with valuable literacy experiences, and provide you with opportunities to reinforce reading skills.

### Create a Home Library

Encourage your children to spend their free time reading by making a wide variety of books and other reading materials available in your home. Help your children choose books that will captivate their attention, and you will help them discover the joy of reading. The more they *like* to read, the more they *will* read.



## SUPPORTING YOUNG READERS: TIPS FROM READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

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If your children are not yet reading, share these activities together to boost their motivation to learn to read.

### Go for a walk

Plan to take a walk with your children. Before heading out, list some things for your children to look for during the walk, such as squirrels, fire hydrants, blue things, trucks, signs, and pigeons. Your children may also have some ideas; list these as well. During the walk, point out these objects to your children. Let your children look for objects on the list and point them out to you.

When your children seem interested in something, stop long enough for them to observe or explore. After your walk, talk with your children about the outing. Look at the list and cross off the objects that you saw together. Invite your children to draw a picture of the objects from the walk; encourage them to tell you a story about the picture.

### Collect family memories, share stories

With your children, look through drawers or storage boxes. Collect objects that bring back memories. Or, as in the book *Song and Dance Man* by Karen Ackerman, let your kids hunt through the attic with a grandparent.

Start a memory box. Fill it with things that hold special meaning for you and your children, such as:

- ★ Toys you played with as a child
- ★ Grandma's locket
- ★ Family letters
- ★ A favorite picture book
- ★ Buttons from an old dress

From time to time, take out the memory box. Let each child pick out something and tell the family a story about it.

### Sing a book

Find a few picture books that illustrate the words of a familiar song, such as *Over the Meadow and Through the Woods*, *Ten Bears in a Bed*, *Hushabye*, *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly*, and *The Wheels on the Bus*. You might find these books at the library, or make your own books by drawing pictures or cutting pictures from magazines and gluing them on paper.

Sing the book to your children while they look at the pictures. Or choose books with rhymes or repetitive phrases so your children can chime in. You can vary the activity by pointing to the words as you sing them aloud so your children can make the connection between the spoken and written word.

## SUPPORTING YOUNG READERS: TIPS FROM READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

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If your children are beginning readers, share these activities together to boost their motivation to learn to read.

### **Get caught reading!**

Catch your child “reading” and take his or her picture. Post the photos on the refrigerator, put them in a special photo album, or make a homemade book with them.

Give your child a chance to catch—and take pictures of—you reading too! Modeling is a very important part of creating an environment for reading.

### **Read aloud with your children**

After your children learn to read, you can share the task of reading aloud with them! Choose familiar books and alternate pages or have your children chime in with words or repeated phrases they know. Here are a few ideas for making read-aloud time a fun time for all:

- ★ Have a puppet “read aloud.” The puppet can also turn the pages.
- ★ Enlarge the audience with your children’s favorite dolls and stuffed animals.
- ★ If you have an audio cassette player, record a few of your family’s read-aloud sessions. Beginning readers can listen to these recordings again and again as they follow along in the book.
- ★ Encourage your children to value their books. Provide a shelf, box, basket, or carton with their names on it for safekeeping. Help them make homemade bookplates to paste inside books to identify the “proud” owners.

### **Scrapbooks**

Making scrapbooks helps children recall what they’ve seen on an outing or family trip. Include maps, sightseeing brochures, menus, postcards, ticket stubs, photos, newspaper clippings from other cities, and other small souvenirs that can be mounted in pages and kept in ring binders.

You and your children can write in memories and captions as you assemble the pages together.

## SUPPORTING YOUNG READERS: TIPS FROM READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

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If your children have learned to read independently, try these activities to fuel their motivation to read.

### **Joke Book**

Together with your children, make your own joke book. Have your children collect jokes and riddles from your family members and friends. Illustrate some of your jokes with funny pictures or photographs that capture silly memories.

### **Mark the Calendar**

Make a monthly calendar and hang it on the refrigerator. Mark the calendar with family things to remember to do, such as:

- ★ Birthdays and holidays (Suggest that your children create greeting cards for special occasions)
- ★ Health appointments
- ★ Play dates with friends
- ★ Holidays
- ★ Times you have volunteered to help out at school

### **Lunch Notes**

Slip notes or poems into your children's lunch boxes or bags. Personalized messages always get read right away. Use these notes as a way to check in with your children again at the end of the day. Ask what were they doing or who they were with when they read the note.

# *Appendix*



## LITERACY PROGRAM RESOURCES



## *Appendix - Literacy Program Resources*

This appendix includes the following supplemental resources to help charter schools develop their reading programs:

**Book List Recommendations** – Book lists provided by many of the charter schools with successful reading programs profiled in Chapter 6.

These lists can be used to build classroom, school, and student at-home libraries, and for after-school and summer reading programs.

**Glossary of Professional Terms** – A glossary of terms frequently used in research studies and literature about reading.

This glossary is a helpful tool for new teacher training sessions, professional development workshops, parent training events, and Board/volunteer instructional seminars. The glossary includes terms that those involved in the selection of reading curriculum are likely to encounter.

**Professional Library** – Recommended books, reports and research on reading and literacy.

Reading coordinators, classroom teachers, school governing boards and organizers, and parents can compile a professional library so that those selecting instructional materials share a common understanding of reading research. Professional libraries may be housed in the “parent room” or “teacher room” at charter schools to promote the on-going learning environment adopted by many successful schools.

**Reading Program Summary** – A brief summary of research-based reading programs and curricula used by the charter schools profiled in Chapter 6.

**Websites** – Timesaving directory of useful internet sites.

This directory includes addresses of sites that are rich in content and sites that have great links to follow-up resources. Charter schools that designate “internet librarians” to provide regular reviews of reading sites and to share information about new reports and studies to the school community may find this resource useful.

## RECOMMENDED BOOK LISTS

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### Pre-Kindergarten

Amelia Bedelia Series – Peggy Parish

Big Black Bear – Stephen Cosgrove

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?  
– Bill Martin Jr.

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom  
– John Archambault

Dr. Dog – Babette Cole

Five Little Monkeys – Eileen Christelow  
(illustrator)

If You Give a Pig a Pancake  
– Laura Joffe Numeroff

I Wish I were a Butterfly – James Howe

The Napping House – Audrey Wood

The Very Hungry Caterpillar – Eric Carle

There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly  
– Pam Adams

There's a Wocket in My Pocket! – Dr. Seuss

*The Accelerated School, Los Angeles, California*  
*Rapoport Academy, Waco, Texas*

### Kindergarten

Are You My Mother? – P.D. Eastman  
(illustrator)

Arthur books – Marc Brown

The Biggest Bear – Lynd Kendall Ward

Casey Jones – Allan Drummond

Clifford books – Norman Bridwell

Curious George – Hans Augusto Rey

Franklin series – Paulette Bourgeois

Gingerbread Baby – Jan Brett (illustrator)

Go Dog, Go – Philip D. Eastman

Green Eggs and Ham – Dr. Seuss

The Hobyahs – Robert D. San Souci

I Wish I Were a Butterfly – James Howe

Johnny Appleseed – Steven Kellogg

Junie B. Jones series – Barbara Park

The Kissing Hand – Audrey Penn

Madeline – Ludwig Bemelmans

Mother Goose Math – Harriet Ziefert

Mother Goose Remembers – Clare Beaton

Piggie Pie – Margie Palatini

Put Me in the Zoo – Robert Lopshire

Rainbow Fish series – Marcus Pfister

The Seals on the Bus – Lenny Hort

The Story of Johnny Appleseed – Alikei

Super Sand Castle Saturday – Stuart Murphy

Suzette and the Puppy: A Story About Mary  
Cassat – Joan Sweeney

Ten Apples Up On Top – Dr. Seuss

The Three Billy Goats Gruff  
– Stephen Carpenter

Three Little Kittens – Tanya Linch

The Three Little Pigs – Paul Galdone

Too Much Trash – Fay Robinson

The Ugly Duckling – Hans Christian Andersen

The Velveteen Rabbit – Marjorie Williams

*The Accelerated School, Los Angeles, California*  
*Benjamin Franklin Charter School, Mesa, Arizona*

*Cherry Creek Academy, Englewood, Colorado*  
*Harlem Day Charter School, New York, New York*  
*Rapopot Academy, Waco, Texas*

## First Grade

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day – Judith Viorst

Angus and the Ducks – Marjorie Flack

Annie and the Wild Animals – Jan Brett  
 (Illustrator)

Beef Stew – Barbara Brenner

Big Black Bear – Stephen Cosgrove

The Big Orange Spout  
 – Daniel Manus Pinkwater

Billy and Blaze – C.W.Anderson

Captain Underpants series – Dav Pilkey

Carrot Seed – Ruth Krauss

Charlotte's Web – E. B.White

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom  
 – John Archambault

The Cock, the Mouse and the Little Red Hen  
 – Felicite Lefevre

Day I Had to Play with My Sister  
 – Crosby Newell Bonsall

The Doorbell Rang – Pat Hutchins

Dr. Dog – Babette Cole

Dr. Seuss books

For Laughing Out Loud – Jack Prelutsky

The Gift of the Crocodile – Judy Sierra

Hank the Cowdog series – John Erickson

The Hatmaker's Sign: A Story by Benjamin Franklin – Benjamin Franklin

The Horned Toad Prince – Jackie Hopkins

It Could Always be Worse: A Yiddish Folk Tale  
 – Margot Zemach

I Went Walking – Sue Williams

Julian, Dream Doctor – Ann Cameron

Junie B. Jones book series – Barbara Park

Little Bear – Else Holmelund Minarik

The Little Engine That Could – Watty Piper

Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China – Ed Young

May I Bring a Friend  
 – Beatrice Schenk De Regniers

Millions of Cats – Wanda Gag

Once A Mouse – Marcia Brown

One Morning in Maine – Robert McCloskey

The Other Side of the Door – Jeff Moss

Parts – Tedd Arnold

Piggy Pie – Margie Palatini

Pinocchio – Carlo Collodi

Puss in Boots – Paul Galdone

Ramona series – Beverly Cleary

Ready, Set, Hop – Stuart Murphy

The Real Mother Goose  
 – Blanche Fisher Wright (Illustrator)

The Rooster Crows – Maud Petersham

Sing a Song of People – Lois Lenski

The Snowy Day – Ezra Jack Keats

The Sun's Family of Planets – Allan Fowler

The Tale of Peter Rabbit – Beatrix Potter

Teeny Tiny Woman – Jane O'Connor

Three by the Sea – Edward Marshall  
 Turtle, Turtle, Watch Out! – April Pulley Sayre  
 The Very Hungry Caterpillar – Eric Carle  
 A Visit to William Blake's Inn – Nancy Willard  
 Wait for William – Marjorie Flack  
 Where the Sidewalk Ends – Shel Silverstein  
 Where the Wild Things Are – Maurice Sendak

*The Accelerated School, Los Angeles, California*  
*Benjamin Franklin Charter School, Mesa, Arizona*  
*Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School,  
 Franklin, Massachusetts*  
*Cherry Creek Academy, Englewood, Colorado*  
*Friendship Edison Public Charter School,  
 Washington, D.C.*  
*Harlem Day Charter School, New York, New York*  
*Rapoport Academy, Waco, Texas*

## Second Grade

Abiyoyo – Pete Seeger  
 Anansi, the Spider – Gerald McDermott  
 Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No  
 Good, Very Bad Day – Judith Viorst  
 Big Black Bear – Tedd Arnold  
 The Boston Coffee Party – Doreen Rappoport  
 Boxcar Children (series)  
 – Gertrude Chandler Warner  
 The Brave Cowboy – Joan Anglund  
 Caps for Sale – Esphyr Slobodkina  
 Captain Underpants series – Dav Pilkey  
 The Chalk Box Kid – Clyde Robert Bulla  
 Charlotte's Web and other books – E. B. White  
 A Christmas Carol – Charles Dickens

Dr. Seuss books  
 Elaine and the Flying Frog – Heidi Chang  
 The Fisherman and His Wife – Jacob Grimm  
 The Five Chinese Brothers – Claire Huchet  
 Bishop  
 The Grouchy Ladybug and other books  
 – Eric Carle  
 Hank the Cowdog series – John Erickson  
 The Hobyahs – Robert D. San Souci  
 In a Pumpkin Shell – Joan Anglund  
 Junie B. Jones book series – Barbara Park  
 Jupiter – Seymour Simon  
 The Labors of Hercules – Agatha Christie  
 Many Moons – James Thurber  
 Ming Lo Moves the Mountain – Arnold Lobel  
 The Mitten – Jan Brett  
 Molly's Pilgrim – Barbara Cohen  
 Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle – Betty MacDonald  
 The Napping House – Audrey Wood  
 The New Kid on the Block – Jack Prelutsky  
 Pecos Bill: A Tall Tale  
 – Steven Kellogg, Sarah Kilbourne  
 Peter Pan – James Matthew Barrie  
 Phantom Tollbooth – Norton Juster  
 A Place in the Sun – Jill Rubalcaba  
 Ramona series – Beverly Cleary  
 Red Fox and His Canoe – Nathaniel Benchley  
 Sarah, Plain and Tall – Patricia MacLachlan  
 The Secret of Foghorn Island – Geoffrey Hayes  
 Spring Is a New Beginning – Joan Anglund

The Steadfast Tin Soldier  
– Hans Christian Andersen

Stellanuna – Janell Cannon

The Tales of Winnie the Pooh – A.A. Milne

The Trojan Horse – Emily Little

Three Billy Goats Gruff – Stephen Carpenter

Weed Is a Flower: The Life of George  
Washington Carver – Alike

Where the Forest Meets the Sea  
– Jeannie Baker

Where the Sidewalk Ends and other books  
– Shel Silverstein

Where the Wild Things Are – Maurice Sendak

The World of Christopher Robin – A.A. Milne

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*Franklin, Massachusetts*  
*Cherry Creek Academy, Englewood, Colorado*  
*Friendship Edison Public Charter School,*  
*Washington, D.C.*  
*Rapoport Academy, Waco, Texas*

### Third Grade

Aldo Applesauce – Johanna Hurwitz

Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves  
– Eric A. Kimmel

Alice in Wonderland – Lewis Carroll

Anne of Green Gables  
– Lucy Maud Montgomery

Because of Winn-Dixie – Kate Dicamillo

Ben and Me – Robert Lawson

Benjamin Franklin – I. and E. D'Aulaire

The Borrowers (series) – Mary Norton

The Cherokee Indians – Sonia Bleeker

Damon and Pythias – Rose Tillinghast

Dear Mr. Henshaw – Beverly Cleary

Dinosaurs Before Dark – Mary Pope Osborne

The Door in the Wall – Marguerite De Angeli

The Five Hundred Hats of Bartholomew  
Cubbins – Dr. Seuss

Freckle Juice – Judy Blume

Grandpa's Teeth – Rod Clement

Harry Potter series – J.K. Rowling

Henry Huggins (and other Henry titles)  
– Beverly Cleary

How to Eat Fried Worms – Thomas Rockwell

If You Lived in Colonial Times – Ann McGovern

If You Sailed on the Mayflower  
– Ann McGovern

Jackie Robinson and the Story of All-Black  
Baseball – Jim O'Connor

James and the Giant Peach – Roald Dahl

Jason and the Golden Fleece – Apollonius

Junie B. Jones and the Mushy Gushy Valentine  
– Barbara Park

Junie B. Jones Loves Handsome Warren  
– Barbara Park

Junie B. Jones Smells Something Fishy  
– Barbara Park

Leif the Lucky – I. and E. D'Aulaire

Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe – C.S. Lewis

The Little Match Girl  
– Hans Christian Andersen

Louis Braille: the Boy Who Invented Books for the Blind – Margaret Davidson

Many Moons – James Thurber

Matt Christopher Sports (series)  
– Matt Christopher

The Menominee – Joan Kalbacken,  
and other New True Books

Miss Nelson Has a Field Day  
– Harry Allard and James Marshall

Miss Rumphius – Barbara Cooney

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale – John Steptoe

Paddle-to-the-Sea – H.C. Holling

Paper Bag Princess – Robert Munsch

The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales – Virginia Hamilton

Pippi Longstocking – Astrid Ericsson Lindgren

A Pizza the Size of the Sun – Jack Prelutsky

Rabbit Hill – Robert Lawson

Sideways Stories from Wayside School  
– Louis Sachar

Song of Hiawatha  
– Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

There's a Hamster in My Lunchbox  
– Susan Clymer

The Truth about the Moon – Clayton Bess

Where the Sidewalk Ends – Shel Silverstein

The Wind in the Willows – Kenneth Grahame

A Wrinkle in Time – Madeleine L'Engle

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*Franklin, Massachusetts*

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*Einstein Montessori School, Gainesville, Florida*  
*Friendship Edison Public Charter School,*  
*Washington, D.C.*  
*Rapoport Academy, Waco, Texas*

## Fourth Grade

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland  
– Lewis Carroll

Beezus and Ramona – Beverly Cleary

Book of Greek Myths – I. and E. D'Aulaire

Caddie Woodlawn – Carol Ryrie Brink

Carry on Mr. Bowditch – Jean Lee Latham

Cheyenne Rose – L.E. Williams

Concord Hymn and Other Poems  
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Cricket in Times Square – George Selden

Dead Man in Indian Creek  
– Mary Downing Hahn

Dew Drop Dead – James Howe

Dogs Don't Tell Jokes – Louis Sachar

The Egypt Game – Zilpha Keatley Snyder

Farmer Boy – Laura Ingalls Wilder

Frindle – Andrew Clements

Frog and Toad (series) – Arnold Lobel

Grandpa's Teeth – Rod Clement

Gulliver's Travels – Jonathan Swift

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone  
– J. K. Rowling

Holes – Louis Sachar

The Hundred Dresses – Eleanor Estes

If You Please, President Lincoln  
– Harriette Gillem Robinet

James and the Giant Peach – Roald Dahl  
 Jumanji – Chris Van Allsburg  
 Knights of the Kitchen Table – Jon Scieszka  
 Life Doesn't Frighten Me – Maya Angelou, et al.  
 The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe  
   – C.S. Lewis  
 Little House in the Big Woods  
   – Laura Ingalls Wilder  
 Little Women – Louisa May Alcott  
 The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks  
   – Joanna Cole  
 The Magic School Bus: Inside the Earth  
   – Joanna Cole  
 Mary Poppins – P.L. Travers  
 The Midnight Horse – Sid Fleischman  
 The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere  
   – Henry Wadsworth Longfellow  
 The Midwife's Apprentice – Karen Cushman  
 Moon, Sun, and Stars – John Bryan Lewellen  
 Mr. Potter's Pet – Dick King-Smith  
 My Father's Dragon – Ruth Stiles Gannett  
 Never Turn Back: Father Serra's Mission  
   – James J. Rawls  
 Number the Stars – Lois Lowry  
 Prairie School – Lois Lenski  
 River of No Return – Vince Lahey, and other  
   Choose Your Own Adventure Books  
 Robinson Crusoe – Daniel Defoe  
 Sarah Bishop – Scott O'Dell  
 Shiloh – Phyllis Reynolds Naylor  
 Smasher – Dick King-Smith

So You Want to Be President  
   – Everett Blackman  
 Souder – William Howard Armstrong  
 Stuart Little – E.B. White  
 Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing – Judy Blume  
 Treasure Island – Robert Louis Stevenson  
 A Wrinkle in Time – Madeleine L'Engle  
 Yankee Doodle Boy – Joseph Plumb Martin  
  
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*Cherry Creek Academy, Englewood, Colorado*  
*Einstein Montessori School, Gainesville, Florida*  
*Friendship Edison Public Charter School,*  
*Washington, D.C.*  
*Rapoport Academy, Waco, Texas*

## Fifth Grade

The Ballad of Lucy Whipple – Karen Cushman  
 The Berenstain Bear Scouts and the  
   Ripoff Queen – Stan & Jan Berenstain  
 A Bird Came Down the Walk  
   – Emily Dickinson  
 Blue Willow – Doris Gates  
 Bridge to Terabithia – Katherine Paterson  
 The Cabin Faced West – Jean Fritz  
 Call It Courage – Armstrong Sperry  
 Charley Skedaddle – Patricia Beatty  
 Charlotte's Web – E.B. White  
 Dolphin Named Bob – Twig C. George  
 Drive By – Lynne Ewing

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil  
Frankweiler – E.L. Konigsburg

George Washington's World  
– Genevieve Foster

The House of Dies Drear – Virginia Hamilton

The Hudson: River of History – May McNeer

James and the Giant Peach – Roald Dahl

Landing of the Pilgrims – James Daugherty

Lincoln: A Photobiography – Russell Freedman

Little House on the Prairie  
– Laura Ingalls Wilder

Little Women – Louisa May Alcott

Master Skylark – John Bennett

A Midsummer Night's Dream  
– William Shakespeare

My Side of the Mountain  
– Jean Craighead George

Never Turn Back: Father Serra's Mission  
– James J. Rawls

O Captain! My Captain! and Other Poems  
– Walt Whitman

Ramona Quimby, Age 8 – Beverly Cleary

Sarah, Plain and Tall – Patricia MacLachlan

A School for Pompey Walker  
– Michael J. Rosen

The Sea Around Us – Rachel L. Carson

Shades of Gray – Carolyn Reeder

Sherlock Holmes – Arthur Conan Doyle

Sideways Stories from Wayside School  
– Louis Sachar

Summer of the Swans – Betsy Byars

The Twenty-One Balloons  
– William Pene du Bois

Uncle Tom's Cabin – Harriet Beecher Stowe

Who is Carrie? – James Lincoln Collier and  
Christopher Collier

The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson  
(Wordsworth Poetry Library) – Alfred  
Lord Tennyson

A Wrinkle in Time – Madeleine L'Engle

*The Accelerated School, Los Angeles, California*  
*Benjamin Franklin Charter School, Mesa, Arizona*  
*Benjamin Classical Franklin Charter School,*  
*Franklin, Massachusetts*  
*Cherry Creek Academy, Englewood, Colorado*  
*Einstein Montessori School, Gainesville, Florida ★*



## GLOSSARY OF PROFESSIONAL TERMS

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**Accountability** A characteristic of an educational system whereby the schools, school districts, state government, or federal government are held responsible for the achievement of students. The term may also be used in the context of holding students responsible for a certain level of achievement for promotion or graduation.

**Alphabetic Principle** The use of letters and letter combinations to represent phonemes in a writing system. Knowledge of the alphabetic principle is awareness that written words are composed of letters that are intentionally and conventionally related to phonemic segments of the words of oral language.

**Analogy-Based Phonics** A method by which children are taught to use parts of word families they know to identify words they do not know.

**Analytic Phonics** A method by which children are taught to analyze letter-sound relationships by comparing unknown words to known words.

**Assessment or Test** A tool used to determine the knowledge, reasoning abilities, skills, and/or feelings of students. Assessments may be characterized as:

**Criterion-referenced assessment** A tool or assessment that measures whether a student has mastered a specific skill or area of knowledge. A criterion-referenced test typically contains an element of subjectivity in that it relies on someone to observe and rate student activities or work products. It therefore does not allow for comparisons to

be readily made between the achievement of one student and the achievement of others.

**High-stakes assessment** A tool or assessment that has major consequences for an individual or institution. For example, an examination, the results of which determine whether a person will graduate from high school, be admitted to college, or obtain a professional license is a high-stakes assessment for that person. An examination that is given to students and their aggregate scores are used to determine how well a school district is educating its students is a high-stakes assessment for the school district.

**Norm-referenced assessment** A tool or assessment that compares the achievement of one student or the students of a school, school district, or state with a norm score that is obtained by giving the test to a sample of students.

**Automaticity** Fluent performance without the conscious deployment of attention. In reading, the term refers to the ability to quickly and accurately recognize a word as a whole unit.

**Basal Reading Programs** Reading programs that have student anthologies of literature and teacher's manuals with skills lessons in phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, et al.

**Blend** A consonant sequence before or after a vowel within a syllable, such as *cl*, *br* or *st*; the written language equivalent of consonant cluster.

**Closed Syllable** A syllable ending with a consonant; e.g. him, mud.

**Concepts of Print** An understanding of how print functions, that writing is comprised of letters, that text has directionality and a familiarity with the format of books.

**Consonant Digraph** Written letter combination that corresponds to one speech sound but is not represented by either letter alone, such as *th* or *ph*.

**Decoding** Ability to translate a word from print to speech, usually by employing knowledge of sound-symbol correspondences; also, the act of deciphering a new word by sounding it out.

**Embedded Phonics** A method by which children are taught letter-sound relationships during the reading of connected text.

**Fluency** Achieving speed and accuracy in recognizing words and comprehending connected text, and coordinating the two.

**Frustration Level/Reading** Level at which a child's reading skills break down: fluency disappears, errors in word recognition are numerous, comprehension is faulty, recall is sketchy, and signs of emotional tension and discomfort become evident. Word recognition averages less than 90%.

**Grapheme** The smallest part of written language that represents a phoneme in the spelling of a word. A grapheme may be just one letter, such as *b*, *d*, *f*, *p*, *s*; or several letters, such as *ch*, *sh*, *th*, *-ck*, *ea*, *-igh*.

**Independent Level/Reading** Level at which a child can read easily and fluently without difficulty in decoding and with rare errors in word recognition. Word recognition averages 95% or better.

**Instructional Level/Reading** Level at which a child is challenged, but can manage text with few errors in word recognition. Word recognition averages 90% or better.

**Letter Knowledge** The ability to recognize the letters of the alphabet, e.g., upper- and lower-case letters, letters in isolation as well as within words, and handwritten and machine-generated letters.

**Literature-Based Reading Programs** Children select, read, and discuss books. Phonics instruction is embedded in activities, but letter-sound relationships are taught incidentally, usually based on key letters that appear in student reading materials.

**Morpheme** The smallest meaningful unit of language.

**Morphology** The aspects of language structure related to the ways words are formed from prefixes, roots and suffixes (e.g., "mis-spell-ing") and are related to each other.

**Onset and Rime** Parts of spoken language that are smaller than syllables but larger than phonemes. An *onset* is the initial consonant(s) sound of a syllable (the onset of *bag* is *b-*; of *swim*, *sw-*). A *rime* is the part of syllable that contains the vowel and all that follows it (the rime of *bag* is *-ag*; of *swim*, *-im*).

**Onset-Rime Phonics Instruction** A method by which children are taught to identify the sound of the letter or letters before the first vowel (the onset) in a one-syllable word and the sound of the remaining part of the word (the rime).

**Open Syllable** A syllable ended by a vowel or diphthong; e.g., *go*, *he*.

**Orthographic Awareness** Knowing that letters and diacritics represent the spoken language; attending to predictable and frequent spelling patterns. (A diacritic is a mark, such as the cedilla of *façade* or the acute accents of *résumé*, added to a letter to indicate a special phonetic value or distinguish words that are otherwise graphically identical.)

**Orthography** A method of representing spoken language by letters and diacritical marks; spelling.

**Phoneme** A speech sound that combines with others in a language system to make words.

**Phoneme Addition** The making of a new word by adding a phoneme to an existing word.

**Phoneme Blending** Listening to a sequence of separately spoken phonemes, and then combining the phonemes to form a word.

**Phoneme Categorization** Recognizing the word in a set of three or four words that has the “odd” sound.

**Phoneme Deletion** Recognizing the word that remains when a phoneme is removed from another word.

**Phoneme Identity** Recognizing the same sounds in different words.

**Phoneme Isolation** Recognizing individual sounds in a word.

**Phoneme Segmentation** Breaking a word into its separate sounds.

**Phoneme Substitution** Substitution of one phoneme for another to make a new word.

**Phonemic Awareness** The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words.

**Phonics** The understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (the sounds of spoken language) and graphemes (the letters and spellings that are present those sounds in written language).

**Phonics through Spelling** A method by which children are taught to segment words into phonemes and to make words by writing letters for phonemes.

**Phonological Awareness** A general appreciation of the sounds of speech as distinct from their meaning; a broad term that encompasses phonemic awareness. In addition to phonemes, phonological awareness activities can involve work with rhymes, words, syllables, and onsets and rimes.

**Phonology** The aspects of language structure related to the distinctive features for the representation, production and reception of sounds of language.

**Prefix** A morpheme that precedes a root or base word and that contributes to or modifies the meaning of a word.

**Reading Comprehension** The ability to use word recognition skills, vocabulary skills and background knowledge to discern the meaning of the words, the intent of the author and the expression of text.

**Reciprocal Teaching** A teaching process in which teachers and students take turns asking and answering questions in order to comprehend text and to learn comprehension strategies.

**Rime** See Onset and Rime

**Schwa** A nondistinct vowel found in unstressed syllables in English.

**Sight Word** A word that is immediately recognized as a whole and does not require word analysis for identification. Words that are phonically irregular or are important to learn before students have the skills to decode them are often taught as sight words.

**Suffix** A morpheme, added to a root or base word, that often changes the word's part of speech and that modifies its meaning.

**Syllable** Unit of pronunciation that is organized around a vowel; it may or may not have consonants before or after the vowel.

**Synthetic Phonics** A method by which children are taught explicitly how to convert letters or letter combinations into sounds, and then how to blend the sounds together to form recognizable words.

**Syntax** The aspects of language structure related to the ways in which words are put together to form phrases, clauses and sentences.

**Systematic Phonics** A method by which children are taught a sequential set of phonics elements delineated along a dimension of explicitness, depending on the type of phonics method employed.

**Word Attack** An aspect of reading instruction that includes intentional strategies for learning to decode, sight read, and recognize written words.

**Word Decoding** An aspect of reading that involves deriving a pronunciation for a printed sequence of letters based on knowledge of spelling-sound correspondences.

**Word Recognition** In reading, identifying as known words those that have been decoded or processed as whole words and associating the known words with their meaning and use in language being read. ★

*Glossary Sources:* Lindamood-Bell 2002; Moats 2000; PRESS 2002; Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1998, 1999; US ED 2001c; US HHS 2000.

## PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY

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*Alternate Assessment: Measuring Outcomes and Supports for Students with Disabilities*

Harold L. Kleinert and Jacqui Farmer Kearns

*Alternative Approaches to Assessing Young Children*

Angela Losardo and Angela Notari-Syverson

*Alternative Assessment Techniques for Reading and Writing*

Wilma H. Miller

*Authentic Reading Assessment*

Sheila W. Valencia, Elfrieda H. Hiebert and Peter D. Afflerbach (editors)

*Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About Print*

Marilyn Jager Adams

*The Charter School Challenge: Avoiding the Pitfalls, Fulfilling the Promise*

Bryan C. Hassel

*Charter Schools and Accountability in Public Education*

Paul T. Hill and Robin J. Lake

*Charters, Vouchers, and Public Education*

Paul E. Peterson and David E. Campbell, eds.

*Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers*

Barbara T. Bowman, Suzanne Donovan and M. Susan Burns

*Fifty Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners*

Adrienne L. Herrell

*Ladders to Literacy: A Kindergarten Activity Book*

*Ladders to Literacy: A Preschool Activity Book*

Angela Notari-Syverson, Rollanda E. O'Connor, and Patricia F. Vadasy

*The Lindamood® Phoneme Sequencing Program for Reading, Spelling, and Speech - Third Edition*

Patricia C. Lindamood and Phyllis D. Lindamood

*Literacy Assessment of Second Language Learners*

Sandra Rollins Hurley (editor) and Josefina Villamil Tinajero

*A Mind at a Time*

Mel Levine, M.D.

*Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills*

Judith R. Birsh (editor)

*Phonemic Awareness in Young Children: A Classroom Curriculum*

Marilyn Jager Adams, Barbara R. Foorman, Ingvar Lundberg, and Terri Beeler

*Phonics from A to Z (Grades K-3)*

Wiley Blevins

*Preparing Our Teachers: Opportunities for Better Reading Instruction*

Dorothy Strickland and Catherine E. Snow

*Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*

Catherine E. Snow, M. Susan Burns and Peg Griffin (editors)

*Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read*

U.S. Department of Education, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the National Institute for Literacy

*Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read*

U.S. Department of Education, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the National Institute for Literacy

*Reading Assessment: A Primer for Teachers and Tutors*

JoAnne Schudt Caldwell

*Readings on Language and Literacy:*

*Essays in Honor of Jeanne S. Chall*

Lillian R. Putnam and Jeanne Sternlicht Chall (editors)

*Report of the National Reading Panel:*

*Teaching Children to Read*

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

*Road to the Code: A Phonological Awareness Program for Young Children*

Benita A. Blachman, Eileen Wynne Ball, Rochella Black and Darlene M. Tangel

*Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers*

Louisa Cook Moats

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

M. Susan Burns, Peg Griffin and Catherine E. Snow (editors)

*Strategies that Work – Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding*

Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis

*Teaching and Assessing Phonics: Why, What, When, How*

Jeanne S. Chall and Helen M. Popp

*Teaching Language Arts: Expanding Thinking Through Student-Centered Instruction*

Cathy Collins Block

*What Really Matters for Struggling Readers-Designing Research-Based Programs*

Richard L. Allington ★

## READING PROGRAM SUMMARY

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### Core Knowledge

Grade level: K-8

Core Knowledge is a program that focuses on content and skills. While offering support, the program does not mandate teaching strategies. Instead, the program is based on the theory that new knowledge must be built upon prior knowledge and that there is an everlasting body of knowledge that all children should be taught. The program provides a description of content that is specific and sequenced and that details what children should know at each grade level. The sequential building of knowledge helps to prepare each child for the next grade level and reinforce what has previously been studied by building on that knowledge through a spiral approach to instruction.

Source: Core Knowledge Foundation at [www.coreknowledge.org](http://www.coreknowledge.org).

### Direct Instruction

Grade level: Primary pre-K-6, yet also successful with older students, remedial students, and adults.

Direct Instruction programs are published by SRA/McGraw Hill in the areas of reading, remedial reading, spelling, math, writing, and language. The reading/language arts program is called “SRA Reading Mastery.” Direct Instruction is designed around classroom scripts that have been extensively tested and revised—scripts are accepted only when field tests show that 90 percent of students grasp the information after the first time through the

lesson. The primary goal of Direct Instruction is to accelerate learning through the design and delivery of instruction. “Rapid pacing and choral group response punctuated by individual turns characterize the delivery of a Direct Instruction lesson.” The theory behind this highly-scripted instructional program is that “students would generalize their learning to new untaught situations if they can respond perfectly to a smaller group of carefully engineered tasks.” ([www.adihome.org](http://www.adihome.org)) For example, by teaching children 600 word parts (morphographs) and three rules for connecting them, students could spell 12,000 words with ease. Additionally, the creators of Direct Instruction believe that for disadvantaged students to be successful, they must be taught at a faster rate than they are normally taught.

Source: Association for Direct Instruction at [www.adihome.org](http://www.adihome.org), *Seven Promising Reading and English Language Arts Programs*, by The American Federation of Teachers, and *Programs and Practices: Direct Instruction* by the Education Commission of the States at [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org).

### Junior Great Books

Grades: K-12

The Junior Great Books program is a supplemental program designed to help students develop the skills, habits, and attitudes of successful readers. The program was originally designed to support after-school and at-home reading experiences. Each lesson sequence includes reading, oral work, and written work. Prior to reading the selection, the teacher provides an introduction to what will be encountered in the text. Students then read the selection and thereafter there is a group discussion about what has been read.

Following the group discussion, students read the text again, making notes to the questions raised during the group discussion. Another group discussion takes place, along with a teacher-led “Shared Inquiry” discussion. The final step includes students writing about the text (stories, poems, essays).

Source: *Seven Promising Reading and English Language Arts Programs*, by The American Federation of Teachers.

### Lindamood-Bell

Grades: K-adult

The Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program® (LiPS®) is a reading and spelling program designed to integrate a combination of auditory, visual, and motor functions. Students learn to pay attention to mouth actions when producing speech sounds. Thereafter, they learn to associate sounds with colored blocks representing phonemes. This knowledge base is then used to learn spelling and reading. This method can be used with existing reading and spelling programs.

Source: *Lindamood Phoneme Sequence Program – Additional Description* at [www.lindamoodbell.com](http://www.lindamoodbell.com).

### McGraw-Hill Reading

Grades: K-6

A basal reading program that uses direct, explicit, systematic and sequential phonics instruction and decodable literature to

promote early reading success. Students read award-winning fiction and non-fiction literature. Teachers are supported by carefully sequenced instruction, multilevel resources for independent reading, five-day lesson plans, and ideas for cross-curricular and multicultural enrichment. Numerous technology and assessment resources, including Internet Connections, provide further support.

Source: McGraw-Hill Reading Product information at [www.mhschool.com](http://www.mhschool.com).

### Open Court Collections for Young Readers

Grades: K-6

Open Court is a basal reading program developed by the same company that publishes Direct Instruction. The program uses a balanced approach of phonemic awareness and phonics instructions with a variety of quality literature to teach reading and writing. In the early reading program, phonemic principles are reinforced through sound/spelling cards and practice reading materials that reinforce what has been taught. Authentic literature is introduced in kindergarten and by the middle of the first grade students are reading independently. The program includes over 100 reading selections for each grade level—many of these selections are from award winning authors and authors that have a strong multicultural focus.

Source: *Seven Promising Reading and English Language Arts Programs*, by The American Federation of Teachers, and *Research-based Reading Programs* at [www.schwablearning.org](http://www.schwablearning.org).



## Success For All

Grades: K-6

Success for All is a structured school-wide reading program where students are often grouped by ability (versus grade) for reading instruction. The scripted program provides specific instructional guidance for each part of the curriculum. Instruction for beginning readers focuses on reading readiness and oral language development. When students reach a certain level, they move on to the Reading Wings program. Reading Wings uses the school's standardized texts and literature to teach comprehension and writing. Reading Wings also includes cooperative learning activities where students work in pairs and teams to build reading comprehension, spelling, and fluency skills. Students are assessed every eight weeks. Students needing additional support are provided tutoring by certified teachers. Additionally, schools using the program have a program facilitator who works with the principal to support implementation and coach teachers.

Source: *Seven Promising Reading and English Language Arts Programs*, by The American Federation of Teachers, and *Programs and Practices: Success For All*, by the Education Commission of the States at [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org).

## The Spalding Method

Grades: K-8

The Spalding Method is a total language arts program that provides explicit and multi-sensory instruction in spelling, writing, and

comprehension. Students are first taught 54 sound-symbol associations and taught how to write those letter combinations. Thereafter, there is an emphasis on dictation of high frequency words and forming sentences. Program writing exercises support practice with grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. Student comprehension skills are developed through quality children's literature.

Source: *The Spalding Method at a Glance* at [www.spalding.org](http://www.spalding.org), and *Research-based Reading Programs* at [www.schwablearning.org](http://www.schwablearning.org).

## Waterford Early Reading Program

Grades: pre-K – 3

This Waterford Program is designed to move the focus of teaching to early achievement and growth, rather than remediation. WERP instruction targets three levels of instruction—emergent, beginning, and fluent readers. Using highly interactive software, instruction is tailored to each student's needs and abilities. Teachers are provided with frequent assessments and are provided with training in how to use the assessment results to guide instruction. Students are provided with an at-home reading library to build reading skills and to help parents guide student learning. The program includes a framework for family learning nights where parents are invited to the school to learn more about how they can participate in their child's education.

Source: *Programs and Practices: Waterford Early Reading Program*, by the Education Commission of the States at [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org).

## Wilson Reading System

Grade Level: K-12

The Wilson Reading System (WRS) is a program designed for students who have difficulties decoding and spelling. The system, originally developed at Massachusetts General Hospitals' language disorder unit, was originally designed for older students with dyslexia. WRS is organized around the type of syllables found in the English language.

The Wilson Reading system is a twelve-step reading and writing program. Mastery is required prior to advancing to the next step. In

the first two steps of the program, students are taught to separate and blend sounds in a word (phonemic segmentation skills) using a "sound tapping procedure." For example, a student is taught to tap fingers to his or her thumb for each sound in the word "cat." In later steps, polysyllabic words are used. Students are also taught sight word instruction, vocabulary, oral language expression, and comprehension right from the beginning. Beginning with step four, students are introduced to concepts such as suffix ending and vowel-consonant-e syllables. In the later steps, students are taught complex word structure.

Source: [www.wilsonlanguage.org](http://www.wilsonlanguage.org). ★

## WEBSITES

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### [www.lis.uiuc.edu/puboff/bccb](http://www.lis.uiuc.edu/puboff/bccb)

*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, one of the nation's leading children's book review journals for school and public librarians

### [www.acs.ualgary.ca/~dkbrown](http://www.acs.ualgary.ca/~dkbrown)

Children's Literature Website; lists of great books from several English-speaking countries

### [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)

American Library Association; extensive list of websites useful to those who educate children (parents and teachers alike). Of note:

[www.ala.org/alsc/caldecott.htm](http://www.ala.org/alsc/caldecott.htm) – home page for the list of Caldecott winners (artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children)

[www.ala.org/alsc/newbery.html](http://www.ala.org/alsc/newbery.html) – home page for the list of Newbery Medal winners (authors of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children)

[www.ala.org/srrt/csking](http://www.ala.org/srrt/csking) – homepage for the list of Coretta Scott King book awards (authors and illustrators of African descent whose books promote an understanding and appreciation of the "American Dream")

### [www.bigchalk.com](http://www.bigchalk.com)

website for teachers, librarians, parents and students; lots of information on a well-designed website

### [www.bpl.org/kids/booklists/index.htm](http://www.bpl.org/kids/booklists/index.htm)

Boston Public Library's website for booklists for children; organized by subject matter (e.g., heritage, folktales, dragons, emerging readers,

young adults, etc.); English and Spanish versions of some lists

### [www.carr.org/read/stateAwardbks.htm](http://www.carr.org/read/stateAwardbks.htm)

a list of hyperlinks to state book award lists

### [www.charterfriends.org](http://www.charterfriends.org)

site of state charter school organizers; tracks federal charter school legislation; includes a good contacts list

### [www.chipublib.org/008subject/003cya/sign/sign.html](http://www.chipublib.org/008subject/003cya/sign/sign.html)

Chicago Public Library website for kids; the "Sign of the Owl" – a well-organized site with areas for parents, teachers, and children

### [www.ciera.org](http://www.ciera.org)

Center for Improvement of Early Literacy Achievement website (University of Michigan); research on reading comprehension; extensive list of links for researchers and educators

### [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

general site for U.S. Department of Education; includes a family literacy site. Of note for educators:

[www.ed.gov/prog\\_info/Labs/](http://www.ed.gov/prog_info/Labs/) - website for Regional Educational Laboratory Program; a gateway to 10 regional education labs across the country, each of which specializes in a specific area of education research; excellent sources of up-to-date research information

### [www.edexcellence.net](http://www.edexcellence.net)

website sponsored by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation; good resource for charter school and school choice information; generates studies by state for standards, tests and accountability; information on charter school research; extensive list of links

**[www.edreform.com](http://www.edreform.com)**

The Center for Education Reform; includes a national ranking of state charter school laws; provides a list of state education officials and a listing of charter schools in each state

**[www.indiana.edu/~eric\\_rec/](http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/)**

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English and Communications; links to Parents and Children Together Online (a free newsletter promoting family literacy by providing materials parents and children can share)

**[www.knowledgeloom.org](http://www.knowledgeloom.org)**

a database of “best practice” resources organized by academic area

**[www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)**

information website on learning disabilities for parents, teachers and other professionals; a service of The Learning Project at WETA in association with The Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities

**[www.nationalreadingpanel.org](http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org)**

site for the National Institutes of Health’s reports on literacy including free, downloadable versions of “Teaching Children to Read,” “Putting Reading First” (parent and teacher versions), and “No Child Left Behind”

**[www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov)**

National Institute of Family Literacy; NIFL is charged with the implementation of the Reading Excellence Act (PLI 05-277), the focus of which is to increase access to evidence-based reading research by providing information in non-technical language that is easily understood by people who are not researchers including educators, parents, and policy makers

**[www2.nypl.org/home/branch/kids](http://www2.nypl.org/home/branch/kids)**

New York Public Library’s “On-Lion” site for kids; lots of links to literature and literacy-enhancing sites

**[www.readbygrade3.com](http://www.readbygrade3.com)**

research information on literacy

**[www.readingrockets.org](http://www.readingrockets.org)**

resource site for parents and teachers of young readers

**[www.rif.org](http://www.rif.org)**

Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.; RIF is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and individuals to place more than 200 million books in the hands and homes of children who need them most

**[www.schwablearning.org](http://www.schwablearning.org)**

a parent’s guide to helping kids with learning differences; supported by the Helen and Charles Schwab Foundation which was established because the Schwab family has been affected by dyslexia

**[www.sedl.org](http://www.sedl.org)**

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory; a private, not-for-profit education research and development corporation that works with educators, parents, community members, and policymakers to build or find strategies and tools addressing pressing educational problems; the source of information for the assessment framework in Chapter 5

**[sfpl4.sfpl.org/edc/booklists/booklists.htm](http://sfpl4.sfpl.org/edc/booklists/booklists.htm)**

San Francisco Public Library; lists of booklists in interesting groupings, e.g., “While You’re Waiting for the Next Harry Potter” or “Girls Worth Knowing”

**[www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org)**

Charter school website sponsored by WestEd and U.S. Department of Education; good source of materials and information on funding ★

**[www.txla.org/groups/tba/index.html](http://www.txla.org/groups/tba/index.html)**

Texas Bluebonnet Award list (Texas state list of book awards)

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## READING RESOURCE CD

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Take Me on a Reading Adventure, along with many other helpful reading resources, is included on the computer disk accompanying this guide. The disk includes the following:

- ★ Take Me on a Reading Adventure: A Literacy Guide for America's Charter Schools
- ★ Building on the Best – Learning from What Works; Five Promising Remedial Reading Intervention Programs
- ★ Building on the Best – Learning from What Works; Seven Promising Reading and English Language Arts Programs
- ★ Professional Development – Learning from the Best: A Toolkit for Schools and Districts based on Model Professional Development Award Winners
- ★ Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and its Implications for Reading Instruction
- ★ A Compact for Reading Guide – A Reading Partnership Action Kit and the School-Home Links Reading Kits (K-3)
- ★ Family Involvement in Children's Education–Successful Local Approaches–An Idea Book
- ★ Put Reading First – Helping Your Child Learn to Read – A Parent Guide
- ★ Put Reading First – The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read







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