



Friday Focus

Carter County Schools

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5 Essential Components of Reading Instruction

How can we teach all children to read accurately, rapidly, and with comprehension? The National Reading Panel Report provides an answer to this question.

The National Reading Panel Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000) summarized several decades of scientific research that clearly shows effective reading instruction addresses five critical areas:

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is commonly defined as the understanding that spoken words are made up of separate units of sound that are blended together when words are pronounced. However, it can also be thought of as skill at hearing and producing the separate sounds in words, dividing or segmenting words into their component sounds, blending separate sounds into words, and recognizing words that sound alike or different. Researchers have been able to identify who would learn to read more easily and who would have difficulty by measuring the extent to which children had developed phonemic awareness (Share, Jorm, Maclean, & Matthews, 1984). More importantly, a number of studies have shown that teaching phonemic awareness to young children significantly increases their later reading achievement (Cunningham, 1989; Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Schatschneider, & Mehta, 1998; Lundberg, Frost, & Peterson, 1988).

Phonics

We define phonics as a set of rules that specify the relationship between letters in the spelling of words and the sounds of spoken language. For the English language, these relationships are predictable, but not completely consistent. However, they are consistent enough to be very useful to young children in helping them learn to decode unfamiliar words. (Foorman et al., 1998). Effective phonics instruction enables children to use these relationships to read and spell words accurately and rapidly. Phonics instruction also serves as a memory aid that helps students remember and apply rules and generalizations for matching sounds and letters. Systematic phonics instruction was shown to produce gains in children from all socioeconomic levels (National Reading Panel).

Fluency

Fluency is recognizing the words in a text rapidly and accurately and using phrasing and emphasis in a way that makes what is read sound like spoken language. In a large-scale study of fluency (Pinnell, Pikulski, Wixson, Campbell, Gough, & Beatty, 1995) the National Assessment of Educational Progress reported that almost half of the fourth graders tested were unable to read fluently. That same study identified a close relationship between fluency and comprehension. That is, students who were low in fluency also showed difficulty comprehending what they read.

Vocabulary

The term vocabulary refers to words we need to know to communicate with others. There are four types of vocabulary: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Vocabulary is important in word recognition. Young readers use the pronunciations and meanings of

words in their oral vocabulary to help them recognize words they see in print. Vocabulary also plays an important role in comprehension. Additionally, vocabulary is important for reading to learn as well as learning to read. Children need to understand the meanings of the words they read if they are to learn from what they read (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Baker, Simmons, and Kameenui (1995) tell us that "vocabulary acquisition is crucial to academic development."

Comprehension

Comprehension involves constructing meaning that is reasonable and accurate by connecting what has been read to what the reader already knows and thinking about all of this information until it is understood. Comprehension is the final goal of reading instruction.

Good comprehenders do the following things:

- They use a range of comprehension strategies to deepen and enrich their understanding of what they are reading (Pressley, El-Dinary, & Brown, 1992).
- They are aware of their own thinking processes, and they make conscious decisions to use different comprehension strategies as they read, especially when they detect problems in understanding what they are reading (Baker & Brown, 1984).
- They attribute successful comprehension to effort more than to ability. They believe they can understand what they read if they apply the right comprehension strategies; however, they also believe that achieving this level of understanding requires effort, according to Carr and Borkowski (as cited in Brown, 2002).

Teaching children to read is a challenging responsibility. Teachers who have a thorough understanding of the five essential components of effective reading instruction are equipped to teach children to read using instructional strategies and materials that have proven to be effective.

Inside This

[K12 Reader](#)

[Reading Rockets](#)

[Achieve the Core \(High School\)](#)

[Improving Older Kids' Reading](#)

[Comprehension Skills, Strategies, and Best Practices](#)

[Reading Comprehension Passages](#)



Upcoming Events

- November 11 Veterans Day
- November 12 Academy for 3-5 Non-math Teachers
- November 26-28 Thanksgiving Break

