Research into Practice

Introduction

There are five essential components of effective reading instruction outlined by Reading First, a U.S. Department of Education program that emphasizes putting proven methods of early reading instruction into classrooms. These components include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, oral vocabulary, and text comprehension. This guide explains these five components and addresses how Pearson’s Reading Street for California provides instruction based on the research.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are made of sequences of meaningless and somewhat distinct sounds called phonemes. It is necessary for decoding alphabetic language, leads to better comprehension, and accelerates spelling growth.

Reading Street for California addresses phonemic awareness as it provides systematic, explicit instruction that begins in kindergarten and is organized into the following developmental levels:

- **Level One**: The easiest tasks involve large units of sound. For example, students segment a sentence into words.
- **Level Two**: Students work with smaller units of sound, such as comparing sounds in words.
- **Level Three**: Students segment, blend, and manipulate phonemes in oral language, such as making new words by adding a phoneme.

Reading Street’s phonological awareness instruction begins with daily lessons in kindergarten, precedes each phonics lesson in Grade 1, and gets reviewed in Grade 2. Students who require extra support receive an additional thirty minutes of scaffolded instruction each day with more practice and teacher feedback through the Universal Access program. Examples of Reading Street activities that develop phonological awareness are listening for rhyming words or counting sounds in words.
Phonics

Phonics is knowledge that sounds and letters have a relationship. Students use phonics to connect what they say to what they read and write. It is important that phonics lessons are organized to make sense of the alphabet and spelling patterns; this helps reading skills progress manageably. It is important for teachers to coach, prompt, and model using word identification strategies such as chunking and blending when decoding unknown words.

Grade 1 phonics instruction in Reading Street involves familiarity with spelling-sound correspondence, common spelling conventions, identifying printed words, sight recognition of high-frequency words, independent reading, and oral reading. The five-day structure provides the modeling, practice, and monitoring of these skills. In Grades 1 and 2, spelling is introduced through phonics, such as identifying long a words. Later, in Grades 3–5, there is a weekly spelling generalization connected to a phonics principle or word structure element.
Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately, quickly, and with expression. Fluent readers focus on what the text means rather than on decoding words. Decoding becomes easier if the student automatically recognizes about three hundred common words that make up around 85% of words in day-to-day reading. The more practice a student gets with reading, the better the student’s reading speed, word recognition, and oral expression. Students should practice orally rereading easily decodable text at their independent reading level, where they recognize about 95% of the words, to increase their fluency. Repeated and assisted readings enable children read more difficult material.

Reading Street builds fluency in kindergarten, where teachers model fluent expressive reading daily, such as during calendar activities. In Grades 1 and 2, students reread for fluency with oral rereading, paired reading, or choral reading. High-frequency words are introduced in a consistent routine and displayed on a word wall. In Grades 3–5, teachers model a fluent skill of the week such as dialogue, and students engage in similar skill activities through choral and partner reading. Teachers monitor progress and provide corrective feedback. Some strategies teachers may suggest to students who need additional support are timed repeated readings or segmented text. At all grade levels, students have opportunities for repeated readings throughout the week. Each week, students in Grades 1–5 have access to Extra Support, More Practice, and Advanced Content Readers as well as poetry and reader’s theater scripts. A running record allows teachers to determine each student’s instructional and independent reading level.

Oral Vocabulary

In order to build strong oral vocabulary, students need to listen to storybooks, listen to others read, engage in rich dialogue, reread, complete performance-oriented readings, and read with their peers. It is also important to expose students to target words through more explicit vocabulary instruction, such as anchored word instruction, which highlights meaning, spelling, and letter-sound relationships in the context of texts.
Vocabulary instruction is ongoing in Reading Street. Students listen to, engage with, and read literature. In Grades K–5, students are introduced to new words using a routine called Amazing Words. Amazing words are related to the concepts and are generally beyond the students’ reading level. The teacher provides a child-friendly definition of the word along with several examples. The students complete activities to interact with the words, such as in a conversation, retelling, or end-of-day discussion. Reading Street also uses anchor words by including meaning, spelling, sound-spellings, and word parts. To support vocabulary development, purposeful talk happens during the day, such as when discussing the Big Question or coaching students during reading or journal writing. Students also have many opportunities to engage with books—they can listen to literature, reread a familiar book, or discuss a book with other students.

Text Comprehension

Active, thoughtful, expert readers use comprehension strategies such as predicting, visualizing, and summarizing to understand text. Strategies need to be practiced with narrative, expository, and Web-based texts. In order to build these strategies, the instruction should follow this explicit pattern:

1. A description of the strategy and how it should be used
2. Teacher and student modeling, usually by thinking aloud
3. Collaborative use of the strategy in action
4. Guided practice
5. Independent use

Using this pattern in conjunction with building prior knowledge to make connections leads to better text comprehension.

Reading Street provides explicit and systematic instruction. Throughout all grade levels, the teacher models a target comprehension strategy every week. Teachers explain their thinking as they read. Then, the students practice the skill, with guidance from the teacher, on a short passage.
Conclusion

Reading Street for California is based upon quality research. It assists teachers in meeting the five components of effective reading instruction, which are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, oral vocabulary, and text comprehension.