

Becoming an Insider: Reaching All Students

by Dr. Alfred W. Tatum

A MAJOR CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATORS in the United States is to find ways to advance the literacy development of middle school students. National assessment data indicate that only about 30 percent of U.S. eighth graders are proficient readers. Almost 40 percent of high school students lack the reading and writing skills that employers expect of employees. Roughly 5 out of 10 high school graduates who enroll in college must take a remedial reading course (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Literacy-related difficulties are often exacerbated for students who lack the English proficiency needed to handle the academic language and cognitively challenging content found in the texts that they must read from middle school on.

Students on the Margin

The inability of adolescents to read with understanding affects their self-perception and self-understanding and leaves them vulnerable to failure (Alvermann et al., 2006). Think of the “dead eyes” present on the faces of many middle school students during reading instruction. These students live on the outside of literacy instruction; and many will remain there unless instructional practices are planned and educational contexts are shaped to meet their specific language and literacy needs and so bring them in from the margins.

This universe of marginalized adolescent readers is made up of three distinct groups (National Governors Association, 2005):

- readers who experience some problems with fluency and comprehension, but are able to read everyday texts such as newspapers

- readers who have more difficulty with fluency and comprehension, and who may fail to complete high school or who graduate with limited literacy skills
- readers who have difficulty decoding the words on a page—the smallest of the groups.

Across groups, these young marginalized readers are most at-risk of quitting school before graduation. Dropping out of school, of course, limits their opportunities to lead

productive lives. Educators know that marginalized students need a great deal of help, and that this help must begin long before students reach high school. Literacy instruction provides one of the best opportunities to better prepare marginalized students to take charge of their lives. Literacy classrooms are a natural environment for nurturing the resilience that striving students “in the middle” need in order to face and overcome obstacles.

**“Literary
classrooms
are a natural
environment
for nurturing
resilience.”**

Literacy Instruction to Promote Resilience

Resilience is a product of multiple personal attributes, such as temperament, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and the ability to set meaningful purposes and goals for one’s life. In developing literacy instruction for striving middle school students, educators need to acknowledge, honor, and advocate for each of these attributes and to combine them with research-based literacy instructional practices to shape positive literacy outcomes and personal-growth paths for students.

Adolescent students are more likely to become resilient if they feel secure in the presence of adults who clearly communicate high expectations along with realistic goals,

and who support the students' active participation in authentic tasks and "real-world" dialogue (Henderson & Milstein, 2003; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000). During reading instruction, educators can help nurture student resilience by modeling specific reading strategies that students can use to read independently, while simultaneously *engaging* students with texts or text-based questions and activities that are meaningful to them. These actions are particularly effective for economically disadvantaged students and students who are English language learners; that is, students who often feel disconnected from literacy instruction (Ivey, 1999; Miller, 2006). Building these contexts and relationships helps to construct students' literacy identities (Triplett, 2004). Literacy classrooms and instructional practices that invite students in from the margins and nurture their resilience are characteristically non-threatening. Students engage in conversations with teachers and classmates about the multiple literacies in their lives and feel supported and valued. Educators who structure such classroom environments and instructional practices have the potential to promote more active student participation in literacy-related tasks and to increase student motivation, leading to improved academic outcomes.

In developing instruction to address the literacy needs and to nurture the resilience of students who are vulnerable to failure, educators should keep in mind the following:

1. Structure supportive environments.
2. Provide direct and explicit strategy instruction.
3. Work to bridge the gap between students' in-school and out-of-school lives.
4. Recognize that young adolescents are developing a sense of self, and that they draw on cultural, linguistic, gender, and personal identities to define that self.
5. Honor cultural and linguistic diversity during instruction while holding all students to standards of excellence.
6. Provide adequate language supports before, during, and after instruction.
7. Select and discuss texts in ways that engage students.
8. Use appropriate pacing during instruction.
9. Involve students in the assessment process and develop an assessment plan that pays attention to students' cognitive and affective needs.



Engaging literature selections bridge the gap between students' in-school and out-of-school lives.

As this list indicates, there are multiple ways to *enable* and *engage* striving middle school students. It is important for teachers to be flexible in finding the ways that work best with their students, and to avoid approaching literacy instruction with a single technique or method.

Applying the Research: *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content*

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content is designed to nurture the resiliency of striving middle school students and to support them in achieving academic success. Engaging literature selections bridge the gap between students' in-school and out-of-school lives, honor the diversity of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and encourage them in the development of positive personal identities.

Teacher's Editions support teachers in providing a nurturing classroom environment and in delivering

direct and explicit instruction, with appropriate pacing and systematic guidance to keep students on track in learning skills, strategies, and content. The program features highly structured and guided practice, using repetitive routines that move striving readers toward reading independence. By involving students in the assessment process, *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* helps students visualize their own progress and embrace the goal of becoming proficient readers.

These approaches to instruction and assessment offer the best potential to shape positive literacy and life outcomes for students who struggle to read. With such help, students become insiders during their school years and carry multiple efficiencies with them when they graduate and move into a promising future in the outside world.

Reading Strategy: Make Connections

Use your experiences and your feelings to make connections to the text. Making connections can make the text more meaningful or interesting.

Reading Strategy
Make Connections

HOW TO MAKE TEXT-TO-SELF CONNECTIONS

- 1. Identify the Topic** Figure out what the writing is about. Ask yourself: *What do I already know about this topic? How do I feel about this topic?*
- 2. Look for Familiar Details** As you read, think about what the information reminds you of. Ask questions like: *Have I experienced something like this before?*
- 3. Make a Connection** Think about how your experiences affect your understanding of the text.

Explicit, systematic instruction moves striving readers toward reading independence.

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Reading Fluency

by Dr. Alfred W. Tatum

EFFORTS TO DEVELOP INSTRUCTION that more effectively addresses the reading and language needs of adolescent students must include attention to increasing their reading fluency. When proficient readers read, they achieve comprehension by applying what they know about how to maneuver the challenges in a text, such as word meanings and language structures and concepts that are new or unusual. They can call on a store of skills and strategies to negotiate these challenges to understanding. Readers who lack these skills and strategies are stuck, striving to make it through a text, and growing increasingly frustrated with their inability to understand what they read. Improving reading fluency is one way to help these readers move through text the way that proficient readers do and so reduce the frustration that often leads them to give up on reading altogether. Indeed, research analyses identify reading fluency as one of the five key components of effective reading instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000). More specifically, the research shows that increased reading fluency is related strongly and positively to increased reading comprehension (Samuels & Farstrup, 2006).

What Is Reading Fluency?

Researchers offer varying definitions of fluency, but most agree that, in broad terms, reading fluency refers to the ability of readers to recognize and decode words and comprehend at the same time. As Pikulski and Chard (2005, p. 510) explain, fluency is a

developmental process that is “manifested in accurate, rapid, expressive oral reading and is applied during, and makes possible, silent reading comprehension.”

Oral reading with speed, accuracy, and expression are *indicators* of the ability to decode. For students to comprehend what they read, however, they must possess more than well-developed decoding skills. Suppose, for example, that students are given the following paragraph to read:

The national debate over the impoverishment of inner-city populations and the presumed failure of New Deal

initiatives such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children and public housing have, for the most part, been structured by a group of theoretical perspectives and empirical assumptions emphasizing individual responsibility for a variety of social ills such as economic dependency, family disorder, and crime (Bennett, Smith, & Wright, 2006, p. 9).

Some students may be able to accurately decode each word of the paragraph, and with a speed that is characteristic of a moderately

fluent reader. However, these students may still be unfamiliar with the words *impoverishment*, *initiatives*, and *empirical*, and with concepts such as *New Deal* or *inner-city*. Therefore, even though they read with speed and accuracy, these students do not read with comprehension. For comprehension to take place, readers must have sufficient vocabulary and background knowledge to access the information in the text.

Effective fluency instruction recognizes that limited vocabulary and background knowledge are major barriers to comprehension, particularly for striving

“Research shows that increased reading fluency is related strongly and positively to increased reading comprehension.”

readers and English learners, and takes care to address both vocabulary and cognitive development (Pressley, Gaskins, & Fingeret, 2006).

For English learners (ELs), the English vocabulary and language structures in their content area reading materials pose a special challenge to fluency. As Palumbo and Willcutt (2006, p. 161) explain, even when these students determine the meaning of a new word in a text, they must “have a place to fit the meaning within a mental framework, or schema for representing that meaning with associated concepts... English words they decode may not yield meaning for them.”

Palumbo and Willcutt conclude that if instruction is to help ELs to decode and comprehend at a productive pace, it must increase both their store of English words and their familiarity with English story grammars, text structure, and, perhaps, new concepts. Research shows that ELs benefit when vocabulary support is incorporated into texts; when students are afforded opportunities to read multiple texts on the same subject; and when they receive explicit instruction about how to apply their own, culturally familiar experiences to achieve understanding. In addition to improving vocabulary and comprehension strategies, many striving readers also need practice routines to develop their reading fluency. They may need practice with intonation, phrasing, and expression. Striving readers often benefit from repeated readings of familiar text in which they gradually improve phrasing and intonation and also record improvements in reading rate measured in words correct per minute (WCPM).

Effective Fluency Instruction

Scientifically based research findings converge on several practices that are essential for effective fluency instruction. These practices include the following:

- Selecting appropriate texts and providing students with opportunities to read from texts that are engaging and age-appropriate.
- Building vocabulary and background knowledge so students can access new and unfamiliar texts.
- Helping students become familiar with the syntax or language structures of different text genres.
- Teaching students specific comprehension strategies that allow them to read successfully and independently.
- Allowing students to sometimes choose materials to read that they find interesting.

- Teaching routines that combine teacher modeling with guided and independent student practice, along with constant encouragement and feedback.
- Practice routines to develop automaticity and fluency at the word level and in reading connected text.
- Encouraging students to monitor and improve their fluent reading rates.

Applying the Research: *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content*

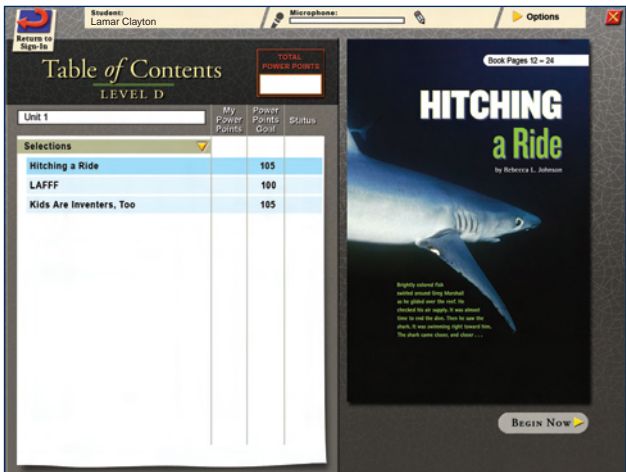
Inside Language, Literacy, and Content provides robust support for fluency development, including all of the research-based practices cited above.

Engaging Literature Student literature includes a wide variety of selections on engaging and age-appropriate topics. Students are further motivated to read through building background lessons that connect to their own experience and generate curiosity about selection content.

Vocabulary, Language, and Comprehension The instructional plan includes extensive exploration and development of vocabulary, genre understanding, and language structures. Comprehension lessons provide scaffolded direct instruction support to help students understand and internalize the comprehension strategies that proficient readers use habitually.

Fluency Practice Routines *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* also provides daily practice routines for developing reading accuracy, intonation, phrasing, expression, and rate. Fluency practice passages are included for each week of instruction, with teaching support that includes modeling of the target skill (for example, phrasing), and a five-day plan for improving the skill through choral reading, collaborative reading, recorded reading, reading and marking the text, and reading to assess. Assessment includes a timed reading of the passage and reading rate in words correct per minute (WCPM). Students are encouraged to graph their reading rate over time so they can monitor their improvement.

Online Coach The Online Coach interactive software at Levels C–E provides a risk-free and private environment where striving readers and ELs can develop their reading power and fluency. All student literature selections are included with comprehension and vocabulary supports. Students can read silently or listen to a model of the selection being read fluently. They can also record and listen to their own reading of the selection. After a recording, the software automatically calculates and graphs their reading rate in WCPM.



The Online Coach gives students a risk-free environment for developing fluency through coached silent reading, listening to proficient models, and recording their own reading.

Conclusion

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content provides the full range of research-based support that striving readers and English learners need to become fluent, proficient, and confident readers.

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Robust Vocabulary Instruction

by Dr. David W. Moore

INSTRUCTION THAT HELPS students develop the kind of broad and deep vocabulary knowledge they must have to achieve reading and academic success is important for all middle school students. For striving readers and for students who are learning English, it is essential (Carlo et al., 2004; Cummins, 2003; Cunningham & Moore, 1993).

Analyses of more than two decades of research (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000; Baumann & Kame'enui, 2004; Graves, 2006; Nation, 1990; National Reading Panel, 2000; Torgesen et al., 2007) indicate that to be most effective in promoting students' vocabulary growth, instruction must include four key components.

1. Rich and Varied Language Experiences

Most word learning occurs incidentally through experiences with rich oral language and wide reading of varied materials (National Reading Panel, 2000).

For young children, quite naturally, the oral language that they hear and participate in at home is the major source of word learning. Once children begin school, the teacher talk they hear and the ways in which they are encouraged to use language to interact with teachers and classmates throughout the day become especially important contributors to vocabulary growth (e.g., Dickinson & Smith, 1994). When teachers use oral language that includes academic language structures and content-related words to talk with students, they contribute to this growth (e.g., Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2004).

Rich oral language experiences are essential to students' vocabulary growth. However, as students move through school, it is reading that becomes the principal source

of vocabulary knowledge (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Indeed, some researchers consider the amount of reading that students do to be the most powerful influence on their vocabulary development (e.g., Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Stahl, 1999). When students read a range of print materials—trade books, textbooks, reference sources, periodicals, web sites, and multimedia presentations—they gain access both to the meanings of unfamiliar words and information about how familiar words are used in different ways in different contexts.

To make new words “their own,” students benefit greatly from frequent and varied activities that allow them to use the words as they speak, read, and write (Marzano, 2004). Engaging students in collaborative content-rich tasks, regularly prompting them to elaborate their ideas, and supporting their efforts are all rich language experiences that are associated with vocabulary growth.

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content provides informative nonfiction and fiction selections

that present key vocabulary through a range of oral and written language experiences. The selections shed light on many fascinating topics and are grouped in topical units so that students encounter ideas and information that relate to and build on each other. The selections also grow in difficulty, which allows students to encounter words in a logical sequence. Instructive videos introduce the selections, embedding the new words and concepts in stunning displays. Instruction related to the selections and videos leads students to interact with the teacher and the materials meaningfully and repeatedly throughout each unit.

“A wide range of vocabulary activities and routines . . . involve students in content-rich collaborative tasks.”

A wide range of vocabulary activities and routines that involve students in content-rich collaborative tasks are included in *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content*. Routines encourage students to elaborate ideas and extend their use of words in ways that lead to consistent vocabulary growth.

2. Direct Teaching of Specific Words

Although instruction that includes rich and varied language experiences leads to vocabulary growth for many students, it is not the most effective way to teach meanings of specific key words that students need to gain full comprehension of a selection or concept. Direct teaching helps students to develop in-depth knowledge of these words (e.g., Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002). Such instruction is especially valuable for students who do not read or understand English well enough to acquire words through reading and listening alone.

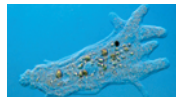





To teach specific words directly requires carefully choosing the words for instruction, then bringing them to life in ways that allow students to gain permanent ownership of them. It means explaining word meanings so that students form connections with what they already know, detecting relationships as well as distinctions among known words. It means providing models of the correct usage of the words and repeated practice with variety that allows students to see and use new words across multiple contexts.

Key Vocabulary *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* directly teaches specific words in its reading selections. Key Vocabulary, words that are essential to understanding a unit concept, appear before each reading selection. Key Vocabulary words are central to comprehension of the selection; they are also words that have personal value for students in classroom discussions and have high utility for future academic growth. Direct teaching of these words helps students to unlock meanings of both the words and of related words they will encounter in upcoming selections. Student friendly definitions and corresponding photographs accompany every key word.

Introductions to the words follow a consistent routine that calls for students to assess their knowledge of a word, pronounce and spell it, study its meaning, and connect the word to known words.

Academic Vocabulary Along with key words, the program also focuses on the direct teaching of **academic vocabulary**, words such as *sequence* and *transform*, that make up the distinctive language of school (Hyland & Tse, 2007).

Vocabulary Routines Throughout the units, instructional routines lead students to gain control of specific words through actions such as graphically organizing them, comparing them with synonyms and antonyms, and using them orally and in writing. Students connect the words to their lives and to the selections' and units' topics. Twelve vocabulary routines are featured in the Teacher Editions and are used repetitively throughout the levels. Repetitive use of these routines helps students internalize the habits of thinking about, exploring, and connecting words. Students' mastery of Key Vocabulary and Academic Vocabulary is also assessed regularly throughout the program.

Key Words		
<p>cell (sɛl) <i>noun</i> ▶ page 273</p>  <p>A cell is the smallest working part of a living thing. People are made up of millions of cells. Related Word: cellular</p>	<p>circulate (sur-ki-lāt) <i>verb</i> ▶ page 279</p>  <p>When something circulates, it moves along a path that returns to the place it started. Blood circulates throughout your body. Related Words: circle, circuit</p>	<p>examine (ig-zam-un) <i>verb</i> ▶ page 273</p>  <p>When you examine something, you look at it very closely. A doctor examines you to make sure you are healthy. Related Words: examination, exam</p>
<p>involve (in-vahlv) <i>verb</i> ▶ page 276</p>  <p>To be involved means to be part of something. A team involves people working together. Related Words: include</p>	<p>organ (or-gun) <i>noun</i> ▶ page 273</p>  <p>An organ is a body part that has a certain job to do. Your heart and lungs are important organs.</p>	<p>oxygen (ahk-si-jun) <i>noun</i> ▶ page 276</p>  <p>Oxygen is the air we breathe. We use extra oxygen to exercise.</p>

Striking photographs, student friendly definitions, and links between each photograph and definition accompany every key word.

3. Instruction in Independent Word-Learning Strategies

Proficient readers know many more words than the ones they are taught directly (Anderson & Nagy, 1992). They learn these words independently by applying strategies that help them to figure out the meaning of the unfamiliar words they encounter as they engage in rich and varied language experiences. *Contextual analysis* and *morphemic analysis* are two powerful independent word-learning strategies that proficient readers use (Harmon, 2000; Lubliner & Smetana, 2005; Nagy, Berninger, & Abbott, 2006).

Contextual Analysis Analyzing the context of an unfamiliar word to clarify its meaning involves the active use of the text and illustrations that surround the word (Edwards, Font, Baumann & Boland, 2004; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). Proficient readers begin to use contextual analysis when they determine that they do not know a word (e.g., “I don’t understand *hitched* in ‘They

got hitched.”). They then look back in the selection, rereading for clues to the word’s meaning that they might have missed, and they look forward, reading on for new information that might help. They search the context for particular types of clues, such as definitions, examples, and restatements that clarify word meanings. They adjust their rates of reading, slowing down or speeding up, to find the information that they need.

Morphemic Analysis Morphemes are meaningful word parts, such as prefixes, bases, roots, and suffixes. Knowledge of morphemes plays a valuable role in word learning because it provides readers with information they can use to examine unfamiliar words and figure out their meanings (Edwards, Font, Baumann & Boland, 2004; Stahl & Nagy, 2006).

Proficient readers use morphemic analysis in several ways. They begin by noting a word’s use in context (“Distances among the stars are just incredible!”). They break the word into parts (*in* + *cred* + *ible*) and assign meaning to each part (*in* = not, *cred* = believe, *ible* = can be done). Then they use the word-part meanings to put the word together again (“cannot be believed”) to see if this meaning makes sense in the selection. Proficient readers also use morphemic analysis to identify words that are derived from a common base word (e.g., *night* as in *midnight*, *nightly*, *nightshirt*) or root (e.g., *cred* as in *credo*, *credential*, *incredible*) to determine word meanings. Second-language learners who are proficient readers in their first language use morphemic analysis to identify morphemes in words that have first-language cognates (e.g., English-Spanish pairs: *continent/continente*, *history/historia*) (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Direct Instruction in Word-Learning Strategies

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content teaches a wide range of independent word-learning strategies, including contextual and morphemic analysis. Each unit begins with a Focus on Vocabulary that explicitly teaches a word-learning strategy and how to use it. This strategy is then carried through the unit in a scaffolded instructional plan. In each selection the teacher first models the strategy explicitly, guides the students in using it, and then provides opportunities for students to apply the strategy on their own. Strategies developed in the program include Using Word Parts, Relating Words, Using Context Clues, Using Context for Multiple Meaning Words, Going Beyond the Literal Meaning, Using Word Origins, and others.

4. Opportunities to Promote Word Consciousness

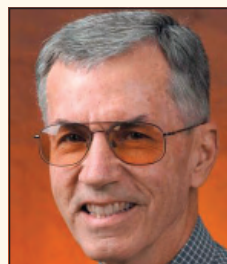
Word consciousness is an awareness of and interest in words, their meanings, and their various uses (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002; Scott & Nagy, 2004). Students who are conscious of words regularly note them in different settings and grasp their individualities. They enjoy and play with words and eagerly learn new ones. Helping students to develop an interest in words goes far in promoting both their vocabulary growth and their lifelong reading success.

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content promotes word consciousness in many ways. It regularly calls attention to interesting word origins. It presents homographs and homophones as well as borrowed, blended, and clipped words. It highlights the multiple meanings of many words, focusing often on the ways figurative language and idioms go beyond words’ literal meanings. Dictionary use is encouraged, but is presented in authentic situations. Students are encouraged throughout the program to explore and become excited about words and to use them with increasing skill. They are also encouraged to respect and value the word knowledge they bring with them from the world outside of school. Literature selections include many examples of young people valuing their diverse linguistic heritages. Instructional activities include many opportunities for students to talk and write about what they know, to produce personal dictionaries, and to relate their personal experience to academic work. All of these features support striving readers in connecting with the vocabulary they learn in school and developing the habit of exploring and enjoying words.

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Build Reading Power: Strategies for Comprehension

by Dr. David W. Moore

PROFICIENT READERS ARE ACTIVE thinkers (National Reading Panel, 2000). Before reading, they preview the selection and identify possible purposes for reading it. As they read, they think about their own experiences and knowledge of the world and apply this information to help them better understand characters, places, or events. They call on their vocabulary knowledge to figure out new words, and they apply different mental strategies to get the most from what they read. For instance, when proficient readers read Pam Muñoz Ryan's young adult novel *Esperanza Rising*, they experience the main character's passage from being a self-centered girl in a Mexican ranch to becoming a compassionate young woman in a California labor camp. They recognize how objects in the story such as a crocheted blanket signify major ideas, and they discern the ways Esperanza Ortega's individual experience suggests an overall immigrant experience. They note how settings such as the labor camp and the Great Depression affect people's actions. In addition, they actively engage one another in conversations about the novel and learn from different perspectives.

The challenge, then, is to help *all* students develop the knowledge, strategies, and skills that are necessary for active thinking and proficient reading. The good news is that this can be done.

Effective Comprehension Instruction

Numerous studies of adolescent literacy development show clearly that when striving middle school readers receive effective instruction, they can and do achieve

reading proficiency (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Torgesen et al., 2007).

Instruction is most effective in building students' comprehension when it

- provides students with access to content-rich texts and diverse genres
- emphasizes purposeful reading
- directly and explicitly teaches students specific strategies for comprehending.

“Proficient readers are strategic. Effective comprehension instruction teaches what these strategies are and how to use them.”

1. Access to Content-Rich Texts and Diverse Genres

Teachers of older striving readers are well-aware that their students often have stores of world knowledge that exceed their reading expertise. Too often, these students are stuck with “easy to read” materials about topics that do not interest them (Ivey & Fisher, 2006). Giving students access to an array of content-rich texts, however, can make reading meaningful and relevant

to them (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001).

Content-rich texts explore subjects in depth, examining ideas and offering distinctive viewpoints that help students develop both general and subject-specific knowledge. Such texts also may highlight different cultural and linguistic groups and topics and so present students with reading experiences that confirm and reflect their own experiences and thoughts or give them insights into the experiences and thoughts of others.

Making available a variety of text genres can also increase student interest in reading. Some older students may reject novels and stories, but become absorbed in reading magazines, biographies, or poetry.

Each unit of *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* includes a wealth of content-rich selections from many genres, including fiction, nonfiction, reference documents—even screenplays. Reflecting the unit focus, these selections explore science and social studies topics, and examine personal identity, loyalty, and other life issues. Short, related selections are paired with main selections. Students also have access to digital texts online. These diverse selections, which range from easy to difficult, enable students to work with material that is challenging but not defeating. In addition, selections by authors such as Sandra Cisneros, Christopher Myers, Gary Soto, and Lensey Namioka permit students both to identify with characters and settings and to learn about other people and cultures.

Providing access to texts involves more than making them available, however. It involves helping students find their way into the selections and supporting their efforts as they read (Hinchman, Alvermann, Brozo, & Vacca, 2003–2004). Among other things, Levels C–E supply entryways into reading through the National Geographic Digital Library of videos and images to prompt background building activities. At all levels, tasks that help students prepare to read include quickwrites, graphic organizers, read-alouds, and students’ personal connections that build background and interest. The program scaffolds students’ efforts by providing main selection summaries in several languages, glossing unfamiliar words, prompting students to think through what they read before reading on, and highlighting salient words and phrases online as students respond to questions.

2. Purposeful Reading

Students develop reading interest and ability best when the reading has a clear, meaningful purpose, one that has meaning for them (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999). When the purpose for reading is unclear to students, or when they cannot see the relevance of the reading, their comprehension suffers. This can also be the case when reading purposes do not take into consideration—or are insensitive to—students’ social and cultural backgrounds (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

Purposeful reading encourages students to read deeply and thoughtfully for conceptual knowledge and to seek out relationships and applications that enhance their own lives. It helps readers to view facts and ideas as facts-in-action and ideas-in-action.

Emphases on purposeful reading permeate *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content’s* comprehension instruction. All selections in a unit are unified by a common theme. At Levels C–E, units begin with a Guiding Question such as, “Why are both storytellers and scientists drawn to the stars?” or “How far will people go for the sake of freedom?” These questions are elaborated in each selection of the unit. Guiding Questions have no single, simple, or predetermined answers; they allow verbal, artistic, and dramatic responses (Langer, 2002). This flexibility helps students to set authentic purposes for reading and provokes active reading to achieve those purposes.

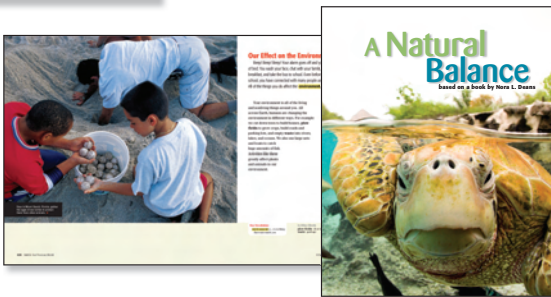
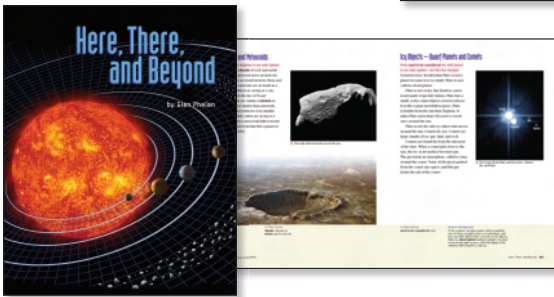
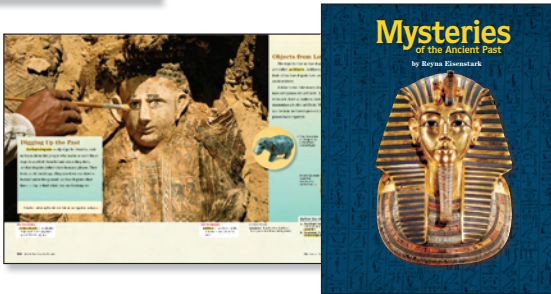
As they move through a selection, students preview each section of the text, establishing a specific purpose for reading each part. Students frequently check their purpose or their predictions as they read. Sections of the text also include Check Your Understanding questions to support students in maintaining focus on the text. *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* also consistently sets up discussions that encourage purposeful reading. During these discussions, students exchange ideas and present interpretations and conclusions. Such discussions contribute greatly to students’ understanding of the texts that they read (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Nystrand, 2006).

3. Direct, Explicit Teaching of Strategies for Comprehending

Whether they are reading to acquire new knowledge, to perform a task, or for pleasure, proficient readers are strategic (Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). They take charge of what they read, adopting strategies that fit their selections and their particular reasons for reading. If something in the text is puzzling or confusing, proficient readers realize this immediately, shift mental gears, and apply other strategies to repair their understanding.

Effective comprehension instruction teaches students both what these strategies are and how and when to use them (National Reading Panel, 2000). The steps of effective instruction typically include:

- *Direct, explicit teacher explanation* of a strategy and why it is useful.
- *Teacher modeling* (“thinking aloud”) of how, when, and where to use the strategy.
- *Scaffolded/guided practice* in applying the strategy.
- *Independent application* of the strategy by students.



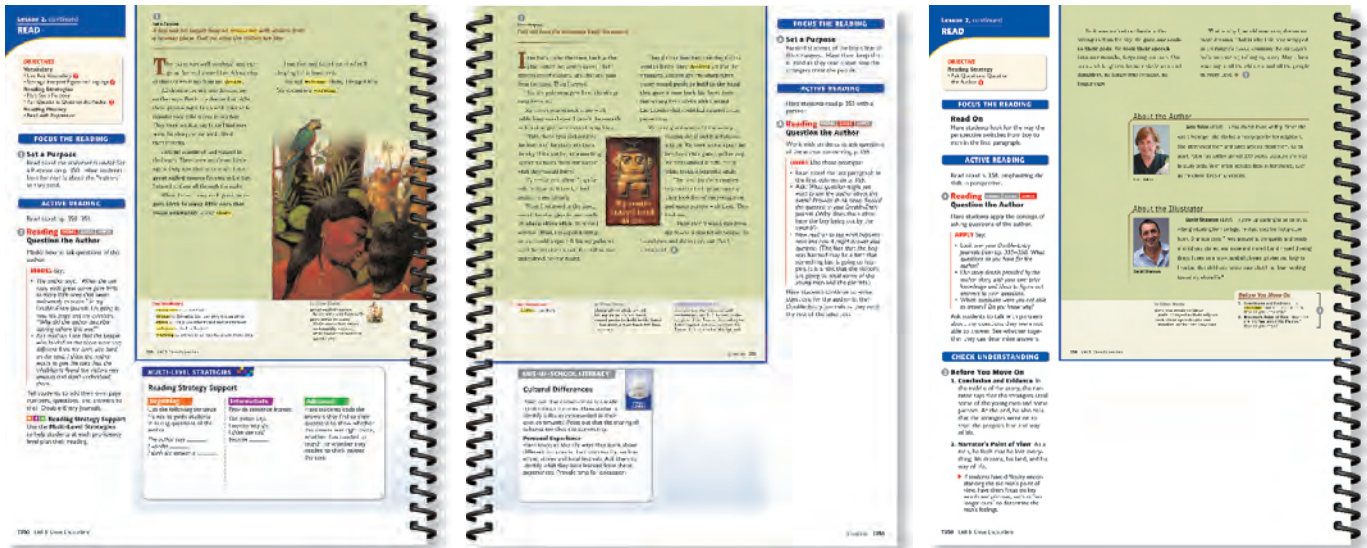
Content-rich texts explore subjects in depth, examining ideas and offering distinctive viewpoints that help students develop both general and subject-specific knowledge.

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content directly teaches the following eight strategies to promote students’ reading comprehension:

1. *Plan Your Reading*: controlling one’s mental activities
2. *Monitor Your Reading*: checking in with yourself on how well you are comprehending and are playing “fix-up” strategies, if necessary
3. *Determine Importance*: identifying essential ideas and information
4. *Ask Questions*: interrogating texts for a variety of purposes
5. *Visualize*: forming sensory images of textual contents, especially visual images
6. *Make Connections*: using what you know to enrich authors’ meanings
7. *Make Inferences*: linking parts of texts that authors did not link explicitly
8. *Synthesize*: putting together ideas from multiple sources

The program focuses on this set of strategies because comprehension strategy research strongly supports their effectiveness (National Reading Panel, 2000; Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992). Each unit in the program targets a single strategy. This concentrated attention to one strategy provides students with multiple opportunities to develop expertise and promotes strategy-use transfer across genres (Nokes & Dole, 2004).

In each selection, students focus on one aspect of the unit’s comprehension strategy. For example, if the unit strategy is Make Connections, the three selections may focus on making Text-to-Self, Text-to-World, and Text-to-Text connections. At the start of each selection, student books include an explicit lesson in the specific strategy for that selection that uses graphic organizers or notes to clearly demonstrate the thinking process involved. During the reading of the selection, this initial lesson is followed up with further teacher modeling, guided practice, and student application of the strategy. This Model/Guide/Apply structure scaffolds instruction so that students have repeated opportunities to use the strategy with increasing independence. Strategy instruction also makes frequent use of Academic Language Frames and other structured supports to help striving readers understand and internalize the thinking processes that proficient readers use habitually.



The Model/Guide/Apply structure scaffolds instruction so that students have repeated opportunities to use the strategy with increasing independence.

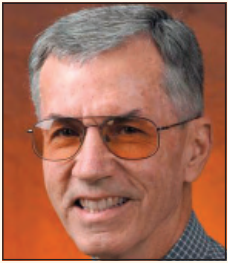
Along with these general comprehension strategies that apply across selections, *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* also presents strategies for analyzing specific text structures and genres. These strategies focus on ways for students to build meaning from texts by analyzing authors' organization of ideas, purposes for writing, and uses of genre-specific features. The strategies are especially important to teach because the ability to activate and apply one's knowledge of text structures and genres to make sense of new passages is a characteristic of proficient readers (Pearson & Camperell, 1994; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

Conclusion

The three fundamental features of effective reading comprehension instruction are seen best as interactive elements that support one another. Providing students access to content-rich texts and diverse genres and directly teaching them specific strategies for comprehending lead to and enhance purposeful reading. The reading comprehension instruction of *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* provides students multiple meaningful opportunities to become active, purposeful, proficient readers.

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Teaching the Fundamentals:

Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Decoding, and Spelling

by Dr. Josefina Villamil Tinajero

EFFECTIVE READING INSTRUCTION must incorporate the most current, scientifically based reading research, such as that reviewed in the National Reading Panel report (2000), as well as other highly regarded reports and research analyses (e.g., Gambrell, Morrow, & Pressley, 2007; Moats, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

These findings show clearly that for striving readers, the content of instruction must be rigorous and the presentation of that content must be direct, systematic and objective.

These findings are reinforced by studies of effective reading teachers, which reveal that the classrooms of these teachers are “characterized by high academic engagement, excellent and positive classroom management, explicit teaching of skills, large amounts of reading and writing, and integration across the curriculum” (Cunningham, 2007, p. 176).

In addition to these sources, the recommendations in this paper are based on reports of research-based best practices for students who are English learners (ELs) (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Teaching Fundamental Skills in Middle School

The National Reading Panel report and other research summaries emphasized the five essential components of reading—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. At the middle school grades, teachers often assume that their students have acquired the fundamental skills of phonemic awareness,

phonics, decoding, and spelling in the primary grades. However, some striving readers in middle school need to begin with foundational skills and learn the entire sequence of phonics and decoding skills. Others need support in only a few of the fundamental skill areas.

“Some striving readers in the middle grades need additional support in the fundamental skill areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, and spelling.”

Teachers may be surprised to realize this—as indicated by these recent comments from experienced teachers in Texas:

“I always thought that teaching phonemic awareness and phonics was something that teachers in the early grades worried about—maybe K through 2nd grade—not 7th grade teachers like me! As I learned more about the kinds of things I could do to help my striving readers, my students began to respond in positive ways. For the first time, I felt that they were making progress—and that I was making a difference.”

“By combining best practices for teaching phonemic awareness and phonics with those of second-language acquisition, for the first

time in my 12-year career as a teacher, I began to see my striving readers thrive.”

Who are the students who need to begin at the beginning? Some students are new arrivals to our schools from countries that may have no written language or a non-Roman alphabet. Some have never been enrolled in school, and others have had interrupted schooling. Still others may have been in the U.S. school system, but have not yet learned basic blending and decoding skills or how to recognize words automatically.

If students are English learners, they need a complete

language and literacy program that develops oral language, vocabulary, and the patterns and structures of English for use in oral and written communication as well as phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding. In fact, oral language is the foundation of reading proficiency (e.g., Fitzgerald, 1995; Hiebert, Pearson, Taylor, Richardson, & Paris, 1998). Oral language is critical in the development of phonemic awareness because students who are able to recognize large numbers of spoken words can focus more easily on recognizing the individual sounds in those words (e.g., Goswami, 2003). In addition it provides support for students' acquisition of the alphabetic principle: When readers have a large store of words in their oral vocabularies, they are better able to sound out, read, and understand these words when they see them in print (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Not all middle school striving readers, however, will need intensive instruction in all of the fundamental skills. Many students in the middle grades have acquired basic decoding skills but read with difficulty because they struggle with word analysis skills (especially with multisyllabic words) and fluency.

Therefore, teachers of striving readers at these grades should carefully diagnose student needs and provide direct, explicit, and systematic instruction that fills the gaps students have in phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, and spelling, including the delivery of a complete sequence of the fundamentals, if necessary.

What Skills Make Up the Fundamentals?

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds, or phonemes, in spoken words is known as *phonemic awareness*. *Phonics* refers to the understanding that a predictable relationship exists between phonemes and the spellings that represent those sounds in written language, or the *alphabetic principle* (National Reading Panel, 2000). Students' levels of phonemic awareness and phonics skills both predict initial reading success and relate strongly to their reading success throughout the school years (e.g., Calfee, Lindamood, & Lindamood, 1973; Ehri & Nunes, 2002; Snow et al., 1998).

The research reviewed by the National Reading Panel (2000) indicates that the best method to ensure that readers develop both phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge is to provide them with direct, explicit, and systematic instruction. The basis for effective direct, explicit, systematic instruction is a carefully articulated

and sequential progression of skills that begins with the most basic tasks and moves with appropriate pacing to more difficult tasks. This curriculum is best presented through consistent teaching routines that let students know up front what they are expected to do and learn in specific activities. The teacher clearly models the skills and provides ample structured and guided practice with immediate corrective feedback when needed.

Decoding and Spelling An essential part of phonics and decoding instruction is blending, in which students are explicitly taught how to blend sounds to decode words. Decoding should begin with simple 2- or 3-letter words and then move gradually to more complex words.

As students learn to decode sound/spellings to blend words, they must also learn and practice spelling, or encoding—the process of hearing sounds in words, relating the sounds to their spellings, and writing those spellings to form written words. This encoding process is an essential part of learning the alphabetic system and becoming proficient in its use.

High Frequency Words These are words that occur frequently in running text and have at least one spelling that is not phonetically regular. Students need to recognize these words automatically for fluent reading.

What Is the Role of Decodable Texts?

Decodable texts are passages in which a high percentage of words can be blended by applying the sound/spellings students have been taught. In addition, up to 10%–15% of the words in these texts may be previously taught high frequency words.

As students learn each new sound/spelling, they need ample opportunities to decode words with the new spelling in decodable text. Using a research-based instructional routine for teaching the decodable text gives students multiple experiences reading the text to build fluency and allows teachers to provide immediate corrective feedback.

Applying the Research: Inside Language, Literacy, and Content

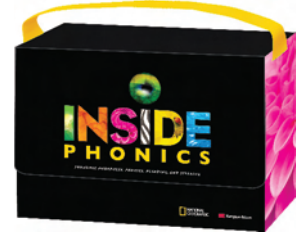
Placement Proper placement into a program level is the first step in meeting students' needs. The program's Placement Test includes a Phonics Test and a Reading Level Lexile® test. Students first take the Phonics Test. If they do not show mastery of phonics and decoding skills, they are placed in either Level A or Level B of the program, depending on their performance. Here they will receive explicit, systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding, spelling, and high frequency words throughout the instructional plan.

At these levels *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* teaches phonemic awareness and phonics skills in a carefully ordered scope and sequence that reflects scientific research findings. This sequence features a strong emphasis at the beginning on blending CVC words with short vowels, and then moves gradually to more difficult skills, including digraphs, long vowels, inflected endings, *r*-controlled vowels, and multisyllabic words. All essential phonics skills are covered.

If students answer 80% or more of the items on the Phonics Test correctly, they will take the Reading Level

Lexile® test to place them into Level C, D, or E of the program according to reading level. Studying the item analysis for the student's performance on the Phonics Test, however, is still helpful in indentifying gaps in decoding, which teachers can fill by selecting appropriate lessons from the *Inside Phonics* kit.

Instructional Routines *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* uses research-based reading routines to teach sound/spellings, blending, spelling, high frequency words, and the reading of decodable texts. These routines allow teachers to *scaffold* instruction, first making sure that students grasp the skill, and then gradually shifting and releasing responsibility for completing a task from themselves to students (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978).



The *Inside Phonics* kit covers all essential skills for use with students at Levels A and B who need sequential instruction in the fundamentals and for use with students at Levels C-E who have gaps to fill.

Lesson 44: LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

R-Controlled Vowels /ar/ /or/ /ir/

OBJECTIVES
Learning to Read
• Develop Phonemic Awareness: Isolate Sounds
• Associate Sounds and Spellings: /ar/ /or/ /ir/ (r)
• Blend Sounds to Decode Words
Spelling
• Spell Words with R-Controlled Vowels (r)

TEACH AND PRACTICE

- Complete Reading Routine 1 (PD46) to introduce /ar/.
- Repeat the routine to introduce /or/.
- If students need preteaching, use Reading Routine 2 (PD48).

Sound/Spelling Card 37 (ar) **Sound/Spelling Card 38** (or)

Words with R-Controlled Vowels

Transparency 57: R-Controlled Vowels

Language Support
Talk through each picture to develop meaning for the words in Items 1-3. For example, for Item 1, say: "Look. The people farm, or make, a star (trace the star with a finger). Here (point to the second picture) is another meaning of farm. The picture shows three farms, or kids, of or."

TEACH AND PRACTICE

- Blend Whole Words**
Work through Step 1 of Script 57.
- Spell Words**
Work through Step 2 of Script 57.

READ DECODABLE TEXT

- Use Reading Routine 3 (PD49) to guide students as they read Decodable Passage 3 for r-controlled vowels /ar/ and /or/.
- Out of Harm's Way, p. 370

Check Understanding Have students read the word lists at the end of the passage.

If students have difficulty decoding the text in the passage, review the steps of Reading Routine 1 (PD46). Have them practice reading individual words in the passage, and then have them reread the entire text.

ON YOUR OWN

When a student's reading indicates understanding, assign the following independent practice.

Practice Book, p. 30

Script 57 Procedure

- Blend Whole Words**
Model: Use the top part of the transparency to model whole-word blending and structure the practice for blending the key words.
 - Point to the star and say: The word star has three sounds. Listen while I blend the sounds.
 - Point to the r. Slide your hand below star as you say: I can blend the three sounds: /s/ /t/ /r/. Now, I'm going to say the whole word: star.
 - Repeat, having students blend the word with you. Then have them say the word naturally.
 - Use the word in a sentence. Ask students to suggest other sentences with the word.
 - Repeat: for horn, pointing out that the letters r stand for /r/.
 - Write the words at the right on the board. Have students chorally read each one. Remind them to use whole-word blending.
- Spell Words**
 - Say: Sir, I see the first star in the sky. Star. Have students repeat the word.
 - Have students say: /s/. Help them identify the matching Sound/Spelling Card and the spelling for the sound. Have students write the letter: s.
 - Repeat: for /r/ and /ar/ so that students have spelled the entire word.
 - Write the word, and have students compare it to their spelling. Have them circle it if they spelled it incorrectly and then write it correctly.
 - Repeat the steps to spell the words at the right.

Words for Blending

far	fork
car	start
corn	sports
smart	hornet
garden	horse

Words for Spelling

part	torn
start	thorn
yard	stork
march	north

Phonics and decoding phonics lessons follow consistent instructional routines based on principles of direct, explicit instruction.

For example, **Reading Routine 1: Introduce Sound Spellings** moves through four steps:

Step 1. Develop Phonemic Awareness

- The teacher models the target sound in a consistent word position (e.g. initial position); students produce the sound.
- The teacher models the sound in another (e.g. final) position; students produce the sound.
- Students listen and show hands to indicate whether they hear the sound and what position they hear it in.

Step 2. Introduce the Sound/Spelling

- The teacher introduces the sound with the Sound/Spelling Card; students repeat the sound.
- The teacher then uses the Sound/Spelling Card to introduce the spelling; students repeat the spelling.
- The teacher gives multiple examples of the sound/spelling in various positions as students say the sound and write the spelling in the air.

Step 3. Blend Sound-by-Sound

- The teacher writes the spelling of the first sound in a word and models the sound; students repeat. This is repeated for each sound up to the vowel.
- The teacher writes the vowel, and then models blending the sounds through the vowel; then students blend the sounds.
- The teacher repeats the process for any additional spellings in the word.
- The teacher models blending the complete word; students blend and read the word.

Step 4. Spell Sound-by-Sound

- The teacher says the word; students repeat it.
- The teacher guides students in segmenting the sounds in the word and matching each sound to its Sound/Spelling Card. Students say each spelling and then write it.
- The teacher writes the correct spelling on the board; students check their spelling and correct it if necessary.

LESSON 10, CONTINUED
LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

OBJECTIVES
Learning to Read
• Decode Words
• Recognize High-Frequency Words
Reading Strategy
• Set a Purpose
Literary Analysis
• Use Text Features: Captions
Reading Fluency
• Read with Phrasing
• Read with Accuracy

FOCUS ON READING

1 Set a Purpose
Introduce the kids in the photos and view the map. Discuss what students know about the countries shown. Then read aloud the text in the orange boxed area to set a purpose for reading. Read to find out how the kids in the pictures are helping other kids.

ACTIVE READING

2 Read the Selection
Use the suggestions below to conduct four readings of "Kids Are Helping Kids."

Kind of Reading	Goals
1. Whisper Reading	• Support students as they decode words. • Provide immediate corrective feedback to ensure accuracy.
2. Partner Reading	• Provide exposure feedback for the students reading. • Assess phrasing and accuracy.
3. Group Reading	• Review genre and discuss text features. • Assess phrasing for individual students.
4. Choral Reading	• Practice phrasing. • Check understanding.

Kids can help other kids in important ways. Nadja, Hafsat, and Craig show us how.

Nadja helped kids in Boina, when Nadja was a girl, ethnic groups in Boina started a war. Nadja was not safe, even in her house. Kids lived in fear. A lot of them were hurt. Nadja started a radio show. She sang on the air to give children courage. She also published two books. They tell how hard it is to live through a war. She hopes her books will help and fighting in the world.

Hafsat helps kids in Nigeria. She formed a group called KIND. It helps kids know how to be leaders; KIND also helps women and children get fair treatment.

Craig was 12 years old when he read that many kids were made to work in hard jobs for no pay. People treated them very badly. He felt that these kids should not be made to work. He formed a group called Free The Children. Since then, his group has worked in 45 countries.

Think about how American kids can help other kids now: what would you do?

BUILD FLUENCY

3 Develop Fluency
Phrasing Use the Practice Book to review pauses between phrases and sentences. Then have students listen to the phrasing of the model as they use the new vocabulary.

Fluency Models and Selection
Readings CD, Track 2
Pair students to practice reading the selection with appropriate phrasing.

Accuracy and Rate After several practice sessions, arrange for a timed reading. Mark words the student misreads on a copy of the passage and note the last word read in one minute. Calculate the words read correct per minute. Have students graph their performance and set a goal for improving in subsequent timed readings.

Practice Book, p. 30

First Read
Whisper Reading
Listen and Provide Feedback Have students read p. 50 aloud quietly. Monitor students as they read, and listen for misread words. Provide immediate feedback to correct the misread words, and ask students to reread the sentences. If necessary, pronounce those non-decodable selection words for students: *zouba*, *war*, *orphans*, *stronger*.

Summarize Errors and Reread After students read, summarize the common errors you identified. Reread the related Sound/Spelling Cards.

Repeat the Procedure Have students read p. 51.

Discuss Hard Words Have students show you the hard words they found in the selection and tell how they figured out those words.

Second Read
Partner Reading
Read with a Partner If students struggled in the first read, have those students who need extra help read aloud with you.

Discuss Hard Words Have partners tell how they figured out the words.

Summarize the Selection Post these prompts:
1. Who is Nadja? What did she do?
2. Who is Hafsat? What did she do?
3. Who is Craig? What did he do?

Third Read
Group Reading
Review Genre Remind students that this is a biography that gives information and facts about real people and events.

Teach Text Features: Captions Point to the captions under each picture. Say: *A caption tells about the picture. Read each caption aloud. Ask students how the caption helps them better understand the photos.*

Assess Individual Progress Call on a student at random to read the first four sentences of the selection. Then call on other students to read the next portions of the selection.

► As you listen to students read, focus on whether they have corrected the common errors you noticed during the first read. If they have not, repeat the corrective feedback.

Fourth Read
Choral Reading
Choral Read Listen while students read the selection.

Practice Phrasing Read the last two sentences in the selection, modeling appropriate phrasing. Have students chorally read the sentences, and listen to assess their phrasing.

Check Understanding Ask the following questions:
1. Why was Nadja unsafe in Boina? (There was a war going on.)
2. Whom does KIND help? (It helps women and children.)
3. How can you help other people your age? (Answers will vary.)

Students apply their skills in decodable passages and Read on Your Own selections. An instructional routine for four readings provides essential practice.

This instructional routine includes the essentials of exemplary phonics instruction: direct, explicit teaching of sound-spellings and the application of this phonics knowledge to blend the sounds together (Shanahan, 2002).

Similarly, high frequency word instruction follows a consistent research-based routine including these steps:

Step 1. Review of previously taught words

Step 2. Introduce new words

- Look at the word
- Listen to the word
- Listen to the word in a sentence
- Say the word
- Spell the word
- Say the word again

Step 3. Practice reading the words

Step 4. Practice spelling the words

After they are taught using this routine, students read texts on their own to develop automaticity in recognizing these high frequency words. The words are then reviewed regularly throughout the instructional plan.

Applying Skills and Developing Automaticity Student books include decodable text selections that are designed to apply phonics, decoding, and high frequency word skills immediately after instruction. These texts are engaging and age appropriate for middle school readers. They are taught using a consistent routine in which students read the text four times, first using whisper reading, then partner reading, then group reading, and finally choral reading with the whole group. Teachers monitor during each reading and provide corrective feedback and other support, including discussion of hard words, teaching text features and genre, summarizing, and practice with phrasing. After several practice sessions, students do a timed reading of the text. The teacher notes misreads and calculates words correct per minute. Students graph their performance and set a personal goal for improvement in subsequent timed readings.

These repeated readings provide essential practice for students in applying phonics and high frequency word skills and in developing automaticity and fluency—a key step on the path to becoming proficient readers.

Conclusion

Some middle school students need intensive intervention in the complete sequence of decoding skills, and others have gaps in their knowledge that need to be filled.

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content provides, through careful placement, appropriate instruction for all students.

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Direct Instruction:

Targeted Strategies for Student Success

by Dr. David W. Moore

THE FINDINGS OF A LARGE body of validated reading research converge on one important point: Reading instruction is most effective when teachers provide students with direct and explicit teaching in the specific skills and strategies that are necessary for reading proficiency. The finding holds for students across grades and ages (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; National Reading Panel, 2000; Torgesen et al., 2007). Although such instruction is effective for teaching a range of reading skills and strategies, it is especially effective in helping students comprehend fully what they read (Nokes & Dole, 2004).

Effective teachers, those who beat the odds in preventing student failure, combine direct, explicit instruction of strategies and concepts with other teaching approaches, nesting it within complete programs of literacy development (Graves, 2004; Langer, 2002). They provide students with content-rich materials, interact with them in meaningful discussions, and engage them in purposeful writing, all of which afford students opportunities to explore how to use the strategies and clarify concepts across diverse contexts, and so make the strategies and concepts their own.

The Direct, Explicit Model of Instruction

The exemplary model of direct, explicit instruction consists of five phases that allow teachers to *scaffold* instruction, gradually shifting and releasing responsibility for completing a task from themselves to students (Joyce & Weil, 2000; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Rosenshine & Meister, 1992; Vygotsky, 1978).

1. Orientation In the first phase of direct, explicit instruction, teachers activate students' relevant prior knowledge and experiences and help them to connect it to the new knowledge they will gain from the lesson. They also familiarize learners with the focus of a lesson. In student-friendly language, they explain the lesson's purpose, telling students what they are expected to be able to do.

2. Presentation This is the *explicit* phase of the instructional model, in which teachers identify a specific strategy for students, then model exactly where, how, and why to apply the strategy to get meaning from a reading passage. If the teaching objective involves a strategy such as comparing ideas, teachers might use a graphic organizer as part of their

modeling, thinking aloud frequently as they complete the organizer. If the objective involves helping students grasp an important content-area concept from a nonfiction selection, teachers may identify its characteristics, along with examples and non-examples, definitions, and rules.

Throughout this and other phases of direct instruction, teachers check frequently for understanding of all students and provide immediate corrective feedback when needed.

The most effective presentations include both verbal and visual explanations (Joyce & Weil, 2000). By completing some sort of graphic organizer as they talk about a strategy or concept, teachers help students trap ideas. Keeping and displaying the representations in

“Reading instruction is most effective when teachers provide students with direct and explicit teaching.”

the classroom also provides students a model to refer to as they apply a strategy or work with a concept on their own.

The best language and literacy presentations also are grounded in real texts and situations (Duffy, 2003). Teachers present strategies and concepts in concert with units' topics and reading materials. They show how particular strategies and concepts can be used to explore a unit's big questions. Additionally, the best presentations are grounded in students' everyday strategic thinking and stores of general knowledge (Langer, 2002), which teachers connect to the academic tasks.

- 3. Structured Practice** The structured practice phase of direct, explicit instruction calls for teachers to begin the process of handing over to students the strategy or concept that they have modeled. Using new but related material, teachers apply the steps of a strategy or the dimensions of a concept, involving students in ways in which they cannot fail. For example, students use graphic organizers, sentence frames, or other structured supports that organize the successful use of the strategy.
- 4. Guided Practice** Guided practice is the phase of instruction that helps students move toward independence. In this phase, teachers give students increasing responsibility for applying a strategy or concept to more new material. Teachers use structured response techniques (see PD56) to ensure that every student participates and to check the accuracy of students' responses in order to provide immediate corrective feedback, if necessary. The teacher withdraws support gradually and only when students show that they can work on their own.
- 5. Independent Practice** In the final phase of direct, explicit instruction, students independently practice work with a strategy or concept, applying their new

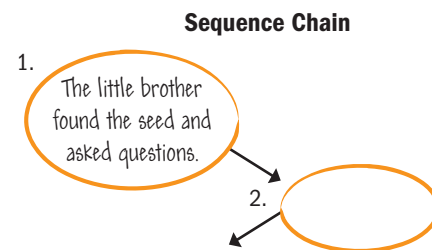
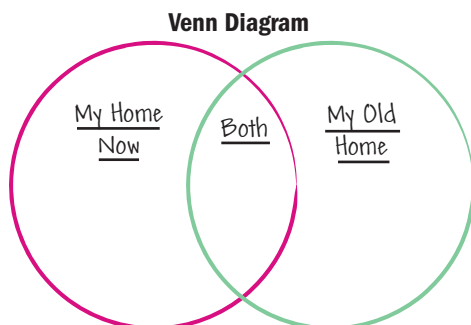
knowledge in unfamiliar situations. During this phase, students have the main responsibility for completing academic tasks on their own, although teachers still monitor what they do and respond to their efforts.

Applying the Research: *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content*

Direct, explicit instruction is an integral part of *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content*. Special emphasis is given to key comprehension strategies such as identifying main ideas, using text structure, or making connections, to word-learning strategies such as contextual and morphemic analysis that students can apply to figure out and learn new or specialized vocabulary, and to writing strategies, such as focusing on the central idea.

Structured, Scaffolded Lessons Following the model of exemplary direct instruction, lessons in each area of *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* are designed to scaffold learners' efforts and to gradually release responsibility. Lessons are organized with headings that clearly identify the phases of direct instruction, such as *Connect, Teach/Model, Practice Together, Try It!*, and *On Your Own*. This gives teachers at-a-glance support and reinforcement in infusing the direct instruction model throughout the day.

Graphic Organizers, Academic Language Frames, and Routines These are used extensively throughout *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* to guide student learning. Lessons use graphic organizers and other visual supports to take students step-by-step through the "hidden" thinking processes that proficient readers and writers habitually use. The Academic Language Frames help students articulate the concepts they are learning or support them as they demonstrate a skill. Simple repetitive routines for developing vocabulary, phonics, and fluency are clearly presented



Graphic organizers are used extensively to take students step-by-step through the "hidden" thinking processes that proficient readers and writers habitually use.

in the front of the Teacher's Edition and referenced throughout the lessons.

Multi-level Teaching Strategies Throughout *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content*, multi-level teaching strategies provide ways to differentiate instruction, adjusting it as needed for students' levels of language proficiency.

Structured Response Techniques As part of structured and extended practice, students respond orally to summarize a concept or write responses on cards to display at the same time. These techniques allow teachers to involve all students and provide immediate feedback to support correct answers and address incorrect ones.

Checking Understanding Lessons include prompts for ongoing checking of students' understanding during the direct instruction process and assist the teacher in deciding when to assign independent practice.

Immediate Corrective Feedback Lessons provide immediate corrective feedback if students have trouble understanding the strategy or content being taught. Look for the ideas that follow the red arrows in the instructional column of the TEs. Corrective feedback varies depending on the lesson but may include rereading or reteaching, additional practice examples, teacher prompts, sentence frames, or other structured support that clarifies the strategy or content.

Additional Support *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* includes multiple additional resources to support students in mastering the strategies and content taught through direct instruction. The Digital Library provides videos and images that help students build background and connect new content to what they already know. Recorded readings, chants, choral responses, and role plays support lessons in multiple strands including oral language and grammar. Supplemental reading materials provide additional opportunities for students to practice and apply skills and strategies in core lessons.

Conclusion

When teachers use the direct, explicit instructional approach of the program, they clarify concepts and demystify strategies, modeling and thinking aloud about how to make inferences or determine the importance of ideas in a text. By so doing, they reveal the “secrets” of what proficient readers do—which *is* a mystery to far too many students. Once students are in on the strategies of good readers, teachers can gradually hand over to students the responsibility for using these strategies as they read independently.

The direct, explicit instruction of *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* offers a productive way for students to take control of their language and literacy.

Unit 4
FOCUS ON VOCABULARY

OBJECTIVES
Vocabulary
• Use Academic Vocabulary: **context**
• Strategy: Use Context Clues (Underline Words)

CONNECT

1 Tap Prior Knowledge Ask students to think of a mystery book or a detective show they have recently read or seen. Say: The detective has to look for clues that help solve the mystery. Like the detective, writers give **context clues** that can help readers figure out unfamiliar words.

Focus Tell students that in this unit they will learn how to use different types of **context clues** to determine the meaning of words.

TEACH/MODEL

2 Use Context Clues
Introduce Read about the introduction. Point out the signal words in the chart. For each example sentence, tell how the context clue provides the meaning of the unknown word. For example, say: In the first sentence, the word or signals that physical means the same as doctor.

3 How the Strategy Works
Model and Sum Up Read the directions and go through the steps. Then read the passage aloud. Reread the first sentence. Use the term medical issues to work through the **Strategy in Action**.

For the other underlined terms:
• identify the signal word
• identify the **context clue** and its type
• state the meaning of the underlined term

REMEMBER Read the statement and ask: How can you use **context clues** to figure out the meaning of an unknown word?

Focus on Vocabulary

Use Context Clues
When you see a word you don't know, it helps to look at how it is written in **context**. These are called **context clues**. There are several types of **context clues**. **Signal words** can help you recognize them.

Restatement repeats the same idea in different words.
example: A sports physician, or **doctor**, helps athletes stay healthy.

Definition defines the new word.
example: A **nutritionist**, or **nutritionist**, who studies how food helps **people stay healthy**.

Example names things that explain the new words.
example: Athletic exercises, **such as swimming and biking**, are good ways to stay healthy.

How the Strategy Works
When you come to a word you don't know, use these steps to figure out its meaning:
1. Notice how the word is used in a sentence.
2. Look for signal words to help identify clues.
3. Decide if the clue is a restatement, a definition, or an example.
4. If you cannot find any clues, look up the word in the dictionary.

Use the strategy to figure out the meaning of the underlined words.

Strategy in Action
S: Suppose you are a sports fan interested in **medical issues**, such as injuries, relief, and injuries. What **context clues** do you have?
T: You might want to be a **physical therapist**. This is a person who treats sports injuries and helps athletes' health.

Academic Vocabulary
• **context** (noun) the circumstances that surround a word or phrase
• **signal word** (noun) a word or phrase that helps you recognize the meaning of a word or phrase

REMEMBER Use **context clues** to help you figure out the meaning of an unknown word.

Academic Vocabulary
Use the Make Words Your Own Routine (PO3).
1. Pronounce the word and have students repeat it.
2. Study Examples—Read the student-friendly definition aloud. Provide additional examples:
• **CONTEXT** If you read the sentence in its **context**, you'll see that it is the punch line to a joke.
3. Encourage Elaboration—Use a prompt:
• **CONTEXT** How is the **context** of a word similar to the setting of a story? (The setting is about the surroundings connected to the story; **context** is the surrounding text that explains a word or phrase)
4. Practice the Word—Create a Word Map.

Genre Overview
The Human Machine
Nonfiction: Science Article
The writer discusses the cellular makeup of the human body and overviews the digestive, respiratory, and circulatory systems.

BEAT The Best Goes On
Nonfiction: Science Article
The writer explains how the circulatory system works, what can go wrong with it, and how doctors work to fix problems.

Two Left Feet, Two Left Hands, and Two Left on the Bench
Nonfiction: Autobiography
The writer recounts being "hopelessly bad at sports" as a child and his eventual discovery of his true talents.

UNIT SELECTIONS

Practice Together
Read the following passages aloud. As you read, listen for clues that tell you what kind of nonfiction each passage is.

Reasons to Run
F: Fitness experts agree that running is good for your health. Research shows that running:
• burns more calories than most other kinds of exercise
• helps prevent and fight diseases, such as stroke, high blood pressure, and diabetes
• improves levels of HDL, the cholesterol that is not harmful to people
• preserves better lung function

Running for Good Health
F: Two years ago, neighbors in the 200 blocks of Main Street decided to meet for their health. Three meetings each week, they met at the corner at 6:30 in the morning. Now, two years later, all the runners report feeling stronger and healthier. Some have even lowered their blood pressure. In addition, most say they feel happier and sleep better at night. These neighbors all agree that running is a great way to stay healthy!

Try It!
Read the following passages aloud. What type of nonfiction is each passage? How do you know?

A Good Fit
Last week, the school opened an After-school Fitness club in the gym. The club focuses on all types of fitness training, but the program begins with weight training. I want to see what it's like, so I went to see what it was all about. Coach Allen said that weightlifting is helpful for staying fit, but we shouldn't do it every day to avoid getting hurt. Coach Allen explained that each day we will warm up before lifting. She explained the importance of stretching before warming up. I think I'm going to like going to this fitness club. It's a good fit!

Club Rules: Weight Training
Exercise correctly to avoid injuries.
1. Movements should be slow and controlled, not fast and jerky.
2. A set of 12 repetitions of one exercise is enough to be effective.
3. Weights should be just heavy enough that you'd lift after 10 or 12 repetitions.
4. A good workout that exercises the key muscle groups needs to be 30 more than 30 to 40 minutes.

Practice Together
Identify Expository Nonfiction
Have a volunteer read the first passage aloud. Point out the boldfaced list and say: This list gives about a topic. That's how I can tell the passage is expository nonfiction.

Identify Narrative Nonfiction
Clearly read the second passage. Then reread the first sentence in each paragraph. Point out the time sequence words "two years ago" and "two years later." Say: This passage has time words and tells a story in order. That's how I can tell the passage is narrative nonfiction.

Try It!
Identify Kinds of Nonfiction
Have volunteers read the two passages aloud. Have students write down clues that help identify the kind of nonfiction. Ask: Which passage is expository nonfiction and which is narrative nonfiction? ("A Good Fit" is expository; "Club Rules: Weight Training" is club rules.)

If students have trouble distinguishing between the two kinds of nonfiction, remind them that narrative nonfiction tells a story and expository nonfiction explains.

If students have difficulty citing elements of each kind of nonfiction, have them review the explanations and labeled passages on p. 260.

CHECK UNDERSTANDING
Have students name two kinds of nonfiction and tell how they are the same and how they are different. (Narrative—tells about events in the order in which they happened; expository—explains topics by main ideas and details, both—tell about real people, places and events)

On Your Own
When a student's answers indicate understanding, assign the independent practice.

Students will also apply what they have learned about narrative and expository nonfiction when they read the unit selections. You may wish to have them preview the selections now as you share the information on the left.

Practice Book, p. 83

Focus on Genre 1268

Lessons are organized with headings that clearly identify the phases of direct instruction.

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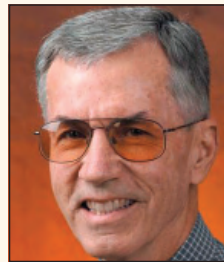
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Build Writing Power

by Ms. Gretchen Bernabei

RECENT SCHOLARLY REPORTS highlight the importance of writing proficiency and provide an important research base for improving writing instruction for middle school students, especially striving readers and English learners (Graham and Perin, 2007; National Commission on Writing, 2003, 2004, 2005). These reports make clear that if students are to improve in writing, they must spend significant classroom time writing, and they must learn about writing through explicit instruction, feedback, and reflection.

Assignments that involve extensive writing can be spread out over several class periods. This allows time for teachers to present models for writing and for students to practice using the models as they generate ideas for writing topics, collect information about the topic, prepare and revise drafts, and solicit feedback from teachers and classmates.

Writing instruction is most successful when it encourages generative thinking — thinking that explores questions deeply, rather than simply producing an expected answer. Teachers prompt generative thinking by creating meaningful activities and helping students form questions that lead to deep understanding of a topic. Classrooms that foster generative thinking are more effective in increasing student learning (Strong, 2001).

“If students are to improve in writing, they must spend significant classroom time writing, and they must learn about writing through explicit instruction, feedback, and reflection.”

Effective Elements of Writing Instruction

These and other aspects of writing are summarized in *Writing Next*, the important research summary by Graham and Perin. *Writing Next* highlights these effective elements of writing instruction:

- 1. Study of writing models:** analysis of examples of good writing and the elements of the type of writing represented
- 2. Specific goals for writing products:** identifying the target form of writing (such as persuasion) and its characteristics, and setting specific goals for how to develop or improve the end result
- 3. Explicit writing strategy instruction:** systematically teaching the steps for planning, revising, and editing text
- 4. Instruction in summarizing:** teaching students how to summarize texts
- 5. Instruction in sentence-combining:** learning to combine two or more basic sentences to create more complex sentences
- 6. Opportunities for collaborative writing:** students work together to plan, draft, revise, and edit their writing
- 7. Support for idea generation and prewriting:** activities to help students gather information, develop and organize ideas, and plan their writing

- 8. **Process writing approach:** extended writing opportunities for real purposes, involving planning, development, and revision, and lessons to address students' writing needs
- 9. **Writing for content learning:** using writing as a tool to enhance students' learning of content material

The Traits of Good Writing

In addition to the elements of effective teaching, writing power depends on an understanding of the traits of good writing:

- **Focus and Unity:** how well the parts of the writing go together and how clearly the writing presents a central idea
- **Organization:** how well the paper presents ideas in a structure that is appropriate to the writer's purpose and how smoothly the ideas flow together
- **Development of Ideas:** how well the ideas are explained and supported with details and examples and how thoughtful and interesting the writing is
- **Voice and Style:** how real the writing sounds and how it reflects the writer's unique style with powerful, engaging word choice and fluent, varied sentences
- **Written Conventions:** how understandable the paper is because it is free of errors in sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Students need ample opportunities to compare and evaluate papers that exhibit and do not exhibit these traits of good writing. They benefit from improving writing samples created by others and then applying these solutions in their own writing.

Applying the Research: *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content*

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content features explicit, intensive writing instruction that aligns with the findings of recent scientific research, including the points listed above. Throughout Levels A–E the program features opportunities to write in response to literature as part of the instructional plan, and at Levels C–E to write in response to the Guiding Question in each unit.

In Levels A and B, writing projects that teach and use the writing process offer extended writing assignments. In Levels C–E, this elaborated writing instruction occurs in the Writing Student Book with projects carefully

coordinated to each week's instruction in the Reading & Language Student Book.

Across the levels, these projects address the writing forms required by state standards, including narrative, expository, and persuasive writing.

Elements of Effective Teaching Writing projects include research-based best practices. For example, the projects in the Levels C–E Student Books contain:

1. **Writing models** Each project begins with a student writing model which is analyzed for the elements of the writing represented. In addition, an extensive collection of professional writing models is provided for extension. Writing models extend beyond the introduction. As students explore writing traits, strategies, and use the writing process, models provide concrete samples that make abstract concepts clear and provide a source for evaluation and inspiration.
2. **Specific goals** Characteristics of the target writing form are explicitly examined and goals established for students to incorporate these characteristics in their work. Students learn and consistently utilize planning resources that focus attention on the form, topic, audience, purpose, and writing process. Through the use of this clear and consistent organizer, striving writers learn how to focus and structure their work and stay on track as they compose.
3. **Strategy instruction** Each writing project includes explicit, intensive instruction in strategies for improving student writing, such as using transitions, establishing a central idea, choosing and using precise words and sentences, writing strong introductions and conclusions, and more. By engaging students in extensive strategy instruction with shorter writing assignments, *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* builds skills and confidence in the craft of writing and then provides an authentic opportunity to apply learning in engaging projects.
4. **Summarizing** Summarizing is a key strategy taught throughout the levels of *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content*. In addition to writing summaries as part of reading instruction, a writing project at each level focuses on writing a summary. As noted above, clear and explicit instruction in strategies and extensive use of student models support instruction in this critical element of literacy.
5. **Collaborative writing** Partner and group writing activities are incorporated in teaching routines that

clarify their purposes and show students how to build their collaboration skills. A range of cooperative learning structures provide support for collaboration and clear management and grouping strategies. There's a craft to weaving in this collaboration during the writing process. One way not to do it is to say, "Get a partner and give each other feedback," without teaching students how. The importance of explicit instruction mentioned above is not just about the writing part of the process, but for all of the steps throughout. There are partner and group writing activities and peer response activities throughout the Writing Student Books, broken down into short, concrete tasks so that students can build their collaboration skills.

- 6. Sentence combining** As students extend their writing from simple sentences to more complex linguistic structures, sentence combining is used as a vehicle for building and revising phrases and paragraphs.
- 7. Idea generation and prewriting** Early in the program, students receive extensive instruction in the techniques and benefits of prewriting. These concepts are reinforced and extended through every project that follows. *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* includes a rich array of graphic organizers and student models of idea generation and prewriting to bring these concepts to life.
- 8. Process writing** The writing process is taught in explicit detail at the beginning of each level. The

stages of the writing process are reinforced and extended through all writing projects in the program. As they learn and apply the writing process, students study models that show works in progress and are provided with clear and extensive opportunities to follow the steps in the *Writer's Workout* activities. At the end of each step in the writing process, students are prompted to reflect on their work, focusing on the goals of the project and the particular stage of the writing process. This ongoing self-analysis builds habits of reflective writing and promotes metacognition. In addition, regular Check Progress features help teachers monitor student progress so students are well prepared before moving to a new stage of the writing process.

- 9. Writing for content learning** *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* includes many opportunities for students to write about content topics they are exploring in the unit literature. In addition, the program provides explicit instruction in the research process and how to use a variety of information resources.

Writing Traits Beginning at Level C, writing projects in *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* include robust instruction in writing traits. Each project targets one trait, such as Organization, which is taught using the direct instruction model. Students use the writing trait rubric to discuss and analyze the treatment of the trait in writing samples. They then critique the application of

The image displays a collection of instructional materials for the 'Writer's Workout' section, specifically focusing on the 'Prewrite' stage of the writing process. The materials are organized into several distinct sections:

- Personal Narrative: Prewrite (Lesson 11W):** This section includes 'Objectives' (Use Academic Vocabulary, Write), 'Vocabulary' (Use Academic Vocabulary, *specific*), and 'Writing' (Writing Process (Prewriting) Collect Ideas, Choose and Narrow a Topic; Gather Data). It features a 'Preview and Plan' section with 'Analyze the Writing Prompt' and 'Identify Form, Audience, and Purpose' instructions, followed by a 'Prewrite' section with 'Choose a Topic' instructions and a 'Model How to Choose a Topic' chart.
- Model How to Choose a Topic:** This chart provides a structured approach for selecting a topic, including steps like 'Read about the items in the second column', 'Choose a Topic', and 'Write a Topic'.
- Differentiate Instruction:** This section offers 'Building Toward Independence' (Lessons 11W-12W), 'More Support' (for students needing more help), and 'Less Support' (for students moving toward independence).
- Multi-Level Strategies:** This section provides 'Prewriting Support: Collect Sensory Details' with 'Beginning' (drawing), 'Intermediate' (group brainstorming), and 'Advanced' (partner support) levels.
- Prewrite:** This section includes 'Model How to Narrow a Topic' (Study the Diagram, Update the Writing Plan) and 'Model How to Gather Details' (Study the Five-Senses Diagram, Academic Vocabulary).

Lessons allow teachers to adjust levels of support to meet their students' varied writing abilities.

the trait in four differentiated student essays on the same topic, analyzing how to raise the score of each essay from a 1 to a 2, or a 2 to a 3, etc.

Differentiated Instruction Lessons are designed to help teachers deal with the diversity of language levels and writing proficiency that may exist in the classroom.

For example, each writing application follows a gradual release model in which more and more responsibility is turned over to students. For each stage of the writing process, teachers model the step, and students then carry out the step in the *Writer's Workout* while the teacher provides guidance and support.

Each application also advises teachers on how to differentiate instruction further (see the box titled “Differentiate Instruction” in the pictured TE lesson). For example:

- If students need more support, the lesson directs teachers to move from the modeling to carrying out the writing step as he or she thinks aloud to create the work, inviting participation from students. This structured practice provides the bridge to the guided practice that students do next in the *Writer's Workout*.
- If students need less support, they can work more independently in the *Writer's Workout* using the checklist and rubric that tie to the writing project.

These approaches help students build toward independence, moving from an “almost” stage to an “I got it” stage.

For further differentiation, lessons include:

- Strategies to help students build banks of personal topics
- Multi-Level Strategies to help teachers adjust the writing lesson so that students at all language levels can participate
- Academic Language Frames that support students in learning academic language and expressing their ideas about writing concepts
- Specific guidance to the teacher in providing immediate corrective feedback

Conclusion

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content approaches writing with all the elements of effective teaching. It involves students in studying and trying out the traits of good writing, learning writing strategies, and engaging in writing applications that will grow their writing proficiency. Lessons are set up for collaboration and differentiation so that teachers can meet the needs of their students regardless of their language levels and writing proficiencies.

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Comprehensive and Responsive Assessment

by Dr. Alfred W. Tatum and Dr. Deborah J. Short

THE 2000 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading report (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001) presented a disappointing picture of the reading performance of middle school students. The NAEP data showed that 70 percent of students entering secondary school are reading below grade level. As a result, state and national governments have focused a great deal of attention on the improvement of middle school students' reading.

One result of this attention is an increase in mandated testing for school districts throughout the United States. Assessments are critical in planning responsive instruction for students who struggle with reading and writing. However, assessment results often are not used as part of diagnostic teaching (Walker, 2008).

What is diagnostic teaching? It is a continuous cycle of activities, in which educators

- *assess* the reading and writing abilities of students
- *interpret* the data according to the students' baseline information (and for English learners, their second-language acquisition level), curriculum, and instructional practices
- *adjust* instructional techniques and materials, either to reteach skills or strategies the students have not mastered or to teach new skills or strategies to advance student knowledge
- *re-assess*
- *re-interpret*.

Ideally, this cycle becomes a three-dimensional spiral as students strengthen and build upon their reading and writing skills.

Reading and writing assessments help teachers construct an understanding of how students are developing, and thus provide critical information that allows them to make important instructional decisions (Afflerbach, 2007). Afflerbach notes that responsive teachers need to examine the consequences, usefulness, roles,

and responsibilities related to assessments, as well as the reliability and validity of the assessments (Afflerbach, 2007).

This point is particularly important for the assessment of students who are English learners (EL). Standardized tests that aim to measure knowledge of academic content (e.g., science, math) generally are not sensitive to second-language literacy development. As a consequence, some educators may incorrectly

interpret data from these measures as evidence that students lack content mastery. A closer look might show, however, that the students performed at the normal pace of the second-language acquisition process (Abedi & Lord, 2001; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). Tests results also are confounded by aspects of EL students' diversity (e.g., native-language literacy, educational history). Further, the tests may require knowledge of cultural experiences that many EL students have not had. The outcome of all this is that for EL students, many tests do not measure what they are intended to measure.

“Assessments are critical in planning responsive instruction for students who struggle with reading and writing.”

Using Assessments to Plan Instruction

To plan responsive instruction, assessment must be ongoing. The assessment plan must include both formal and informal measures to gauge student progress and determine the effectiveness of instructional programs and their impact on students. All students can benefit from a diagnostic assessment at the start of the school year. Instruction in reading and writing can be more carefully tailored to the students' needs when teachers know, for example, that students have strong decoding skills but lack understanding of specific comprehension strategies, such as determining importance or inferencing. EL students also benefit when teachers know the extent of their native-language literacy skills, because many of these skills transfer to English literacy acquisition (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). In addition, EL students who have strong home-literacy experiences and opportunities generally achieve better English literacy outcomes than do those without such experiences (Goldenberg, Rueda, & August, 2006). Therefore, effective assessment practices include the initial testing of students' native-language literacy as well as their English literacy.

To capture students' varied reading, writing, and linguistic abilities and interests, assessment plans must endeavor to create comprehensive student profiles that

1. capture students' concept of reading
2. identify students' strengths and weaknesses at both the word level and text level
3. assess students' acumen for reading narrative and expository texts
4. gauge students' affective responses to reading and writing activities
5. involve students in the assessment process and use their voices to adjust instructional practice and assessment practices, if necessary.

Using these five dimensions to develop more comprehensive profiles increases the likelihood that assessment practices will be of maximum benefit to students. Comprehensive profiles allow teachers to focus attention on whether students view reading as a word-calling task, or on whether they strive actively to construct meaning as they read. They give teachers ways to become aware of students' reading fluency, observe their reading for meaning-changing and non-meaning changing miscues, and assess their comprehension-monitoring strategies. Additionally, the profiles guide teachers in examining the texts

students read to determine whether the content engages their interest.

Responsive instruction for ELs may be more complicated than for native English speakers. In general, EL students attain word-level skills, such as decoding, word recognition, and spelling, in a way similar to their English-speaking peers. For text-level skills, such as reading comprehension and writing, however, the situation differs because of EL students' more limited oral English proficiency and knowledge of English vocabulary and syntax. Given the important roles that well-developed listening and speaking and extensive vocabulary knowledge play in English reading and writing success, literacy instruction for EL students must incorporate extensive opportunities for language and vocabulary development. In particular, it must teach language and writing skills directly and explicitly. Students' writing, for example, can improve when teachers model a range of writing forms and techniques, review writing samples with students, and use Academic Language Frames to help students expand their English usage. Writing can also improve when teachers simply have students copy words or text until they gain more proficiency (Graham & Perin, 2007). Discussion and repeated practice with words and sentence patterns familiarizes EL students with English language conventions, such as how words and sentences are arranged in oral and written discourse (Garcia & Beltran, 2003).

Applying the Research: *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content*

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content provides a robust array of tools for both formal and informal assessment to support teachers in understanding their students' needs and monitoring their progress.

Diagnostic and Placement Assessments Students entering the program can take a Phonics Test and a Lexile Placement Test. If the Phonics Test indicates that a student needs support with fundamental reading skills and decoding, placement is in Level A or B. Students who have acquired basic decoding skills will proceed to the Lexile Placement Test. This assessment provides a recommended placement in Level C, D, or E.

In addition to these placement tools, the program includes recommendations for further diagnostic assessment with standardized instruments from a number of test publishers. Such measures can give additional information on students' strengths and instructional

Lesson 2, continued
PREPARE TO READ: READING STRATEGY

OBJECTIVE
 Reading Strategy
 Ask Questions: Question the Author

TEACH/MODEL

Reading Strategy: Ask Questions
Introduce: Read the introduction and work through the How To.

Strategy in Action
Question the Author: Read aloud the text through the first sentence in the second paragraph. Say: The student has a question for the author: "Why does the author include this?" Show where the student wrote the question in the Double-Entry Journal.

Read aloud to the end of the passage.
 Say: The student does not find an answer in the text, but reading on gives him an idea. Show where the student wrote his idea in the Double-Entry Journal, and read it aloud.

PRACTICE

Practice Together **Structure**
 Choral read the first paragraph. Say: I would like to know why the author starts by talking about the moon and the fire. Make a Double-Entry Journal, and write the question in column 1.

Say: Now I'll read on to try to answer my question. Choral read the rest of the passage. Say: I think the author wanted to get a scary mood for the dream. Point out that the answer is not there in the text, but your idea comes from what you know about dark nights and scary dreams.

Check Understanding
 Ask: How can you question the author?
 Post **Academic Language Frames** to help students express their answers.

Try It! **Support**
 As students read the selection, use the **Academic Language Frames** active reading supports.

Academic Language Frames

- Beginning
- Intermediate
- Advanced

Ask Questions

- I can use ... to write my question.
- I can ... to try to answer my question.
- I can think about ... to answer my question.
- To question the author, I can use a ...
- To answer my question, I can ...
- I think ... helps to question the author.
- Help to answer my question are ... and to ...

Strategy in Action
 Here's how one student questioned the author.

Ask the text

The season was well overhauled, and our great fire had burned low. A loud clap of thunder woke me from my dreams.

All dreams are not true-dreams, my mother says. But in my dream that night, three great winged birds with voices like thunder rode wild waves in our bay. They were not like any birds I had ever seen, for sharp, white teeth filled their mouths.

Double-Entry Journal

Page and Section	Question	Answer
Page 101, Section 1	Why does the author start by talking about the moon and the fire?	He wants to get a scary mood for the dream.
Page 102, Section 2	Why does the author include this?	He wants to show that the answer is not there in the text, but your idea comes from what you know about dark nights and scary dreams.

Practice Together
 Follow the steps in the How To box. Create a Double-Entry Journal. As you read "Cuckoo," find questions you have for the author, and record them in your Double-Entry Journal. Try to answer them as you read on.

Transparency 52

Prepared to Read T347

The Check Understanding step of the lesson includes an Academic Language Frame that supports students in responding and enables the teacher to informally evaluate each student's understanding of the strategy.

needs in phonics, decoding, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, language, and writing. The instructional plan also provides consistent support for informal diagnosis of student needs. Lessons include frequent checks for understanding and many opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills through a variety of oral and written responses; as they observe and evaluate these steps of the plan, teachers engage in continuing diagnosis of students' needs and progress.

Formal Progress Monitoring The main formal assessment of student progress in *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* is at the unit level. Levels A and B include Unit Quick Checks after every unit of instruction to evaluate progress on phonics and decoding, spelling, word recognition, vocabulary, and grammar. More extensive Unit Progress Tests are provided after every third unit, covering phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding, word recognition vocabulary and morphology, comprehension, grammar, and writing.

Informal Progress Monitoring The program provides a wealth of resources and daily support to help teachers monitor student progress informally. Lessons include a Check Understanding step to assist teachers in quickly

determining if students understand the skill. In addition, lessons are constructed so that at each step of the learning process, all students respond in ways that demonstrate how successfully they are learning the strategy or content objectives. Students respond in a variety of ways, including graphic organizers, Academic Language Frames and sentence frames, choral responses, written responses, gestures, and others. This interactive lesson structure gives teachers continual opportunities to note students' successes and areas of need. When students have difficulty with a strategy or concept, lessons provide specific suggestions for corrective feedback, addressing student needs immediately.

Affective and Metacognitive Measures Responsive assessment includes surveys of students' attitudes toward reading and writing and their self-assessments of achievement. *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* includes interest surveys, inventories related to the behaviors of reading and writing, metacognitive measures in which students can share the strategies they are using to determine the meaning of words and comprehend selections, and student self-assessments that lead to goal-setting.

Summative Assessments The program also includes at the end of each level a test that measures achievement on the standards taught in the program and typically tested on high-stakes tests. At Levels C–E, a mid-level test is available to get a read on how students are doing earlier in the school year.

Reteaching The program includes reteaching prescriptions for the informal and formal progress-monitoring tests and for the summative assessments so that teachers can take corrective action.



With the Online Coach, students can record their own reading of a selection and evaluate their reading fluency in words correct per minute.

Fluency Assessment Each week students can practice fluency with a passage, excerpted from the reading selection. This same passage can then be used for a timed reading in which the words-correct-per-minute (WCPM) fluency rate is calculated. Students are encouraged to graph their fluency rates over time so they can see the evidence of their improvement. Fluency development in the core materials is supported by daily fluency activities including listening, choral reading, partner reading, and recording, with emphasis on intonation, phrasing, and expression. Additional technology support for fluency practice and assessment of WCPM rates is provided in the Online Coach at levels C–E (see pages PD61–PD63).

Conclusion

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content provides a full range of tools for formal and informal assessment that support teachers in diagnosing their students' needs and using assessment to continually monitor students' progress, adjusting instruction as needed for optimum progress for striving readers and English learners.

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Structured Support for English Learners

by Dr. Deborah J. Short

FOR EDUCATORS OF STUDENTS who are English learners (ELs), the goal is twofold: to accelerate their development of academic English and to strengthen their content knowledge. Research has shown that ELs both improve their academic English skills and learn more of the content of school subjects through this integrated instructional approach (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006). When EL students participate in a program of systematic instruction and assessment that provides them with access to solid, research-based curricula and that also advances their academic language and literacy skills, they can succeed in school and beyond.

Understanding English Learners in Middle School

Most English learners in middle school are already on the path to academic literacy. They are not stalled; rather, they are making steady progress.

Second-language acquisition, however, takes time—and requires understanding of what EL students bring to our classrooms.

Some English learners arrive in the United States without literacy in their native language. Yet often they are placed in the classrooms of teachers who lack training in how to teach basic literacy skills to adolescents (Rueda & García, 2001). These newcomers need a developmental program of language and literacy with direct instruction in vocabulary, grammar and the fundamentals of reading and writing.

Other ELs have grown up in the U.S., but for reasons such as family mobility, sporadic school attendance, or limited access to ELD, ESL, or bilingual instruction, they have not developed the degree of academic literacy required for reading and understanding middle school texts or for interacting productively in instruction with teachers and classmates. Some of these students may need a targeted intervention. Still other ELs enter middle school with strong native-language literacy skills. These students have a strong foundation that can facilitate their

academic English growth as their prior knowledge and aspects of their literacy abilities can transfer from the native language to the new one.

What, then, do ELs from all these different backgrounds need as they move through the middle school years?

Explicit Instruction in English Vocabulary and Structures

We know that the connections between language, literacy, and academic achievement

grow stronger as students progress through the grades (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Kamil, 2003), and that the development of proficiency in academic English is a complex process for adolescent ELs. Middle school ELs must develop literacy skills for each content area *in* their second language as they simultaneously try to comprehend and apply content area concepts *through* that second language (García & Godina, 2004; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). Therefore, even while we focus on developing literacy and bolstering content area knowledge, we must provide explicit instruction in English semantics,

“Second-language acquisition takes time—and requires understanding of what EL students bring to our classrooms.”

syntax, phonology, pragmatics, and discourse levels of the language as they are applied in school. (Bailey, 2007; Dutro & Moran, 2003; Schleppegrell, 2004).

Personal Connections to Learning The complexity of second language acquisition is not the only variable in becoming literate in English. Identity, engagement, motivation, and life outside school are other important factors. (Moje, 2006; Moje et al., 2004; Tatum, 2005, 2007).

Adolescents tend to engage more with text that they have chosen themselves, and they will read material above their reading level if it is of interest. Engagement and motivation increase when students can see themselves in the characters, events, and settings of the materials that they read.

Self-perceptions as a strong vs. weak reader and personal goals also influence motivation. Out-of-school experiences and literacies also play an important role. Stressors outside of school—hectic home lives, work, lack of study space, peer pressures—may diminish students’ interest in and ability to develop English literacy. On the other hand, positive out-of-school interactions with English literacy (through text messaging, the Internet, music, work) may strengthen their engagement with literacy practices in the classroom. The opportunity to participate in collaborative literacy activities with their classmates often heightens motivation as well.

Promoting English Literacy Development: What Research Tells Us

A number of recent research reports have examined more than two decades of rigorous studies of English second language development (e.g., August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Slavin & Cheung, 2003). These reports provide a great deal of valuable information about adolescent ELs and about the curricular content and instructional practices that work best to promote their academic language and literacy skills. The following are among the reports’ key findings:

1. Transfer of Skills Certain native-language skills transfer to English literacy, including phonemic awareness, comprehension and language-learning strategies, and native- and second-language oral knowledge. If students have opportunities to learn and maintain literacy in their native language, they may more quickly acquire English. Content that students learn through their native language is *learned*

knowledge. They may require assistance to articulate this knowledge in English, but they do not have to relearn it. The process of transfer of knowledge from one language to another, however, is not automatic (Gersten, Brengelman, & Jiménez, 1994). It requires teachers to make explicit links to students’ prior knowledge and to prompt students to make connections, using the cognitive resources they have.

2. Native Language Literacy Academic literacy in the native language facilitates the development of academic literacy in English. For example, once they have enough proficiency (e.g., vocabulary, sense of sentence structure, etc.) to engage with text, students who have learned reading comprehension strategies (e.g., finding the main idea, making inferences) in their native language have the cognitive background to use those strategies in their new language.

3. Academic English Teaching the five essential components of proficient reading—phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000)—to English learners is necessary but not sufficient for developing their academic literacy. ELs need to develop oral language proficiency and academic discourse patterns as well. These are the vocabulary and language structures that make up academic English—the language used in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Academic English allows students to participate in classroom talk, such as supporting a historical perspective or providing evidence for a scientific claim.

As a corollary to this point, students benefit from the integration of all language domains—reading, writing, listening, and speaking. As they develop knowledge in one domain, they reinforce their learning in other domains.

4. Instructional Accommodations High-quality instruction for EL students is similar to high-quality instruction for native English-speaking students. However, beginning- and intermediate-level ELs need instructional accommodations and support. The National Literacy Panel (August & Shanahan, 2006) found that the impact of instructional interventions is weaker for English learners than it is for English speakers. This suggests that for ELs, interventions must include added supports or accommodations (Goldenberg, 2006).

5. Enhanced Explicit Vocabulary Development

English learners need enhanced, direct vocabulary development. Direct teaching of specific words can facilitate vocabulary growth and lead to increased reading comprehension for native English speakers (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982) and for English language learners (Carlo et al., 2004). However, many middle school ELs need to learn many more vocabulary words than teachers have time to teach. As a result, specific-word instruction must be supplemented with explicit instruction in strategies for word learning, such as contextual and morphemic (word part) analysis.

For some ELs, these strategies should include ways for them to identify and use native-language cognates to figure out English words. Helping ELs develop knowledge of words, word parts, and word relationships is crucial if they are to understand topics in the content areas well enough to increase both their academic knowledge and reading comprehension (Graves, 2006).

Designing Appropriate Curriculum for ELs

Comprehensive literacy instruction programs for English learners must incorporate the following elements:

- lesson objectives that are based on state content and language standards
- explicit attention to academic, cross-curricular vocabulary and subject-specific terminology
- strategic, developmental reading instruction tied to a wide range of expository and narrative texts
- explicit writing instruction
- listening and speaking/discourse instruction
- grammar instruction
- teaching practices that both tap students' prior knowledge and build background for learning about new topics
- explicit instruction in learning strategies
- instruction in common content area tasks
- comprehension checks and opportunities for review

In effective programs, we see teachers using specific techniques, such as those in the SIOP Model for sheltered instruction (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008), to make

the presentation of new content comprehensible for English learners. For example:

- Teachers make the standards-based, lesson objectives explicit to the students, utilizing realia, pictures, and video clips to help students visualize the content.
- Before moving into a reading or a writing activity, teachers activate students' prior knowledge and link to past learning, tapping students' current abilities in their native language. They preteach vocabulary, and build background appropriate to the content and task at hand.
- Knowing that typical lecture practices are not effective with ELs, teachers organize the presentation of information into chunks suited to students' proficiency levels, offer demonstrations, promote student-student interaction, teach note-taking skills with specific organizers, and include time for reflection.
- To build competence and the ability to work independently, any new subject matter task or classroom routine is scaffolded for students by using sentence and paragraph frames graduated to students' proficiency levels. Thus, teachers lead students, even those at differing levels of proficiency, to higher levels of understanding and independent practice.
- Language skills are sequenced and taught explicitly as well as integrated into lessons on other skills so that students have every opportunity to grow their academic English. Language skills taught in one lesson are reinforced in later ones.
- To ensure that learning is taking place and students are making expected progress, teachers check ELs' comprehension frequently during instruction. They also use multiple measures to monitor progress on a more formal basis, using assessments that accommodate the students' developing language skills and lead to timely reteaching.

Applying the Research: *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content*

Inside Language, Literacy, and Content provides all of these elements of successful instruction for ELs.

The program uses state standards for language, literacy, and content as the foundation for the lesson objectives. At Levels C–E, the standards also inform the guiding questions that address topical issues like *What happens when cultures cross paths?* and *What makes the environment so valuable?* These guiding questions engage and motivate

students to read and find answers. Moreover, students share ideas about the questions over the course of three major selections in each unit, which offers them opportunities to build language in context over time and to respond more thoughtfully as they gain new perspectives, information, and, in some cases, data.

Lesson plans are built around techniques that are appropriate for English learners. For example, reading lessons begin with building background using pictures and videos from the National Geographic Digital Library.

To promote growth in vocabulary, the program teaches both key content-related words from the reading selections and important academic words and concepts, such as *debate*, *sequence*, and *organize*, that students can apply across content areas. It also includes a wide range of vocabulary-building activities for ELs, giving them multiple opportunities to practice new words in various contexts. In addition, instructional routines for daily vocabulary practice help students use independent word-learning strategies.

Academic Language Frames are used to further support ELs' development of language. These frames provide structure for using language to carry out academic tasks. Because the frames are graduated in language complexity, they help students of all proficiencies to participate fully in class discussions and activities.

Each level includes daily lessons in English grammar and sentence structure so that students receive systematic, comprehensive language instruction. See PD pages 52–55 for the full description of these lessons.

With each selection, the program targets a specific language function, such as Ask for and Give Information or Describe. Students hear multiple language models to help them see the language function in action and participate in songs, chants and other audio lessons to try out the language function in a risk-free way. In the selection lessons, students use this language function again and again.

Instructional strategies are specifically designed for English learners. For example, lessons promote interaction and the use of oral language, often in cooperative learning activities. The lessons offer Multi-Level Strategies to give students at different levels of language proficiency access to the text or to support their participation in the task at hand.

Conclusion

Effective instruction for English learners requires both high expectations and specialized strategies to ensure success. The standards base of *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content* along with its structured supports, Multi-Level Strategies, and other instructional techniques designed especially for English learners allows students to accelerate their growth in language and literacy.

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