

The Oregon Literacy Framework of September 2009 as it Applies to grades K-3

The State Board adopted the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework (December 2009) as guidance for the State, districts, and schools to support reading proficiency, a requirement of the Oregon Diploma. The purpose of the Framework is to ensure students are

- Reading grade-level text or above by end of first grade
- Developing grade-level or above reading skills K-12 across all classes
- Receiving intensified instruction to help them read at grade level, if they are *not*.

Designed as a Response to Intervention (RTI) model, the Framework was developed by the Literacy Leadership State Steering Committee (LLSSC) in partnership with ODE, to prepare Oregon students to

- **Meet on OAKS Reading at Grade 3**
- **Meet on OAKS Reading in Grades 4 - 8 & High School**
- Graduate with an Oregon Diploma, college and career-ready (*no need of remediation*)
- Be able to study and train for new jobs of the future.

We know more about literacy—particularly reading—than any other subject in education. In the past 30 years, researchers have amassed an extensive amount of information about how children become literate, and the strategies we can use to help them succeed in literacy development and achievement.

The Literacy Leadership State Steering Committee (LLSSC) began focusing on literacy in 2005. The LLSSC coordinates Oregon's efforts to improve literacy pre-kindergarten through grade 12 and its members are appointed jointly by the Governor and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Guided by Dr. Michael Kamil, a Stanford University researcher on early reading and adolescent literacy, the LLSSC wrote the “Oregon Literacy Plan,” a design for a complete comprehensive reading model for Oregon. The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework is the culmination of that earlier design. In 2007, the Center on Teaching and Learning (CTL) in the College of Education at the University of Oregon began working on the Framework documents and a series of resources to support school and district efforts to increase student reading achievement. The guidance in the Framework provides a step-by-step approach to the state, districts, and schools on how to use evidence based literacy instruction to ensure that all students read well.

December 4, 2009: The Oregon State Board of Education adopted the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework as a tool to support the Essential Skill of Reading, a requirement of the Oregon Diploma. Overall, one third of Oregon's fourth graders and one quarter of Oregon's eighth graders scored at the lowest achievement level on the NAEP.

Taken together, OAKS and NAEP reading assessments provide strong evidence that Oregon schools need to do much more in K-12 to prepare stronger readers.

K-3 Literacy

Early literacy experiences set the stage for later academic success. It is critical that children learn to read at grade level prior to grade 3; if they do not, the chances are reduced that they will learn to read at grade level, and great that they will fall further behind each year (Juel, 1988). Students who read at grade level early in school substantially improve their opportunities for long-term success both inside and outside of formal school settings (Finn, Gerber & Boyd-Zaharias, 2005).

For those students who are not successful readers by grade 3, it will be more difficult for them to direct their academic attention on developing reading comprehension strategies or on using their reading skills to develop subject-area knowledge. **After grade 3, the odds are against students becoming grade-level readers without intense intervention.** Therefore, what schools do to teach children to read in the early years of schooling matters greatly.

Poor literacy skills - which prevent students from keeping up with the curriculum - **are cited as one of the most common reasons for student dropout** (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003).

Why a Focus on Reading

The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework focuses specifically on reading development for two primary reasons. First, the purpose of the framework is to delineate variables directly under the school's control (e.g., group size, instructional time, or materials) for the development of student learning and outcomes. Second, the framework provides clear guidance for how schools, districts, and the state can use scientific evidence to teach students the literacy skills they need for advanced education.

The reality is that much more scientific evidence exists about what schools can do to teach students the literacy skills they need in reading than all other areas of literacy combined. In reading, we know what to teach and when to teach it. We know what strong reading instruction looks like in the classroom and we know how to support teachers to provide that instruction. We know how to measure reading outcomes as well as critical indicators of those outcomes. Of course, our knowledge of how schools can provide effective reading instruction will continue to expand and improve as scientific evidence expands. But the knowledge base is sufficiently mature in reading right now to provide clear direction in the six fundamental components that organize this framework.

The purpose of the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework, is to ensure that

- All students read at grade level or above as soon as possible after entering school
- All students continue to advance in grade-level reading skills each year across instructional areas in grades 4-12
- All students reading below grade-level receive the strongest reading instruction and interventions possible to help them read at grade level.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Implementing the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework means implementing a framework fully aligned with Oregon's Response to Intervention Initiative (Or-RTI). Or-RTI integrates high-quality instruction, assessment, and intervention in a way that allows schools to match the level of intensity and instructional support to student needs in reading and in reading across the instructional areas.

The major features that need to be in place in an RTI framework can be found throughout the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework. Important highlights are:

- Using scientifically-based programs and practices in the general education classrooms
- Developing a multi-tiered support system that incorporates prevention and early intervention services
- Implementing a reliable and valid comprehensive assessment system
- Using student data for making a range of instructional decisions, including student responsiveness to instruction and intervention.

Moving Forward

Making sure **all** students read as soon as possible after they enter school, and that they continue to read at grade level or higher each year of school, is critical because **reading well increases the likelihood that students will do well in school**. **Grade K-3** teachers provide timely and critical reading foundations and interventions. Intervening early to bring students to grade-level is the most helpful to students because being a grade-level reader or higher positively impacts students' lives and their school career.

In the Framework, a four-tiered **Response to Intervention (RTI)** model is used to differentiate levels of instructional support (Instruction, pp.1-37-41) based on student **data**:

Advanced—Students who are reading above grade level.

Tier 1—Students who are reading at grade level and are *low-risk* for long-term reading difficulties.

Tier 2—Students who are reading slightly below grade level and are *moderately at risk* for long-term reading difficulties.

Tier 3—Students who are reading significantly below grade level and are at *high-risk* for long-term reading difficulties. In addition to guidance on setting reading goals, assessment, and differentiating instruction, the *Framework* discusses making sufficient time for instruction, fluid grouping for instruction, providing explicit instruction in the essential elements of reading, selecting research-based strategies and programs, and utilizing *effective teacher delivery*.

To help districts and schools implement a differentiated instruction model gradually, the [Professional Development for the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework portal](#) was developed. It features multiple series of **ready-to-use** “lesson” modules (audio presentations with Power Point slides, activities, and related resources) presenting key concepts and related understandings teachers and principals need to implement a comprehensive reading program with an RTI model. Intended for use with **professional learning communities or grade-and-department level teams**, the professional development is designed to be embedded, on-going, and reaching full implementation over time.

Framework Context: In December 2009, the Oregon State Board of Education adopted the *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework to support proficiency in reading, a requirement of the Oregon Diploma*.

The purpose of the *Framework* is to ensure students are
Reading grade-level text or above by the end of first grade
Developing grade-level or above reading skills K-12 across all classes Receiving intensified instruction to help them
read at grade level, if they are *not*.

(3) Implementation Guides

The [K-12 Reading Implementation Guides](#), together with the K-12 Self-Assessments already part of the *Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework*, are tools to **turn high-quality planning into high-quality action/implementation**.

The **first step** of implementation is for schools and districts to determine what is currently in place. They conduct an internal audit.

In the **second step**, schools and districts prioritize their needs.

Executive Summary School-level Implementation of the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework

Making sure **all** students read at grade level or higher each year—no later than grade 3—and that they continue to read at grade level or higher each year of school is critical because **reading well increases the likelihood that students will do well in school**.

Getting all students to grade level and higher requires focus and coordination from educators at every level. **Grade K-3** teachers provide timely and critical reading foundations and interventions. Intervening early to bring students to grade-level is the most helpful to students because being a grade-level reader or higher positively impacts students’ lives and their school career. Also, early intervention is timely, and as such, it is the most efficient and cost-effective.

GOALS

First, schools must establish strong **summative reading goals** that all students meet. The most important reading goal is reading at grade level or higher each year. Students who read at grade level or higher are proficient readers and proficient readers are far more likely to learn content across the instructional areas than students who are not proficient readers. Progress monitoring/formative reading measures in grades K-3 indicate whether students are on track to read at grade level in grade 3, and they may also be used as summative or outcome measures for specific elements of reading in **grades K-2**. **Formative reading goals** determine if students are developing reading skills in the essential elements of reading such as phonics and reading fluency, and they help determine if students are on track for grade-level reading.

ASSESSMENT

Screening assessments determine if students are at risk for reading difficulties. For those at-risk, schools need to administer systematic progress-monitoring assessments to make sure students are developing the reading skills they need to read at grade level. In this respect, the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework is entirely consistent with a Response to Intervention (RTI) model of service delivery. A strong assessment system also helps schools determine whether reading problems are unique challenges individual students face or whether they are symptomatic of larger challenges relating to the school's ability to provide effective reading instruction at an overall system level.

INSTRUCTION

Third, schools must provide **effective reading instruction throughout K-12**. In grades K-3, effective reading instruction ensures that students develop the foundational reading skills they need to read and learn successfully in school and beyond. Schools must have four components in place to ensure effective reading is provided to all students.

- Schools allocate sufficient time for reading instruction and make sure that time is protected. In grades K-3, all students receive at least 90 minutes of daily reading instruction.
- **Data is used to form fluid instructional groupings.**
- Instruction is focused on the essential elements of reading. For students in grades K-3, the essential elements include phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Schools use research-based strategies, programs, and materials that target the essential elements of reading.
- Schools differentiate instruction based on what supports students need to reach reading goals. How instruction is differentiated for students should be clear and documented through grade-level plans.
- Schools use a common set of strategies and instructional approaches to deliver instruction **effectively**. When effective teacher delivery converges with strong programs that focus on the essential elements, schools increase the probability that students will reach grade-level or higher reading goals.

LEADERSHIP

Fourth, **effective building leadership** must prioritize student attainment of grade-level reading goals by vigorously supporting teachers to provide classroom instruction that meets student needs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Fifth, **high quality professional development** enables teachers to provide the instruction students need to be successful readers. Professional development also enables leaders and other personnel to provide the support teachers need to improve reading instruction.

Six principles of high-quality professional development:

- Guided by assessment data to attain school reading goals
- Focused on the implementation of research-based practices and programs
- Consistent time allocated for educators to plan, reflect on, and refine instruction
- Multifaceted, coordinated, and ongoing to support teachers and instructional staff on the assessment and instruction of reading priorities
- Differentiated by position and need
- Results in a thorough understanding of, and ability to implement effectively, reading priorities and practices.

COMMITMENT

Sixth, making sure **all** students read at grade level or higher each year and that all students can demonstrate proficiency in the **Essential Skill of Reading**—a requirement for earning an **Oregon Diploma**—requires a high level of **commitment** and coordination from educators at every level.

Oregon's K-12 Literacy Framework describes the structure necessary to implement a comprehensive reading program. A comprehensive reading program includes instructional practices designed to help all students develop the skills they

need to read at grade level or higher each year in school. The **School Reading Plan** summarizes the school's commitment to proficient, grade-level reading for all students, and describes how each of the six components of the framework will be implemented in the building. Making this commitment publicly through a School Reading Plan or through a dedicated section of the School Improvement Plan (SIP), part of the district's Continuous Improvement Planning (CIP), increases the likelihood that the commitment will be met, maintained, and carried forward.

The data a school collects during the year to make ongoing adjustments to the reading program are described in a **School Action Plan**. A clear demonstration of commitment is for the school to provide **regular reports** throughout the year to teachers and to stakeholders, including parents, the school board, the district office, and community members, on progress in reading achievement and reading instruction.

Preface

Current Reading Skills of Oregon Students

Performance on the Oregon Reading Assessment

The paradox is that many students who are graduating from high school but are not well prepared for postsecondary opportunities were actually experiencing difficulties learning to read as early as kindergarten. These students could have been easily identified at that time, and if scientifically-based instructional interventions had been used, the chances are good that many of them would have acquired the reading skills they needed for a lifetime of learning.

Performance on a “National” Reading Assessment

The NAEP data offers clear evidence that Oregon is near the bottom of the country for grade 4. Seen in the context of NAEP, 35% of Oregon grade 4 students read **below grade level**. In other words, more than 1 out of 3 students in grade 4 does not have the reading skills necessary to meet Basic (grade-level expectations) on the NAEP. Among grade 4 students living in high poverty environments, 50% are not reading at grade level.

How we perform compared to other states is important to examine. On the grade 4 NAEP assessments, among all 50 states (plus the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education schools, 52 jurisdictions in all), only 16 states had lower overall average scores than Oregon. In other words, 67% of states / jurisdictions had a higher average score than Oregon.

Taken together, OAKS and NAEP reading assessments provide strong evidence that Oregon schools need to do much more in K-12 to prepare stronger readers. To support this effort, we all must do much more to make sure schools have the resources and tools they need to accomplish this task. **Early intervention as part of a coordinated, comprehensive educational system can make it more likely that all students will do well in reading by the time they reach grade 4.** The technology and the measures are available to assess all students early in school (as early as kindergarten) to provide accurate information about whether a student is at risk for reading difficulty. **This information, coupled with what is known about effective early reading instruction and intervention, strongly suggests that the number of students in grade 4 who do not have basic reading skills can be substantially and immediately reduced.** How well children read in grade 4 is the single best predictor of how well they will read in grade 8, and how well students read in grade 8 is the best predictor of how well they will read in grade 12. Early reading skills are better predictors of later reading skills than other factors including race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.¹³

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, just from the Oregon class of 2007, the cost of school dropouts to the state will total almost 3.5 billion dollars in lost wages, taxes, and productivity over the lifetime of students who drop out of school. **With some justification, students who do not read proficiently in grade 8 or grade 10 are not convinced that completing high school will give them the same options after high school as students who read proficiently.** the U.S. has one of the lowest graduation rates among industrialized nations in the world.¹⁶

Only about 50% of high school graduates across the country are prepared for postsecondary education.¹⁸ This figure is mirrored by data from the ACT, where only 50% of high school juniors and seniors taking their college entrance exam are ready for college-level reading assignments in subjects like math, history, science, and English.¹⁹

Why a Focus on Reading

The reality is that much more scientific evidence exists about what schools can do to teach students the literacy skills they need in reading than all other areas of literacy combined. In reading, we know **what to teach** and **when to teach it**. We know what strong reading instruction looks like in the classroom and we know how to support teachers to provide that instruction. We know how to measure reading outcomes as well as critical indicators of those outcomes. Of course, our knowledge of how schools can provide effective reading instruction will continue to expand and improve as scientific evidence expands. But the knowledge base is sufficiently mature in reading right now to provide clear direction in the six fundamental components that organize this framework. This is not true of other areas of literacy including writing, speaking, and listening.

Despite this strong research base, however, implementation of these strategies has been somewhat uneven. The framework is designed to provide the state, districts, teachers, administrators, parents, school board members, and other stakeholders with a strategic “blueprint” of what schools in Oregon need to do to help students develop key reading skills. This literacy framework emphasizes that the “architecture of reading instruction” must be well designed and executed throughout K-12. For schools, the critical period of teaching students to decipher a new symbolic system—an alphabetic writing system—generally takes place from kindergarten through grade 2. **The goal is for students to learn this alphabetic system before grade 3, but all students should have a thorough command of it no later than grade 3.** A deep knowledge of the alphabetic system allows students to negotiate the often treacherous transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Throughout grades 4-12, and in earlier grades to a lesser degree, directing students’ academic focus toward learning **deep, grade-level reading comprehension skills and strategies** so they are able to apply the skills and strategies across the instructional areas—results in **full content access for students**.

For students who are not successful readers in grade 3, it will be more difficult for them to direct their academic attention on developing reading comprehension strategies or on using their reading skills to develop subject-area knowledge. **After grade 3, the odds are against students becoming grade-level readers without intense intervention.** Therefore, what schools do to teach children to read in the early years of schooling matters greatly. Increasingly in the later grades, effective reading instruction is characterized by explicitly teaching students how to read specific subject areas, including history, science, mathematics, and literature.²⁶ Thus, **all teachers including kindergarten teachers in elementary schools and science teachers in high school need to be effective reading teachers.** Effective reading instruction throughout K-12 requires that teachers receive extensive support, including strong and sustained professional development on teaching reading

Implementing the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework means implementing a framework fully aligned with Oregon’s Response to Intervention Initiative (Or-RTI).²⁷ Or-RTI integrates high-quality instruction, assessment, and intervention in a way that allows schools to match the level of intensity and instructional support to student needs in reading and in reading across the instructional areas.²⁸

Goals

Progress monitoring/formative reading measures in grades K-3 indicate whether students are on track to read at grade level in grade 3, and they may also be used as summative or outcome measures for specific elements of reading in **grades K-2**. To accomplish this overarching goal, schools must make sure students reach formative reading goals that provide critical information about whether students are on track to read at grade level.

Assessment

Formative measures of reading should be used to determine if students are on track for grade-level reading. These formative measures should include early measures of phonemic awareness and alphabetic understanding that determine if students are developing foundational reading skills. Formative measures should also include measures of fluency and comprehension that help determine if students are developing advanced skills necessary to read complex academic material.

Instruction

High-quality reading instruction in Oregon’s K-12 Literacy Framework involves the integration of **six** guiding principles. First, it is critical that schools **allocate sufficient time to teach reading and use it effectively**. Second, **data** is used to form fluid instructional groupings. Third, instruction is focused on the **essential elements of reading**. Fourth, teachers need to utilize **research-based strategies, programs, and materials**. Fifth, schools must **differentiate**

instruction based on what supports students need to reach target goals. How instruction is differentiated for students should be communicated formally through grade-level plans. Sixth, all teachers should provide **effective teacher delivery** of content by focusing on nine general features of instruction. When schools successfully implement these six guiding principles, they increase the probability that all students will reach grade-level reading goals.

Professional Development

All professional development related to reading outcomes should **target what needs to occur in the classroom** in order for all students to meet grade-level reading goals. To do this, the state, districts, and schools need to integrate content and resources to provide **coherent, multifaceted, and on-going** professional development. The closer professional development occurs to the school level, the more it becomes focused on specific classroom instructional practices. Professional development should be **differentiated** based on need.

Goals

- A critical school responsibility is helping K-12 students meet grade-level or above reading goals each academic year.
- Research-based formative reading goals are set in grades K-3 to track students' progress on the essential elements of reading and to help them become grade-level readers as soon as possible after they enter school.
- Meeting or exceeding grade-level formative and summative reading goals means that students have the knowledge and skills they need to read a variety of academic materials with understanding, are able to use reading as a tool to deepen their knowledge of challenging academic content across a variety of instructional areas, and may read for a variety of purposes throughout their lives, including reading for enjoyment and enhancement.
- Not meeting grade-level formative and summative reading goals means that students need instruction and interventions designed to improve their opportunities to meet them for the reasons listed above.

Reading Goals Anchor Reading Instruction

The major purpose of reading instruction is to ensure that ALL students read at grade level or higher each academic year, no later than in grade 3, and that they progress at grade level or higher in reading across the instructional areas throughout their school career.ⁱ ⁱⁱ ⁱⁱⁱ Helping students learn to read at grade level as early as possible after entering school—and to maintain grade-level reading throughout their public school experience—is a critically important education objective that impacts their success in school and beyond.^{iv} ^v Students who read at grade level early in school substantially improve their opportunities for long-term success both inside and outside of formal school settings.¹ **Learning to read at grade level as soon as possible after entering school is optimal.** When students are reading at grade level or higher in **grade 3**, they have the foundational reading skills firmly in place to begin learning challenging content the next year in **grade 4**.

For students who are reading below grade level in grade 3, the challenges immediately ahead are significant. For students who are reading below grade level beyond grade 3, the challenges can be daunting. **In grades 4-12, students reading below grade level not only must learn foundational reading skills, but they must also learn advanced reading strategies necessary for understanding specific textbooks and materials.** The degree of explicit instruction targeting the development of foundational reading skills needs to be directly related to how far these students are below grade level. Not only must instructional resources be devoted to helping these students develop the skills necessary to read at grade level or higher, but until they develop grade-level reading skills, teachers must adjust instruction to meet the needs of students who struggle with comprehending subject-specific texts and materials. **In grades K-3** the focus of reading instruction is on teaching students how to read; instruction targets this foundational goal.

Setting Reading Goals

In the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework, **two types of measurable goals** determine whether students are reading at grade level or are on track to read at grade level by the end of the year. First, the **summative reading goal** is an overarching, comprehensive goal that represents desired reading performance at key points in time.

Second, **formative reading goals** are measurable goals that are used to determine **whether students are on track to be able to read at grade level or better** by demonstrating proficiency in the essential elements of reading, or important sub-skills of overall reading proficiency.

- In **grades K-3**, reading goals target learning to read and consequently should measure how well students are learning phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. I
- **Reading goals must guide reading instruction.** When students are not meeting formative or summative reading goals, it is critical that schools implement the necessary reading instruction and interventions to improve the opportunity students have to reach the goal.

Summative Reading Goals

Because the foundation for reading development occurs in grades K-3 and the OAKS in Reading/Literature is not administered prior to grade 3, progress monitoring/formative measures of reading in grades K-2 take on special significance. These measures in grades **K-2** indicate whether students are on track to read at grade level or higher in grade 3, and they may also be used as summative or outcome measures for specific essential elements of reading in grades K-2. In **grade 3**, this summative goal is measured directly by the OAKS in Reading/Literature.

Formative Reading Goals

Formative goals help determine whether students are on track to read at grade level or higher. Formative goals measure proficiency in the essential elements of reading and are important for two fundamental reasons.

- First, when students reach or exceed a formative goal, they have met an important reading objective that represents a key “**benchmark**” or indicator of grade-level reading. For example, students who reach a phonemic awareness goal set at the end of kindergarten, or a phonics goal set at the middle of grade 1, have met an important reading objective on the path to overall grade-level reading proficiency.
- Second, formative reading goals indicate whether students are **on track** to read at grade level or higher. If students reach or exceed formative reading goals, their chances of reading at grade level or higher are much better than if they do not reach these formative goals. **If students do not reach formative reading goals, they are not likely to read at grade level or higher without intense interventions.**

Formative goals can be established for individual essential elements of reading. Schools should set measurable formative goals for at least three of the five essential elements of reading: **phonemic awareness**, **phonics**, and **reading fluency**. Formative goals are set for these essential elements because performance can be measured directly, accurately, and efficiently, and levels of performance can be established that set the formative goal benchmarks. Optional formative goals in reading comprehension and vocabulary can also be established by districts and schools. However, the knowledge base for establishing formative goals in reading comprehension and vocabulary—in part, because of the higher-order nature of these essential elements—is not as well established as the knowledge base for establishing formative goals on other essential elements.

- In **kindergarten**, formative goals should be set in **phonemic awareness** and **phonics**.
- In **grade 1**, formative goals should be set in **phonics** and **fluency**.
- In **grades 2-8**, and perhaps in grade 9, formative reading goals should be set in **fluency**.
- In **grades 2 through high school**, establishing **comprehension** goals for some students on maze and cloze reading comprehension assessments is important.

On the essential elements of reading that can be efficiently measured, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading fluency, multiple goals within a school year and goals that cut across years, should be set. The advantage of **setting multiple time-specific goals** is that more opportunities are provided for schools to gauge how well students are doing in relation to formative goals, and consequently schools have **more opportunities to adjust their instruction** to better meet the learning needs of their students during the year. For example, fluency goals could be established for the beginning, middle, and end of grade 2 Phonemic awareness goals could be set for the middle and

end of kindergarten and the beginning of grade 1. In general, formative goals set at the end of each grade are particularly important because they permit schools to determine at key and consistent points in time if students are on track for successful reading.

The following are examples of formative goals and how they might be worded to be clear, measurable benchmarks for performance

- ● **Phonemic awareness:** At the winter benchmark assessment, **kindergarten** students will be able to orally produce the individual segments presented in words at a rate of 18 correct segments per minute.
- ● **Phonics:** At the spring benchmark assessment, **kindergarten** students will be able to read randomly presented CVC pseudo-words at a rate of 25 correctly-produced phonemic segments per minute.
- ● **Reading fluency:** In the fall of **grade 2**, students will be able to orally read grade-level text at a rate of 44 correctly-read words per minute.
- ● **Reading fluency:** At the spring screening assessment, **grade 6** students will be able to orally read grade-level text at the rate of 160 correctly-read words per minute.
- ● **Reading fluency:** In the spring of **grade 9**, students will be able to orally read grade-level text at the rate of 190 correctly-read words per minute.

Summary

Formative goals provide valuable information about whether students are on track to meet the summative goal.

When students have not met a formative reading goal, it is critical that schools use that information to improve reading instruction. The guideline for improving reading instruction is to increase the intensity of instruction in systematic, research-based ways so that students have more and better opportunities to meet or exceed formative reading goals during each school year.

Assessment

Reading Assessments in K-2

The recommendation to administer reading assessments in **grades K-2** is based on research on the **prevention and early remediation of reading problems**. Reading problems can be prevented, and early problems remediated, through early identification. Early identification through assessment allows interventions to be implemented effectively as soon as possible. The following table summarizes three empirical findings that support the use of grade K-2 reading assessments.

Three Research-Based Reasons to Use Grade K-2 Reading Assessments

1. Patterns of reading development are established early and are stable over time unless interventions are implemented to increase student progress.⁴
2. Without intense interventions, struggling readers do not eventually “catch up” to their average performing peers—in fact, the gap between strong and weak readers increases over time.⁵
3. Reading interventions that begin in grade 3 and extend beyond are likely to be **less successful and less cost-effective** than interventions that begin in the earlier grades. The later interventions begin, the longer they take to work, the longer they need to be implemented each day, and the less likely they are to produce desired effects.⁶

Purposes of Assessment and the School Assessment Plan

Reading assessments should be administered for four specific purposes.ⁱ These purposes answer four fundamental questions.

1. **Is the student at risk for not meeting formative and summative grade-level reading goals?** Assessments **screen** students for reading problems, and the data help determine the level of reading risk students face.
2. **Is the student on track—that is, is the student meeting formative reading goals and thereby making enough progress to be able to meet summative reading goals?** Frequent reading assessments **monitor the progress** students are making incrementally in meeting formative reading goals that increase the likelihood they will meet overall summative reading goals.

3. **Is the student meeting grade-level summative reading goals? Summative or outcome assessments** determine whether or not students have met grade-level reading goals.
4. **For students not making adequate reading progress toward meeting grade-level reading goals, despite intense intervention, what additional intervention approaches have the best chance of improving the rate of reading progress? Diagnostic assessments** provide detailed information about students' reading skills for the purpose of developing and implementing individualized interventions for students.

Screening Assessments

The purpose of a screening assessment in reading is to identify those students at risk for reading difficulties and those students on track for successful reading outcomes. Screening data are used to make decisions about the level of instructional support students need. Students at high risk—that is, students well below grade-level reading expectations—should receive more instructional support than students who are on track for meeting grade-level reading expectations. Being at risk for reading problems is influenced by a number of factors including the quality of a student's ongoing instruction.

Schools should provide at least **three levels of instructional support** for students based on whether or not they are reading at grade level. If they are not reading at grade level, determining how far below grade level they are reading is essential information; identifying the level of risk these students face is key to providing them with appropriate and effective instruction so they may learn the skills needed to be grade-level readers.

1. Grade-level support for students reading at or above grade level (**low risk for reading problems**)—**these** students meet or exceed reading expectations
2. Moderate additional support for students reading somewhat below grade-level expectations (**moderate risk for reading problems**)—**these** students nearly meet reading expectations
3. Intense additional support for students reading well below grade-level expectations (**at high risk for reading problems**)—**these** students are well below reading expectations

In **grades K-2** and prior to when the OAKS is administered at the end of grade 3, the risk categories are based largely on **formative goals** set by the school (see [Goals](#) chapter, 9-11). To identify the level of instructional support students need, schools can also use **normative information** (information based on how large numbers of students have done in the past), **benchmark recommendations** (recommendations based on what levels of performance students should meet to be on track for reading at grade-level), or **local norms** (information on “local” students in a state, district, or school in which performance is divided into (a) top, (b) near the top, (c) below the top, or (d) well below the top categories, or some other similar type of performance breakdown).

The first screening assessment of the school year should be administered as early as possible (within two weeks to one month of the start of school) so that the information can be used immediately. The need to collect screening data early in the school year, and the need to collect it frequently in most grades and with all students, means that screening assessments should be efficient to administer.^{vii} Fortunately, there are screening measures available that are efficient to use and that provide strong information about the level of student reading risk. Screening assessments directly measure students' proficiency on the essential elements of reading.

In **grades K-3**, screening assessments should focus on the development of a number of different foundational skills necessary for skillful reading. In kindergarten, knowledge of the alphabet, assessed through letter-naming, is a valuable screening tool.¹¹ Also early in kindergarten, students' developing awareness of the phonemic structure of spoken words is a good predictor of reading and thus a strong screening measure.¹² Assessing both letter knowledge and phonological awareness skills early in kindergarten should be part of a screening system in reading. By the middle and end of kindergarten, schools should screen students for problems with alphabetic understanding (phonics). In grades 1-3 regular assessments of reading fluency should be used to screen students for problems with fluent reading and for likely problems with reading comprehension.

Generally, students who do well on reading fluency assessments are able to read with comprehension and students who are not fluent readers will have difficulty comprehending what they read. Some students, however, may read with sufficient fluency but have difficulty with comprehension. Although research indicates these students are relatively rare, a reading fluency screening assessment, combined with a reading comprehension assessment using maze or cloze procedures can help identify these students.

Progress-Monitoring Assessments

Effective instruction consists of responding to students' needs while building on their strengths, and it benefits from a sensitive and continuous approach for monitoring student progress.¹³ Progress-monitoring assessments should provide an estimate of student reading growth across time, typically within a school year.¹⁴^{viii ix} Progress in reading, using formative goals to track progress (see [Goals](#) chapter, 9-11), should tell educators whether students are learning reading skills at an appropriate pace to reach end-of-year, grade-level reading goals. The reading progress of students who are not reading at grade level should be monitored frequently in between school-wide screening assessments. The reason for frequent progress-monitoring assessments is that students who are reading below grade-level expectations have to make more progress than would be normally expected if they are going to "catch up" to grade-level expectations. Consequently, schools need timely information on whether students are making enough progress to reach the outcomes in the timeframe for which outcome goals are set.

How often progress-monitoring assessments are administered should be based on the level of student risk.

For students at low risk, there is no need to administer progress-monitoring assessments. Screening assessments administered three times per year will be sufficient to make sure students who are at low risk for reading problems continue to meet formative goals and grade-level reading expectations over time. For students who are at moderate risk for reading problems, progress monitoring once every two weeks is typically sufficient. If school resources are an issue, once per month will be acceptable. For students at high risk, schools should try to administer progress-monitoring assessments once per week. In some cases, if resources are an issue, once every two weeks is acceptable. The table below summarizes these recommendations.

Risk Level	Student Skill Level	Frequency of Progress Monitoring Recommendation
Low Risk	Grade level or above; meets or exceeds expectations on the OAKS	Screening assessments only, three times per year
Moderate Risk	Somewhat below grade level; nearly meets or below expectations on the OAKS	Twice per month (or once per month, if funding is limited)
High risk	Well below grade level; very low performance on the OAKS	Once a week (or twice a month, if funding is limited)

Progress-monitoring assessments must be quick and efficient to administer and score

because in many schools, a large number of students are reading below grade level and need to be assessed frequently. The important point is to minimize the amount of instructional time students lose to assessments and maximize the quality of the information a brief assessment can provide. Because progress-monitoring assessments are given frequently, different versions or forms of the same assessment need to be used. These "alternate" forms need to be equivalent in all aspects (e.g., how difficult they are) so that the student's growth across many monitoring assessments can be analyzed and interpreted. The analogy is using a scale that is calibrated the same way from one week to the next in order to accurately measure weight gain or loss over time. If the scale's calibration fluctuates, estimates of "real" weight gain or loss will be inaccurate.

Schools should analyze and interpret progress-monitoring data as soon as it is collected. The objective is to determine whether students are making sufficient progress to meet reading goals or whether instructional changes should be made to increase progress and put students on a trajectory for meeting reading goals. This decision is more complex than it might appear. To do this well, schools have to determine the rate of student progress and compare this to the rate of progress needed to reach the goal.

Summative Outcomes Using Formative Measures: Grades K-2

Because the foundation for reading development occurs in grades K-3 and the OAKS in Reading/Literature is not administered prior to grade 3, progress monitoring/formative measures of reading in grades K-2 take on special significance. **These measures of reading in grades K-2 indicate whether students are on track to read at grade level in grade 3, and they may also be used as summative or outcome measures for specific essential elements of reading in grades K-2.** The essential elements of reading that can be measured effectively as outcomes are phonological awareness, alphabetic understanding (phonics), and fluency (see [Goals](#) chapter, 11, for an example of a range of scores that can be used as a guide for district). While comprehension is critically important, it is not as readily measured.

Generally speaking, the following formative outcomes can also be used as summative outcomes because they are important goals in school.

- By the end of kindergarten, students should meet formative outcomes on measures of phonological awareness. Also by the end of kindergarten students should demonstrate an emerging degree of proficiency in word-level reading.
- By the middle of grade 1, students should meet formative outcomes measuring their ability to use a phonetic-based approach to reading words accurately and fluently.
- Throughout grades 1–2 students should meet formative outcomes measuring their ability to read grade-level connected text accurately and fluently.
- In grade 3 (and also in grades 4–12), outcomes associated with reading connected text accurately and fluently, as well as comprehension skills, are the most important formative outcomes schools should track closely.

Each school needs to identify the assessment measures that will be used to answer important educational questions about screening, progress-monitoring, evaluating student reading outcomes, and diagnosing students' instructional needs.¹⁵ The following table displays four key purposes of reading assessments. For each purpose, the table identifies the key features of assessment, which students are assessed, and the primary questions that are addressed for each purpose.

Purposes and Features of Reading Assessments			
Assessment Purpose	Educational Question	Key Features	Who is Assessed?
Screening	Is the student at risk for reading problems?	Brief Predictive of reading outcomes	All students
Progress Monitoring	Is the student making enough reading progress to reach summative reading goals?	Brief Alternate forms Sensitive to small changes over time	Students not meeting reading expectations—not reading at grade level or not reaching key reading goals
Summative Evaluation	Is the student reading at grade level and meeting other reading goals?	Comprehensive measure of overall reading proficiency	All students
Diagnosing Instructional Needs	What precise instructional needs does a student have that if identified will improve his/her rate of progress toward important reading goals?	Provides in-depth instructional profile	Students who are not making adequate progress despite the use of intense intervention

Informal Curriculum-Embedded Assessments for Instructional Purposes

Curriculum-embedded assessments are frequently included in core and intervention reading programs. A drawback of most curriculum-embedded assessments is that reliability and validity information is unknown or weak. Thus, interpreting student performance should be done cautiously. The benefit of curriculum-embedded assessments is that the data can provide useful information regarding the degree to which students appear to be learning what has been explicitly taught. Teachers can use this information to determine whether their instruction seems to be meeting students' needs for re-teaching and for planning future instruction. Three of the most useful curriculum-embedded assessments are

- Core program survey assessments
- Core program theme skills tests/intervention program mastery tests
- Placement tests.

Core program survey assessments

The purpose of core program survey assessments is to sample a broad range of skills on a given essential element of reading (e.g., phonics, comprehension). Information from these assessments is used to design small group instruction using the core program or material contained in supplemental or intervention programs. Schools can use core program survey assessments to develop instructional profiles that include student strengths and weaknesses in relation to the essential elements of reading.

A careful analysis of student reading data will allow schools to understand the extent to which the specific problem an individual student is experiencing is occurring in the context of an underlying strong system of reading instruction or in a system that is in need of overall improvement.

If the student's progress is not adequate, the **sequence of decision-making is as follows**. A student may not be making adequate progress for three reasons. First, the level of support the school believes is being provided to the student is not occurring. For example, if a grade 8 student is supposed to receive homework support each night in the form of several guiding questions to help the student focus on comprehension, and that is not occurring, then the instructional support intended for the student is not being provided. Second, the quality of the instructional support is not equal to what the staff believes the student needs to be successful. For example, the guiding questions used with the student are at a level of abstraction that may be too difficult. The team concludes the student needs more concrete guiding questions. Third, the instructional support plan is being implemented as intended, and with expected quality, yet the student is still not making sufficient progress. In this case the team decides to make a change in the student's plan to increase the intensity of the support.

When student progress is not adequate, and schools have determined that the instructional support is being implemented as intended, **the school needs to consider ways to increase the intensity of the support provided to the student in an effort to increase progress**. Implementation features that can be adjusted include: (a) time for instruction, (b) program efficacy (content of instruction, programs, and materials), (c) program implementation, (d) grouping for instruction, and (e) coordination of instruction. The table below includes implementation features that can be adjusted to increase the intensity of instruction. See the following "Alterable Variables Chart."

Implementation Elements	Alterable Variables Chart Specific Adjustments				
	Less intense	More intense			
Time for Instruction	Increase student attendance	Provide instruction daily	Increase opportunities to respond	Vary schedule of easy/hard tasks/skills	Add another instructional period (double dose)
Program Efficacy	Preteach components of core program	Use extensions of the core program	Supplement core with appropriate materials	Replace current core program	Implement specially designed program
Program Implementation	Provide model lesson delivery	Monitor implementation frequently	Provide coaching and ongoing support to teacher	Provide additional professional development	Vary program/lesson schedule
Grouping for Instruction	Check group placement	Reduce group size	Increase teacher-led instruction	Provide individual instruction	Change instructor
Coordination of Instruction	Clarify instructional priorities	Establish concurrent reading periods	Provide complementary reading instruction across periods	Establish communication across instructors	Meet frequently to examine progress

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Schools that implement the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework will be implementing a framework that is completely in line with a Response to Intervention (RTI) model of service delivery. RTI integrates instruction, assessment, and intervention in a way that allows schools to match the level of intensity and instructional support to student needs in essential academic areas, such as reading. RTI is also a way for schools to determine whether students *have a specific learning disability*. Frequently, the primary purpose a school has for implementing an RTI model of service delivery is to identify students with learning disabilities. However, RTI should be conceptualized at a much deeper level than this. In its deepest conceptualization, **RTI is a comprehensive system of instruction that is designed to match student services with student need**. In this way, it is completely consistent with the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework which is designed to meet the needs of ALL students.

The major features that need to be in place in an **RTI framework** can be found throughout the **Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework**. Important highlights are

- Using scientifically-based programs and practices in the general education classrooms
- Developing a multi-tiered support system that incorporates prevention and early intervention services

- Implementing are liable and valid comprehensive assessment system
- Using student data for making a range of instructional decisions, including student responsiveness to instruction and intervention.

RTI is also a legal way for a school to identify whether a student has a specific learning disability. The basic idea is simple in conceptualization, extremely difficult in execution. **In an RTI framework, a learning disability can be diagnosed when a student has failed to respond “to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures.”** This means that increasingly intense instructional interventions have been implemented with the student in an effort to increase academic progress. Insufficient progress on the part of the student, despite the use of scientifically defensible interventions implemented as intended and with quality, defines a learning disability. **The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework includes all of the components necessary for diagnosing the presence of a learning disability in this manner.**

Summary

In summary, a comprehensive assessment system for grades K-12 should be linked explicitly to formative and summative reading goals to determine overall reading proficiency. An assessment system should be used for four purposes: (a) screening, (b) monitoring progress over time, (c) evaluating overall reading outcomes, and (d) diagnosing potential causes of reading difficulty and instruction need. Data from reading assessments should be used to make instructional decisions about groups of students and individual students. Major features that need to be in place in a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework are integral to the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework.

Instruction

Six Organizing Principles of High-Quality Reading Instruction:

- Sufficient time for reading instruction is scheduled, and the allocated time is used effectively.
- Data is used to form fluid instructional groupings.
- Instruction is focused on the essential elements of reading.
- Research-based strategies, programs, and materials are adopted and used school wide with a high level of fidelity.
- Instruction is differentiated based on student need.
- Effective teacher delivery features are incorporated into daily reading instruction.

The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework is aligned to Response to Intervention (RTI)

Organizing Principle 1: Sufficient Time Is Allocated and Used Effectively for Reading Instruction

Throughout **grades K-3**, all students benefit from receiving at least 90 minutes of daily reading instruction.² The goal is for all students to be grade-level readers or above. This 90-minute block is dedicated to providing instruction on the five essential elements of beginning reading: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. For grades K-3 students who have not met grade-level reading goals, more than 90 minutes of daily reading instruction needs to be provided.ⁱⁱ The amount of instruction time provided beyond the 90 minutes is based on what students need to become grade-level readers. Students who are well below reading goals need more reading instruction than students who are close to meeting reading goals or who are meeting or exceeding reading goals.

Organizing Principle 2: Data Is Used to Form Fluid Instructional Groups

In **grades K-3**, schools need to use time allocated for reading instruction to provide both whole class (also referred to as whole group or large group) and **small group instruction for every student** on a daily basis. Small group instruction is the most effective way to provide students with intense reading instruction that focuses on their specific learning needs.⁸

Student reading skill is used in creating the composition of reading groups, particularly during small group instruction.⁹ If all students in the group are at approximately the same instructional level, teachers can target a narrower range of skills, which intensifies the instruction. That is why homogeneous group instruction based on reading proficiency data is an important consideration throughout grades K-12.

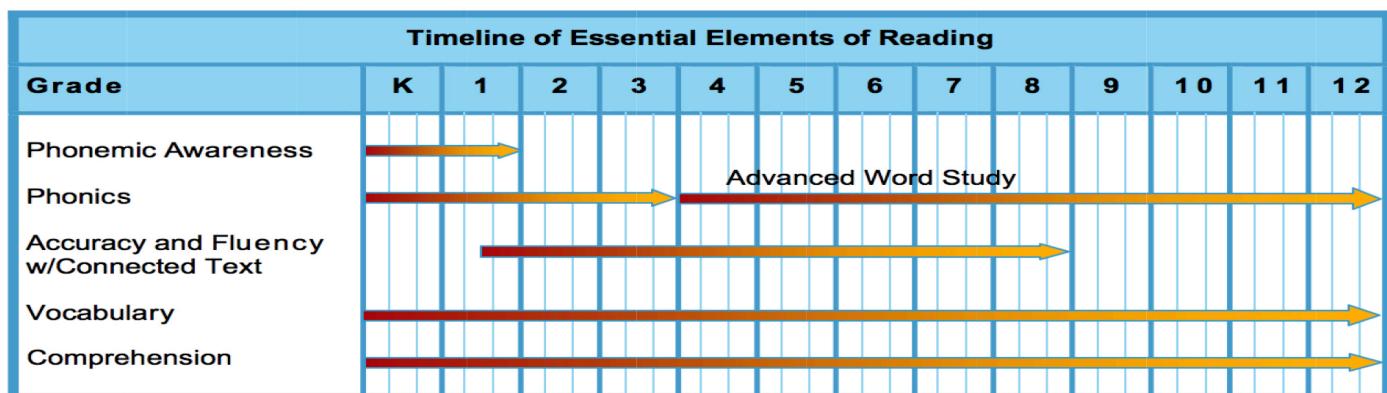
In **grades K-3**, the size of the groups and the amount of time students spend in whole class and small group instruction depends on student performance data and school resources. The goal is to provide instruction that will move ALL students to grade-level proficiency or higher. Students who are well below grade level need more time in small group instruction than students who are somewhat below, at, or above grade level. Students who have not met reading goals need at least 30 minutes per day in small group instruction. Students who are meeting reading goals need the opportunity to work in small group formats each day throughout grades K-3. For those exceeding reading goals, small group instruction is one of the best ways for schools to provide the accelerated instruction higher performing students need.

General guidelines for the number of students to include in small group instruction are outlined in the following table. For students in **grades K-3** who are well below grade level, small group instruction is best if group size does not exceed five students; optimal group size is no more than three students.¹³ For students who are performing somewhat below grade level, group size should not exceed eight. For students at or above grade level, small group size should not exceed twelve. (An exception to the above recommendations would be some supplemental programs that can be delivered effectively with a group size of 18-20.) Note that in most cases the appropriate group size for maximum benefit from small group instruction will be recommended by the reading program that is being implemented.

Recommendations for Small Group Sizes in Grades K-3	
Student Skill Level	Number of Students Per Group
Well Below Grade Level	3-5
Somewhat Below Grade Level	<8
Grade Level or Above	<12

Organizing Principle 3: Instruction Is Focused on the Essential Elements of Reading

The third organizing principle of high-quality reading instruction is focusing instruction on the essential elements of reading. The following figure provides a preview of the essential elements for reading instruction across the grade levels. The section immediately below the figure explains the essential elements for grades K-3



A Preview of Five Essential Elements of Reading Instruction for Grades K-3

Reading instruction in the early grades focuses on **the five essential elements** research has identified: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.^{25 26 27 xi} These five essential elements are aligned to Grades K-3 Oregon Reading Standards

http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/real/newspaper/Newspaper_Section.aspx?subjectcd=ELA. Students with knowledge and skills in these essential elements will be able to read at proficient or advanced levels on the OAKS in Reading/Literature in grade 3.

In general, **phonological awareness** instruction is heavily emphasized in kindergarten and the first part of grade 1. **Phonics** instruction begins in kindergarten and grade 1, with teaching children sound symbol relationships and how to decode many simple words. Phonics instruction progresses in grades 2 and 3 to include letter and vowel combinations and more difficult word types. (Students in grades 4 and above focus on advanced word study.) **Fluency** instruction receives greater instructional attention as students develop proficiency in phonics. Fluency instruction begins in grade 1 and is heavily emphasized.

The best predictor of reading difficulty in kindergarten or first grade is the inability to segment words and syllables into constituent sound units (phonemic awareness). Lyon (1995) in grades 2 and 3. (For some students, fluency should continue to be a major instructional focus through grade 8 and above.) **Vocabulary** instruction is strongly emphasized throughout grades K-12. In the early grades, much of the content of vocabulary instruction is from books and other curriculum materials teachers read to students. As students begin to read on their own and read increasingly complex texts across the instructional areas, they encounter words that are not a part of their oral vocabulary, and their vocabulary expands more rapidly. **Comprehension** instruction shifts from a listening comprehension focus in grades K-1 to a mostly reading comprehension focus beginning in grade 1 and continuing on through grade 12. Because comprehension is the key to school success and learning throughout life, there is a heavy emphasis on comprehension instruction throughout grades K-12.²⁸ of sound. When placed together, phonemes create words.

In the sections that follow, each essential element for beginning reading instruction is defined and described.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness can be defined as one's sensitivity to, or awareness of, the sound structure of words.²⁹ It is heavily emphasized in kindergarten and the first part of grade 1. Phonological awareness is an **oral language skill** that sets the stage for understanding the association between sounds and print, which is the central emphasis of phonics instruction.³⁰ Phonological awareness can be thought of as a hierarchy of skills that develops over time.

Examples of early phonological awareness tasks include identifying and making oral rhymes (e.g., the *cat* on the *mat*) and identifying syllables in spoken words (e.g., clapping the parts in names: *Jo-anne*). More sophisticated phonological awareness skills include identifying onsets and rimes in spoken words (e.g., the first part of *pot* is /p/, *p-ot*) and identifying individual phonemes (sounds) in spoken words (e.g., the sounds in *hot* are *h-o-t*).

When students are able to hear, identify, and manipulate **individual sounds** in spoken words, they have **phonemic awareness**.³¹ Phonemic awareness is the most sophisticated skill in the hierarchy of phonological awareness skills—and it is the skill that best predicts later reading achievement.³² The research base is clear that phonemic awareness can be taught and learned, and when it is, the beneficial impact on early reading achievement is measurable. Instruction that focuses on phoneme blending and segmentation best prepares children for reading. In phoneme blending, children first listen to a sequence of separately spoken phonemes, then they combine the phonemes to form a word (e.g., “What word is /r//a//t/?”). In phoneme segmentation, children break a word into its individual sounds (e.g., “Say the sounds in *glad*.”).³³

Phonics

Phonics instruction focuses on teaching students the associations between sounds and print. Phonics instruction begins in kindergarten and grade 1 and progresses in grades 2 and 3. In English, 44 phonemes represent the sounds of the language, and children need to know what letters and letter combinations represent each of these phonemes in order to be able to read. **Associating sound to print (decoding)** is essential for learning to read, and most children will need to be taught these sound associations directly. Effective reading instruction teaches students these letter-sound combinations through the isolation of individual letter sounds (i.e., synthetic phonics instruction) as well as in the context of reading connected text.³⁴ While some children develop adequate phonics skills without a great deal of explicit classroom instruction, other children need even more explicit instruction than what is offered in the classroom in order to learn the associations between sound and print.

Only a reader with skilled decoding processes can be expected to have skilled comprehension processes. Perfetti (1984)

Phonetically reading unfamiliar words (“sounding out”) is the most powerful strategy good readers use to read unknown words.

Strong phonics instruction is highly systematic and incorporates enough practice so that students soon learn to read familiar words with **automaticity** (i.e., applying letter-sound knowledge immediately). Automaticity is essential to reading because meaning is easily lost if every word has to be sounded out before it is read. When children begin reading words with automaticity, they progress rapidly as readers. When they come to an unfamiliar word, they have the tools to read the word phonetically by “sounding it out”; phonetically reading *unfamiliar words* (“sounding out”) is the most powerful strategy good readers of all ages use to read words they don’t recognize.³⁵ One focus of phonics instruction, then, is to teach children the associations between sounds and print so they develop **automaticity with familiar words**, and a second focus of phonics instruction is to teach children the skill of regularly and effectively “sounding out” **unfamiliar words** so they are able to access thousands of words on their own.

Fluency

In essence, fluent reading is **reading text accurately and with sufficient pace so that deep comprehension is possible.**³⁶³⁷ If one reads for **comprehension**, then reading fluently is essential. Fluency instruction begins in grade 1 and is heavily emphasized in grades 2 and 3. Some students develop adequate fluency skills without a great deal of explicit instruction. Other students need considerable instruction to learn to read fluently.

Students work on fluency development by reading connected text that includes words they are able to read accurately. This allows students to build on the knowledge they have of phonological awareness and phonics. A consistent problem with some fluency instruction is that the words students are trying to read fluently are not words they are able to decode accurately.³⁸ When students have problems with decoding text accurately, fluency instruction is inappropriate because it may encourage them to guess at reading words they do not know. In order to build fluency, students need to practice orally reading and rereading text that is at their independent reading level; that is, text they can read at about 95% accuracy.³⁹

Fluent reading also addresses appropriate inflection and expression. Effective fluency instruction includes varied models of fluent reading, with critical features such as inflection and expression conspicuously identified, so that students can emulate these features and receive direct and immediate feedback from teachers on their effort.

Grade 1 students improve fluency—and at the same time expand and improve vocabulary and comprehension—when they begin reading hundreds of words on their own independently, typically during the last half of first grade. Making sure all children are on track to being independent readers as soon as possible after they enter school is a major objective of the framework. Once a student begins to read independently, fluency increases and vocabulary and comprehension expand. **Encouraging, supporting, and expecting all students, once they are able to read, to build fluency through reading regularly in and out of school, will result in more grade- level readers and above in grades 1-3 as well as system-wide.** Grade-level readers and above are able to benefit the most from school.

One of the most common problems in fluency instruction is that students are reading passages that contain words they are not able to read accurately. In these cases, phonics instruction needs to be the focus of the lesson. If fluency instruction is the goal, then the difficulty of the materials needs to be adjusted so that students are able to read the words accurately.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary instruction, teaching the meanings of words, should begin in earnest in the beginning of kindergarten.

Vocabulary knowledge is a key determinant of reading comprehension. If students do not know the meanings of words they are expected to read, they will have little chance of comprehending the texts they are reading. As students progress through the grade levels and learn to read more difficult texts, they begin learning the meanings of new words that are not part of their oral vocabulary.

While children learn most of their vocabulary at first indirectly by engaging in conversations with adults and through listening to books that are read to them, learning vocabulary through reading on their own soon becomes the most efficient strategy for increasing vocabulary (see independent reading references in previous section on fluency). **In fact, by grade 3, the number one determinant of vocabulary growth is the amount of time a student spends reading independently.**⁴¹ Struggling readers simply do not engage in the amount of free reading necessary to promote large or even sufficient gains in vocabulary knowledge. That is why it is critical for schools to catch young children up quickly to grade-level reading targets so they, too, can become independent readers as early as possible, efficiently building vocabulary and comprehension on their own.

However, explicit instruction in word meanings can add to students’ ability to learn a given set of words. Explicit instruction is particularly important for students who are not strong or regular readers. In school settings, students can

be explicitly taught a relatively deep understanding of about **300 words each year**. This can account for between 6% and 30% of a student's vocabulary growth.⁴² It is reasonable to teach thoroughly about eight to ten words per week.

Explicit vocabulary instruction provides instruction in word meanings as well as strategies that promote independent vocabulary acquisition skills. Explicit instruction in word meanings and explicit instruction in strategies for learning the meanings of new vocabulary are complementary approaches, not conflicting approaches.⁴⁵ Research clearly indicates both approaches enhance students' vocabulary acquisition.⁴⁶

Comprehension

For students to be successful in school, they must be able to read grade-level text with deep comprehension. Students will not be able to read with deep comprehension if they struggle with phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, or vocabulary words they do not know and are encountering in text.⁴⁷ ⁴⁸ If students have these skills and knowledge, the likelihood they will be able to read grade-level text with deep comprehension is very good.

Comprehension instruction shifts from a mostly listening comprehension focus in grades K-1 to a reading comprehension focus beginning in grade 1 and continuing on through grade 12. Comprehension is emphasized strongly in grades 2, 3, and above. To increase the chances students will read with deep comprehension, it is critical that teachers **explain and model** comprehension strategies and skills directly to students at all grade levels.

Comprehension strategies are routines and procedures that readers use to help them make sense of texts. Even students who are struggling with phonics or fluency skills can benefit from learning comprehension routines. Examples of these strategies include **summarizing texts, asking and answering questions, paraphrasing, and finding the main idea.**⁵⁰ The table that follows lists the seven types of text comprehension strategies which appear to have a solid scientific basis. When these strategies are taught explicitly to students, the benefit in terms of overall reading proficiency can be powerful.

Key Term

Comprehension Strategy:

Routines and procedures that students learn to employ in order to make meaning from text. These strategies should be taught explicitly.

The National Reading Panel identified 7 reading comprehension strategies that are supported by empirical research. There is evidence that when these strategies are taught explicitly, reading comprehension improves. However, Willingham (2006/7) makes the excellent case that many good readers do not require explicit instruction to learn how to comprehend text. Although explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies should not harm students who already read with deep comprehension, this type of instruction is not as critical for students with strong comprehension skills.

Explicit instruction is the best delivery system for teaching students comprehension strategies.⁵² Explicit comprehension instruction involves a series of steps: **teacher modeling** and explanations of the specific strategies students are learning, **guided practice and feedback** on the use of the strategies, and finally **independent practice** in the application of taught strategies.⁵³ In addition, explicit instruction involves providing a sufficient amount of support, or scaffolding, to students as they learn **how** to use the strategies on their own and **when** to use them.

In explicitly teaching comprehension strategies to students, it is better to provide multiple-strategy instructional lessons (e.g., make connections between new text information and prior knowledge, make predictions about the content of the text, and draw inferences)⁵⁵ than single-strategy lessons.⁵⁶ This finding is consistent with the National Reading Panel, which also found benefits from teaching students to use more than one strategy to improve their reading comprehension skills.⁵⁷

Scientifically-Based Comprehension Strategies Identified by the Report of the National Reading Panel

Comprehension Monitoring: Teaching students to be aware of their understanding of the material

Cooperative Learning: Teaching students to work as a group to implement reading strategies

Use of Graphic and Semantic Organizers: Teaching students to make graphic representations of the text to improve comprehension

Question Answering: Teaching students to answer questions and receive immediate feedback

Question Generation: Teaching students to ask themselves questions as they read the text

Story Structure: Teaching students to use story structure to help them recall story content

Organizing Principle 4: Research-Based Strategies, Programs, and Materials are Adopted and Used Schoolwide with a High Level of Fidelity

With the goal of all students reading at grade level or above, schools use strategies, programs, and materials that focus on the essential elements of reading. The strategies, programs, and materials are constructed in a manner aligned to the best research evidence available on design of instruction. When possible, strategies, programs, and materials should be supported by evidence from experimental research that clearly demonstrates their effectiveness; that is, a program has actual scientific evidence of effectiveness that has been demonstrated through a well-designed study that clearly describes how the research was conducted. The term “**evidence-based**” is used here to describe these types of strategies, programs, and materials. In the absence of an evidence-base, then strategies, programs, and materials are used that have been designed based on components that scientific research has verified as effective. While the exact program itself may not have been evaluated, it is based on components and techniques proven effective in other research studies. The term “**research-based**” is used here to describe these types of strategies, programs, and materials. Each school needs an integrated set of strategies, programs, and materials that are selected and used to meet the needs of the full range of students in the building.

In **grades K-5/6**, this includes a core reading program, supplemental programs and materials, and intervention programs that are specifically designed for students who are well below desired reading goals. Supplemental programs may also be implemented with students reading somewhat below grade level. For students well below grade level, however, intervention programs that focus on foundational aspects of reading development need to be used.

The term “core” has different meanings at elementary and secondary. In **grades K-5/6**, a core program is a basal reading program that can be purchased for use as the basis of reading instruction. Similar types of programs can be used in **grades 6-8** as part of the curriculum for reading classes.

Key Terms

Research-Based vs. Evidence- Based

The term “**research-based**” indicates that the specific program/approach is based on scientific research. It includes components that scientific research has verified as effective, but it may or may not have evidence of actual use in practice.

“**Evidence-based**” indicates that a scientific study has determined that the specific program/approach is effective when implemented, that is, a program has actual scientific evidence of its effectiveness that has been demonstrated through a well-designed study that clearly describes how the research was conducted.

District and school leaders purchasing a variety of programs will need to study how programs will align. Often the scope and sequence of intervention programs and core curriculums are not aligned; at the least, special planning time will be needed by teachers to make the necessary adjustments so as not to confuse struggling learners who are receiving instruction in several programs.

Core Reading Program: Elementary

In **grades K-5/6**, schools select and implement a research-based core reading program. In general, the core program is used with (a) students who are meeting or exceeding reading goals or (b) with students who are close to meeting reading goals. Note that students who are performing well-below grade level can benefit from participating in parts of the core program as well. The core program should comprehensively address all five essential elements of beginning reading, provide explicit and systematic instruction, and be sequenced in a way so that if it is taught by teachers with fidelity, students will develop the necessary skills to meet reading goals and expectations. In other words, the major benefit of using a core reading program is that if used correctly, students have the greatest opportunity to learn the knowledge and skills they need to meet state reading standards in **grades K-5/6**, which means they would read at grade level soon after they enter school or in grade 3 at the latest and continue reading at grade level throughout elementary school and beyond.

Additional benefits to students, teachers, and schools accrue from the use of a common core reading program. A good core program is **sequenced** carefully within and between grades so as students move through the grades, the content knowledge addressed builds on previous knowledge. A common core program makes **planning easier** for teachers. It provides a basis for **effective staff communication** about goals and objectives, instruction, and student performance. A coach benefits by needing to know deeply one core program rather than several. For schools and districts, selection of a common core program makes providing **professional development more efficient and cost effective**. For districts with high mobility, a common core program provides **consistency in instruction from school to school**.

Benefits of Selecting a Common Core Reading Program in the Elementary Grades	
Audience	Benefit
Students	A core program provides instructional continuity from grade level to grade level (i.e., vertical alignment of scope and sequence for the five essential elements).
Teachers	A common core program makes planning and pacing of the instructional program easier and provides a basis for effective staff communication about reading instruction, student data, and reading goals.
Coaches	A coach benefits by needing to know deeply one core program rather than several.
Schools / Districts	A common core program makes professional development cost effective and efficient.
District	For districts with high mobility, a common core program provides consistency in instruction and language from school to school.

Teachers need extensive professional development to use a core program effectively and with **fidelity**. To that end, it is important to differentiate professional development based on teacher need. **Professional development provided by publishers is insufficient** for effective implementation of the program to occur. Additional and on-going professional development is critical, particularly during year one with follow-up provided during year two, if the core program is to be used effectively and with fidelity. See the [Professional Development](#) chapter, 3-4, for a discussion on preparing teachers to implement reading programs.

Defining Fidelity to the Program

Fidelity of implementation is an important and commonly misunderstood concept. Many educators mistakenly assume that "fidelity" means that ALL aspects of the program are implemented precisely as written by the publisher. There are two major problems associated with this interpretation. **First**, most core programs contain more material than can be taught in the time schools allocate for reading instruction (90 minutes). **Second**, some aspects of the core program lesson(s) may not provide sufficient information about what teachers actually need to do instructionally to provide systematic and explicit instruction. In this case, the goal is for teachers to instruct in a way that actually provides more explicit instruction than is indicated in the core program. The most important aspect regarding fidelity to the core program is that school-based teams decide (a) what aspects of the core program are most important in teaching the five essential elements, and (b) when and how specific aspects of the core should be extended or enhanced to make instruction in these five essential elements more systematic and explicit, based on student need.

As noted above, elementary schools select core programs that are constructed in a manner that is aligned with the best research evidence available. If a core program is not supported by experimental research (i.e., an evidence-based program), a school will need to evaluate the quality of how a core program is constructed (i.e., determine if the program is research-based). There are multiple dimensions on which the construction of core programs should be evaluated. It would be a major challenge to schools to adequately evaluate the design of a core reading program because of the time and preparation it takes to do this well. However, schools can be critical consumers of information provided by other larger entities that have conducted comprehensive reviews of core reading programs. Schools can carefully analyze these reviews, examine the instruments and methods used in conducting the reviews, and arrange to ask questions and otherwise seek additional information about the review process before deciding to purchase a core program.

Design Features of Strong Core Programs

- Provide explicit and systematic instruction
- Provide ample practice on high-priority skills
- Include systematic and cumulative review of high priority skills
- Demonstrate and build relationships between fundamental skills leading to higher order skills.

From the "Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program Grades K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis" (Simmons and Kame'enui, 2005)

Intervention Programs: Elementary

Intervention programs are intense reading programs designed to address **the needs of students who are well below grade-level goals**. Whereas core reading programs in the early grades typically focus on many aspects of literacy instruction including areas such as writing, spelling, and oral communication, intervention reading programs focus more narrowly on the essential elements of reading. To select the most effective intervention programs, schools should identify those programs supported by experimental research (i.e., evidence-based programs). In the absence of experimental research, schools can evaluate the alignment of intervention programs to scientifically-based reading research.

Intervention programs can be comprehensive, but in some cases intervention programs focus on fewer than all five essential elements. Some intervention programs specialize on only one element of reading. For example, a subset of students may be reading or decoding with a high level of accuracy, but their rate of oral reading continues to be slow. In this example, the students would benefit from an intervention program that focuses on fluency building and not phonics.

Many core reading programs now include intervention materials. One benefit of utilizing intervention programs that are designed to go with a core reading program is the consistency in the scope and sequence between the core and intervention for items such as the order of introduction of sounds, high frequency words, and word types. This consistency is often reflected in common themes as well. Just as with stand-alone interventions, however, schools need to review the core-embedded intervention program to determine if the program is aligned to scientifically-based reading research. In some cases, the core-embedded intervention programs may not be intensive enough to meet the needs of the students. Characteristics of intensive intervention programs are discussed below.

One characteristic of an intensive intervention reading program is that instruction is usually **more explicit and systematic**. A second characteristic is that an emphasis is placed on the concept of **mastery learning**; that is, there are clear criteria for what students must do to demonstrate they have learned learning is that students can only progress through the sequence of learning objectives when they are able to demonstrate competence on the key objectives of the instructional content.

A third important characteristic of an intervention reading program is that student **progress on formative reading goals is carefully monitored**. The ultimate objective is that students will make sufficient progress in the intervention program to **exit the program** and receive their instruction in the core program or in a grade-level reading class. Normally this requires a specific plan for the amount of instructional material teachers will need to cover each day so the students will eventually catch up to the instruction being provided in the core program or grade-level class. The concept of mastery learning is critical in this pacing plan because adequate pacing ensures that teachers cover instructional content and that students master the key objectives.

It is helpful for teachers to set goals for **lesson pacing** and then provide regular, planned updates on the lesson progress of their instructional groups. These updates can be scheduled in conjunction with upcoming grade-level or department-level meetings. Teachers indicate how many lessons each group has completed to date (e.g., the blue group in first grade has completed Lesson 55 of Intervention Program X as of October 31st). These updates include the most recent information on student performance on in-program mastery tests as well as a summary of the students' overall progress toward formative reading goals. Teachers work in grade-level or department-level teams to review the lesson progress updates to determine which groups are on pace for timely completion of the program, which groups are not on pace, and which groups do not have all students at mastery. The team identifies ways to improve lesson pacing (e.g., sharpen teacher presentation skills) or address lack of mastery (e.g., provide additional opportunities for group responses prior to individual responses). The team also identifies if there are students who need to be regrouped based on their performance at these regular updates.

Teams select and implement intervention programs based on the students' grade and level of need. For example, kindergarten students who are identified as being at risk for reading difficulty upon entering school in the fall require intensive intervention. Teams select a research-based intervention program that teaches phonemic awareness and beginning phonics skills. These kindergarten students may participate in the regular core reading instruction and receive an additional explicit, systematic intervention program outside of the reading block (e.g., in an extended day program). Grade 5 students who are reading at the grade 2-level will require an intervention program that teaches initial decoding skills and allows for acceleration through the lessons so students can learn the content in a shorter amount of time. For these struggling readers, teams may consider supplanting core reading instruction with the intervention program during the regular reading block AND providing additional instructional time outside of the reading block to complete lessons in the intervention program. This additional instruction time may also be used to reteach or provide extra practice on skills that were difficult during the initial presentation of lessons earlier in the day.

Organizing Principle 5: Instruction Is Differentiated Based on Student Need

The third major organizing principle of high-quality reading instruction is differentiating instruction based on student need. Differentiated instruction is the key instructional concept that drives the nature of instruction for below grade-level readers and above grade-level readers. In order for **ALL** students to be able to meet yearly reading goals, instruction needs to be differentiated based on student need. This concept articulates how each teacher, with support described in this section, is able to make sure that all students in his or her classroom receive the instruction they need to make adequate reading progress and to become grade-level readers or above. For **students who are on track** for successful reading achievement, core reading instruction can be provided that (a) meets state standards, (b) allows students to meet or exceed standards on the OAKS in Reading/Literature and (c) allows students to read texts and other material across the instructional areas with comprehension.

For **students who are not on track—those** students who are not meeting formative reading goals and are not meeting on the OAKS in Reading/Literature—reading instruction should be **differentiated** from standard core instruction so that students can make progress toward reading at grade level. The

Tier 3 – Students who are reading significantly below grade level and are at high risk for long-term reading difficulties.

Tier 2 – Students who are reading slightly below grade level and are at moderate risk for long-term reading difficulties.

Tier 1 – Students who are reading at grade level and are low risk for long-term reading difficulties.

Advanced – Students who are reading above grade level.

The first step in organizing how to differentiate instruction is to **group students** based on level and type of need. Increasingly, students are grouped into instructional tier categories. These **instructional tiers** are based on how far below or above students are relative to grade-level reading goals. The precise number of tiers may vary among schools, but most schools use three or four instructional tiers at each grade.

In a 4-tiered system, the term “Advanced” describes students who are reading above grade level. Advanced students typically are quite efficient at learning the core content and require enhanced activities to continue to accelerate progress. **Tier 1** describes those students who are reading at grade level and are considered to be at **low risk** for long-term reading difficulties. **Tiers 2 and 3** describe students who are not meeting grade-level reading goals.

Tier 2 students are described as being **at moderate risk** for long-term reading difficulties. Generally, instruction for Tier 2 students in **grades K-8** is differentiated in ways that allow them to be successful in the school’s core reading program or in the grade-level reading class. This may involve enhancing the core program, or providing reading class instruction that provides more explicit teacher language, more teacher modeling, and more practice opportunities on critical reading skills. In some cases, a supplemental program is necessary to establish foundational reading skills for Tier 2 students. A supplemental program may be implemented as part of a reading class curriculum in **grades 6-8**. In **grades 9-12**, schools may schedule a supplemental reading program during study skills, homeroom, or elective periods for Tier 2 students who would benefit.

For **Tier 2** students in **grades K-5** settings, **additional reading instruction outside of the 90- minute block** is often needed for students to make the progress necessary to reach grade-level reading goals. Teachers implement a supplemental program during the additional reading time. Tier 2 students in **grades 4-12** require teacher support to access the content across the curriculum. To help students access information, teachers can (a) **summarize and explicitly teach** the content from text in their respective courses, (b) **provide scaffolds** to students for reading the selected course text, and

(c) **provide additional text** at the students’ level. It is critical for this instruction to be provided within the context of the class. See sections on supplemental and intervention programs for more information on how classroom teachers can support students in their classrooms who are receiving supplemental and intervention instruction for reading improvement.

Tier 3 students are **at high risk for long-term reading difficulties** and need the most intense reading instruction possible. Typically, the core instruction alone is not appropriate. Tier 3 students require reading instruction that is as explicit as possible and **focuses exclusively on the essential elements of reading**.

In **grades K-5**, depending on student need, schools may include Tier 3 students in some or all of the core instruction and provide additional intensive instruction using the intervention materials that were designed to complement the core program or a separate intervention program. In many cases, a separate, stand-alone intervention program is selected and supplants the core program for Tier 3 students. Instruction is differentiated through the effective implementation of the intervention program.

In **grades K-5**, when an intervention reading program is used with Tier 3 students and a different core program, or reading class, is provided for Tier 1 and Tier 2 students, an important goal for Tier 3 students is to eventually receive their reading instruction in the same core program or reading class as other students. That is **the purpose of intensive interventions: to accelerate students' reading development to bring them up to grade-level performance**. For this challenging transition to occur, Tier 3 students have to make accelerated reading progress over an extended period of time.

In order to accelerate reading progress for Tier 3 students, reading interventions need to be scheduled as follows: in **grades K-5**, additional reading instruction outside of the 90-minute block and literacy-connected learning across the instructional areas.

Organizing Principle 6: Effective Teacher Delivery Features Are Incorporated into Daily Reading Instruction

The final organizing principle of high-quality reading instruction is effective teacher delivery. How teachers deliver instruction is one of the most critical aspects of effective reading instruction.⁹⁸ Whereas the essential elements of reading instruction can be clearly defined and program materials scrutinized to determine their alignment with the essential elements, these variables remain inert until teachers use them with students in the classroom. How teachers deliver reading instruction through the use of strong programs and materials plays a major role in whether students are **actively or passively engaged** in learning. Students who are reading below grade level, and are passively engaged during reading instruction, are unlikely to make the progress necessary to reach grade-level reading goals. Teachers who deliver reading instruction effectively make potentially difficult material accessible to all students, from advanced learners to students who are struggling. The effective delivery of instruction is what most people think of when they think of an effective teacher.

Although the delivery of effective reading instruction is a hard concept to describe precisely, there are identifiable features that should be emphasized. Teachers can learn to incorporate these delivery features into their daily instruction which may be especially beneficial for those students who are not meeting important reading goals.⁹⁹ The following sections describe nine features of the effective delivery of reading instruction. These features are independent of the specific programs and materials used to help organize reading instruction.^{xxxiv} High-quality programs and materials will make it much easier for teachers to deliver instruction effectively, but the use of strong programs, in the absence of strong instructional delivery, is unlikely to result in students receiving the instruction they need to reach important reading goals.

These nine features target critical instructional interactions between teachers and students and address how teachers model instructional tasks, provide explicit instruction, engage students in meaningful interactions with language, provide students multiple opportunities to practice instructional tasks, provide corrective feedback, encourage student effort, engage students during teacher-led instruction, engage students during independent work, and facilitate student success.

The **nine features of effective teacher delivery are applicable grades K-12**; they are essential for initial reading instruction in kindergarten and continue to be essential through elementary, middle, and high school as teachers instruct students on how to access content from texts. When these delivery features converge with strong programs that focus on the essential elements of reading, schools increase the probability that students will learn to read at grade level or above. If the delivery of instruction is problematic, students are less likely to meet reading goals.

Effective Teacher Delivery Checklist

Teacher models instructional tasks

Teacher provides explicit instruction

Teacher engages students in meaningful interactions with language

Teacher provides multiple opportunities for students to practice instructional tasks
Teacher provides corrective feedback after student responses
Teacher encourages student effort
Teacher engages students during teacher-led instruction
Teacher engages students during independent work
Teacher facilitates student success

Feature 1: Teacher Modeling

Teachers provide clear and vivid examples (e.g., **think alouds**) of the knowledge they want students to develop. Models of whole concepts, such as using context in surrounding text to determine word meanings, and isolated tasks, such as reading cvc (e.g., cat) words written on the white board, are provided so that students understand exactly how to complete tasks. Strong **teacher modeling** (a) clearly isolates the critical aspects of what students should do, (b) is visually engaging, and (c) avoids the use of language that is extraneous to the learning task. In an instructional sequence, effective modeling is followed by **guided student practice** under high levels of teacher support before students **practice the skill on their own**. Examples of modeling in the upper grades include a social sciences teacher modeling how to evaluate the historical context of primary source materials, a science teacher modeling how to form hypotheses while reading subject-area textbooks, a mathematics teacher modeling the use of slow precise reading of word problems, or a literature teacher modeling how to interpret symbolism in a passage or a short story.

Feature 1: Modeling Checklist

Teacher clearly isolates the critical aspects of the task
Teacher visually engages the students when appropriate
Teacher uses language that is central to the learning task

Feature 2: Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction begins by setting the purpose for learning. The teacher identifies for students what the **learning objective** is, explains **why it is important**, and then proceeds to teach students that objective through modeling and other explicit and systematic approaches. During explicit instruction, the critical details that define the concept being learned are identified and thoroughly addressed. During the early stages of learning, explicit instruction limits the range of interpretations students might reach through the use of highly specific **examples and non-examples**. Examples of concepts are carefully selected. The number of examples and the range of examples illustrating the dimensions of a target concept (as well as closely related concepts) are carefully planned beforehand as part of the delivery of instruction. In explicit instruction, current learning objectives are overtly **connected to previously learned material**. The language that teachers use during explicit instruction is **clear** and **concise** and **avoids ambiguity**.

Feature 2: Explicit Instruction Checklist

Teacher sets a purpose for learning
Teacher identifies critical details that define the concept being learned
Teacher uses highly specific examples
Teacher connects new concepts to previously learned material

In **explicit instruction**, explaining and modeling include **defining** each of the strategies for students and **showing** them how to use those strategies when reading a text. **Guided practice** involves the teacher and students working together to **apply the strategies** to texts they are reading. This may involve extensive interaction between the teacher and students when students are applying the strategies to see how well they understand the particular text they are reading. Or, it may involve having students practice applying the strategies to various texts in small groups.

Independent practice occurs once the teacher is sure that students can use the strategies on their own. At that point, students independently practice applying the strategies to a new text.¹⁰⁰

Feature 3: Meaningful Interactions with Language

The effective delivery of reading instruction requires that teachers provide students with many **opportunities to hear and use language in meaningful ways**. In **grades K-3**, language-rich activities occur when teachers read books and other materials to students. Similarly, language-rich activities occur across the curriculum in **grades 4-12** when teachers read aloud passages from books and other texts featuring complex language and text structures that challenge students' comprehension skills. Visuals, such as semantic maps and other organizers, are an excellent means of promoting meaningful language discussions about the text that is read aloud. Visual materials provide concrete representations of objects and actions. Students are able to use these visuals as prompts or scaffolds as they learn to engage in extended academic language activities such as discussions about the text, oral or written responses to the text, or simulations or dramatic skits using the text.

Additionally, reading aloud to students in **kindergarten through high school** provides teachers the opportunity to engage them in contextual vocabulary study necessary for comprehension of more difficult text than they can read on their own. Students develop more sophisticated vocabulary and comprehension skills over time as teachers read texts across the instructional areas that are above students' reading levels.

Strategies to build language and language structures such as these are aligned to the **Kindergarten through High School** Oregon Reading Standards

http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/real/newspaper/Newspaper_Section.aspx?subjectcd=ELA.

Feature 3: Language Rich Activities: Grades K-3 and Beyond

Teacher reads books aloud to students

- Reading text to students assists with comprehension building.
- Books should be above students' independent reading level to access rich vocabulary.

Teacher uses visual prompts to scaffold and model language use

- Semantic maps and other graphic organizers are effective visual tools.
- Visual tools can be used to extend academic language activities.

Through language activities carefully supported by the teacher, **students integrate new learning with previously learned content**, as well as reflect on their life experiences outside of formal school settings. It is critical that teachers establish instructional routines to ensure that these language interactions are academic in nature. In providing language models for students, teachers clearly identify the distinctive features of new concepts and describe the relations among concepts. Teachers elaborate on student responses to model appropriate language. Students can practice the same language activities with their peers or with the teacher. The **intentional redundancy** that can be built into language rich interactions is important in learning concepts deeply

Feature 4: Multiple Opportunities for Practice

Effective teachers provide multiple opportunities for students to practice each new skill. For more complicated cognitive routines, teachers need to provide opportunities for **practice after each step** in an instructional sequence. Eliciting group responses is an efficient way to provide students with multiple opportunities for practice. **Group responses** are particularly powerful for more rote tasks associated with skill development (e.g., "Everybody, what's the sound for this letter?"). Group responses can be achieved through written and gestural responses as well. For example, a teacher might ask a group to show her what "gape" looks like or to show thumbs up if she gives an example of something that might make one gape.

Group responses do not work in all situations (e.g., if a teacher is leading an authentic conversation aimed at deep comprehension), but they can be utilized during instruction when there is only one acceptable response (e.g., "What word means able to be justified?" justifiable). Group responses provide opportunities for **all** students to practice **all** skills versus the teacher selecting individual students to respond. For oral group responses to be most effective, teachers must require unison responding. If students are not required to answer in unison, higher performing students typically respond first and are echoed by lower performing students. Some students quickly learn how to mimic responses milliseconds after other students and tune out the content of the teacher request. In essence, these

students are learning to NOT pay attention to the teacher and teacher requests, and they are learning how to respond in ways that give the impression they understand content when they do not.

Feature 4: Multiple Opportunities for Practice Checklist
Teacher provides opportunities for practice after each step in an instructional sequence
Teacher elicits unison group responses
Teacher follows group responses with individual turns

In effective delivery sequences, group responses are followed by a much briefer period of time for **individual responses**. With individual response turns, teachers can check the mastery of specific students. This is an excellent time to determine how well low-performing students are doing and whether they really have learned the material from the lesson.

Feature 5: Providing Corrective Feedback

Correction procedures are essential to ensure **student mastery** of strategies and content. If errors go unnoticed or are not addressed directly, students are likely to make the same errors again and again. Moreover, in early reading if students have not mastered the preskills, they cannot be successful when moving on to more complicated tasks. That is why it is critical for teachers to provide **immediate corrections**. In most cases, a correction begins with a teacher model of the correct response. When modeling, the teacher should limit corrective feedback to the task at hand. The teacher models the answer, requires the students to repeat the answer, then goes back to the beginning of the particular task to ensure that students are firm on the entire part or exercise. If a student makes a word reading error when reading connecting text, for example, the teacher states the word correctly, asks the student to repeat the word, then asks the student to reread the sentence correctly. Providing a delayed test for students is a good method of ensuring mastery.¹⁰⁶ In the word reading example, this may involve the teacher writing the difficult word on the white board and returning to it after the students have completed the story/passage. Building in this type of extra practice of difficult tasks in the lesson can help ensure mastery by all students before moving on.

An important principle of providing corrective feedback is that teachers also need to provide **affirmations for correct responses** by students. They can reinforce and praise students for the quality of their answers. In general, feedback on responses should go beyond confirming that the student's response was correct or incorrect. Feedback should be specific, and when possible, enthusiastic. When providing feedback to adolescents, it is important to "be real" or they may not accept the feedback. If teachers are too effusive, the praise may be discounted. Effective strategies to use with adolescents may include asking them why their answer was a good one or what they did to read so well. The teacher can assist adolescents to begin to speak to their own strengths.

Teachers should provide affirmations for correct responses by students

Feature 5: Corrective Feedback Checklist
Teacher provides immediate corrections
Teacher begins by modeling the correct response and requires student to repeat the answer
Teacher "firms" each part of the task
Teacher provides a delayed test on the difficult items
Teacher provides affirmations for correct student responses

Feature 6: Encouraging Student Effort

Effective teachers give feedback to students before, during, and after task completion. They provide specific feedback about student accuracy and effort. The majority of feedback students receive should be positive. **The ideal ratio of positive to negative feedback by the teacher is thought to be at least 3 to 1.**^{xxxvi}^{xxxvii} A grade 2 teacher might

praise students, for example, for reading an entire line of words correctly in a phonics warm up. A high school teacher might say, “Excellent summary of that section of text. You captured the main ideas.” Teachers need to demonstrate to students that they value student success in reading. They can do this by posting exemplary student work and by having regular celebrations to let students know that their hard work and good effort is important and appreciated.

Specific Praise Encourages Student Effort	
Specific Praise Example	Non-Specific Praise Example
The teacher could say, “Great job reading every word in that row correctly the first time. I know you’ll read those words correctly when you see them in our story today.”	The teacher says, “Great job reading. Keep up the good work.”
The teacher could say, “Excellent summary of that section of text. You captured the main ideas.”	The teacher says, “Nice work” or “Good job.”

Feature 6: Encouraging Student Effort Checklist
Teacher provides feedback before, during, and after task
Teacher provides specific feedback regarding accuracy and effort
Teacher provides a 3 to 1 ratio of positive to negative feedback
Teacher posts exemplary student work/has regular celebrations to honor good work

Feature 7: Engaging Students During Teacher-led Instruction

Student engagement during lesson presentation is critical for student success.¹⁰⁷ One of the most important aspects of effective teacher-led instruction in grades K-12 is gaining the attention of students before instruction begins. **Once they have students' attention, effective teachers pace lessons quickly to maintain attention.** Appropriate pacing both within and between tasks is necessary. For tasks such as phonemic blending and segmentation, letter-sound practice, and word reading, teachers should elicit about 10-12 responses per minute. For more complex tasks in a reading lesson, such as vocabulary instruction and comprehension strategy instruction, teachers will need to stay within time limits as outlined by either the program or the length of the class period. Transitions between tasks need to be quick, whether in grade 2 or grade 10, and follow specific procedures that teachers establish early in the school year so class time is not wasted.

In addition to providing appropriate pacing, teachers can increase engagement by eliciting student responses throughout the lesson. This may be accomplished through requiring **group responses** whenever possible (see *Feature 4: Multiple opportunities for practice*). Assigning partners for **Think Pair Share** or other supported discussion activities is another way to increase student responses throughout the lesson. When presenting a comprehension question, for example, the teacher can ask the students to whisper the answer to their partner first and then call on an individual student to answer for the group (e.g., “Everybody, what is the prefix of biology? Tell your partner what that means.”). The idea is to create as many **opportunities for the students to actually do something** (e.g., respond as group, respond to partner, write response on a whiteboard, etc.) versus sitting passively and listening.

Feature 7: Engaging Students During Teacher-led Instruction Checklist
Teacher gains attention of students before beginning instruction
Teacher uses appropriate pacing within and between tasks
Teacher elicits student responses throughout the lesson
Teacher employs other active engagement techniques such as Think Pair Share, etc.

Feature 8: Engaging Students during Independent Work

In **grades K-5**, in order to provide small group instruction, teachers often have to rotate through teaching several instructional groups in the reading block while the remaining students work independently. Given the frequency and

potential for regular independent work time, it is critical that teachers develop meaningful activities for the students to complete.¹⁰⁸ **Independent work activities** need to be **aligned with lesson content**. If the students are working on reading words with the short “a” vowel sound in the reading lesson, for example, the independent work should also focus on this skill. It is critical that teachers **model the task** and **check for understanding** before beginning the independent work time to ensure that students are capable of completing the tasks independently.

In **grades K-12**, for independent work time to run smoothly, students need to be taught all **independent work routines** and expectations early in the school year. Examples, depending on grade level, include the following: where to keep their independent work, what to do if they have a question, how to select a center activity, what materials to bring to class, what to do when they complete the work and so on. Monitoring student independent work to make sure it is completed with a high level of accuracy is necessary for effective instruction; if work is not completed with accuracy, teachers need to provide additional instruction on the particular skill in a whole group or small group setting.

Feature 8: Engaging Students During Independent Work Checklist

Teacher develops meaningful activities for students to complete, aligned with lesson content
Teacher ensures students are capable of completing the independent work tasks
Teacher instructs and provides practice on independent work routines
Teacher monitors independent work and provides feedback

Students Should be Taught Effective Independent Work Routines

Grades K-3	Grades 4 - 12
Where to keep student work	What materials to bring to class
What to do if they have a question	What to do if they have a question
How to choose a center activity	How to choose appropriate independent work
What to do when work is completed	

Feature 9: Facilitating Student Success

Ultimately, teachers must ensure that students are successful at completing lesson activities at a high level of performance. To do so, **the teacher must elicit a high percentage of accurate responses from the group and a high percentage of accurate responses from individuals**. Some examples of methods teachers can use to check for understanding include random calling on students using popsicle sticks, quick matching of cards, or other manipulatives, such as clickers or 3-1 exit cards. To gain more exact information on student success rate, a coach or colleague can assist the teacher by collecting data on student responses to the various tasks outlined in the lesson.

For mastery-based programs (i.e., supplemental or intervention programs), 70% of students’ initial responses should be correct on new material. Overall, 90% of students’ responses should be correct on both new and familiar material.¹⁰⁹ If students are not meeting these criteria for lesson success, the coach can work with the teacher to adjust instruction. This may involve, for example, working with the teacher on implementing complete correction procedures, going back to “firm” **the exercise**, and providing **delayed tests**. It is critical that teachers hold the same standard of accuracy for high performers and lower performers in the group; however, teachers may need to provide regular additional instruction and practice for lower performers to ensure that their success rate is on par.

Feature 9: Facilitating Student Success Checklist

Teacher elicits a high percentage of accurate responses from the group and individuals
Teacher adjusts instruction when student responses are not accurate
Teacher provides additional practice for lower performers to increase success rate

It is critical that teachers hold the same standard of accuracy for high performers and lower performers in the group.

Summary

In summary, high-quality reading instruction in Oregon's K-12 Literacy Framework **with the goal of all students reading at grade level or above** involves the integration of six organizing principles: (1) sufficient time for reading instruction is scheduled, and the allocated time is used effectively; (2) data is used to form fluid instructional groupings; (3) instruction is focused on the essential elements of reading; (4) research-based strategies, programs, and materials are adopted and used schoolwide with a high level of fidelity; (5) instruction is differentiated based on student need; and (6) effective teacher delivery features are incorporated into daily reading instruction.

- First, it is essential that schools allocate sufficient time for reading instruction, and that they use **scheduled reading time effectively**. In grades K-5, the recommendation is for students to receive at least 90 minutes of daily reading instruction; students in grades 4-5 also receive literacy-connected learning across the instructional areas. Students in grades 6-8 benefit from a daily 40-60 minute reading class, separate from English language arts, and daily literacy-connected learning across the instructional areas. For grades 9-12, the recommendation is 2-4 hours of daily literacy-connected learning across the instructional areas.
- Second, schools utilize both whole class and small group instruction to effectively provide students with reading instruction that meets their specific instructional needs. In grades K-12, additional instructional time should be allocated for students who are not meeting important reading goals for their grade level.
- Third, teachers target the essential elements of reading—phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation—as appropriate to students' skill levels and needs, during reading classes and during literacy-connected learning across the instructional areas.
- Fourth, schools adopt research-based strategies, programs, and materials for use school wide. Schools utilize core, supplemental, and intervention programs that are constructed to align with the best research evidence available on design of instruction with the goal of supporting all students to be grade-level readers or above. To that end, teachers provide explicit instruction and practice in the reading strategies and skills students need to read proficiently across the instructional areas.
- Fifth, to meet yearly goals, it is critical to differentiate instruction for students based on what instruction they need to meet or exceed target reading goals. For the best outcomes, students are grouped into instructional tiers based on skill levels—advanced, low risk, moderate risk, and high risk—and provided the instruction they need. How instruction is differentiated for subgroups of students within each Tier is communicated formally through grade-level instructional plans.
- Sixth, nine general features of effective instructional delivery provide guidance to teachers for honing delivery skills. When these delivery features converge with strong programs that focus on the essential elements of reading, schools increase the probability that students will meet or exceed grade-level reading goals.