

FIVE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF READING INSTRUCTION FROM PUT READING FIRST

by Bonnie Armbruster, PhD, Fan Lehr and Jean Osborn, M. Ed.
(based on the research of the National Reading Panel*)

- I. Phonemic Awareness: to be able to hear, count and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words.
- II. Phonics: the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (sounds in spoken language) and graphemes (letters that represent sounds in the written language). Students need to be taught the alphabetic phonetic principle: specific letters make specific sounds. Instruction in phonics should be systematic (easiest concepts to hardest) and explicit (taught to mastery) and should begin no later than kindergarten. Systematic, explicit phonics instruction has been proven to improve word recognition, spelling, fluency and comprehension.
- III. Vocabulary: development of stored information about the meanings and pronunciation of words. Vocabulary is developed *indirectly* through oral language, through listening to enriched text read aloud, and through independent reading. It is developed *directly* by the explicit teaching of specific words and by word learning strategies like dictionary use, familiarity with word parts (roots, prefixes and suffixes) and the use of context clues.
- IV. Fluency: the ability to read text accurately and quickly (rate + accuracy = fluency) calculated by words read correctly per minute. Improving fluency requires monitored, repeated, ORAL (not silent) reading practice with a partner providing modeling, feedback and assistance. Words in isolation or connected text should be at the relatively easy independent level (95%success) for the reader. Some activities for repeated oral reading practice include timed drills of word lists, student-adult echo reading, choral reading, tape assisted reading, partner reading or reader's theatre. Repetition leads to automaticity, which in turn is the key to fluency. Fluency frees students to understand what they read.
- V. Comprehension: strategies must be taught that help the student understand, remember and communicate with others what has been read. Six strategies that have a firm scientific basis for improving text comprehension are: 1) monitoring comprehension, 2) using graphic organizers, 3) answering questions, 4) generating questions, 5) recognizing story structure, and 6) summarizing. Also useful are: a) previewing text in light of student's prior knowledge, b) visualizing, and c) predicting.

*A complete copy of the report of the NRP can be read, downloaded or ordered at no cost from www.nationalreadingpanel.org. Free copies of Put Reading First can be ordered by calling 1-800-228-8813.