Foundational Research

From Phonics to Reading ©2020

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Introduction

From Phonics to Reading™ is a supplemental foundational skills program developed from the Science of Reading research. The Science of Reading empirical base emphasizes five pillars of reading instruction: phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension. *From Phonics to Reading* aligns with expert guidance for foundational skills practices which successfully cultivate children's reading abilities (e.g., Foorman et al., 2016), including recommendations from the National Reading Panel (2000).

The Science of Reading—a convergence of evidence from research conducted over the last five decades across various fields of study (including Cognitive Development, Neuroscience, Education, Linguistics and more)—details effective practices for teaching children to read. This research supports two theoretical frameworks that depict how skillful reading develops: The *Simple View of Reading* and *Scarborough's Reading Rope.* The *Simple View of Reading* (Gough and Tunmer, 1986) states that reading comprehension is a product of decoding and language comprehension.

The Simple View of Reading

Scarborough's *Reading Rope* (2001) expands on the *Simple View Reading* by further defining the elements that make up Word Recognition and Language Comprehension as shown in the illustration below. Each of these elements are depicted as strands that are woven together over time to develop fluent readers who comprehend the text they read.

Many Strands Are Woven into Skilled Reading

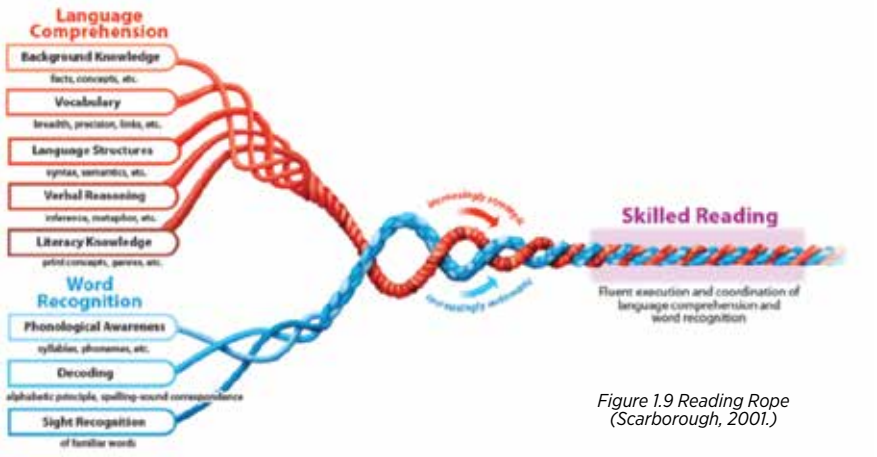

Figure 1.9 Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001.)

Within this framework, Word Recognition encompasses the foundational skills that include phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, concepts of print, and phonics. Therefore, tailoring the instruction of phonics and foundational skills to align with the effective practices supported by the Science of Reading optimizes the ability of a program to positively impact students as they learn to read. This document will focus on four critical areas to delineate the alignment of *From Phonics to Reading* to Science of Reading research. These areas are Scope & Sequence, Systematic and Explicit Instruction, Daily Application to Reading and Writing, and Assessment.

Scope and Sequence: What Research Says

High-quality reading programs must include a systematic **scope and sequence**. **Scope** refers to the concepts and skills covered by the program, whereas the **sequence** refers to the order in which concepts and ideas are addressed and revisited. Research supports the notion that children benefit from supplementary reading programs aligned to a systematic scope and sequence (Wonder-McDowell, Reutzel, & Smith, 2011). Research also indicates that reading programs with systematic scope and sequences improve children's outcomes when compared to programs that lack a scope and sequence (Bleses et al., 2018; Ortlieb & McDowell, 2016).

Research-Based Practice in *From Phonics to Reading*...

From Phonics to Reading includes a systematic scope and sequence that builds from the simplest to the most complex skills in a way that takes advantage of previous learning and allows students to form words as early as possible. The systematic nature of the scope and sequence is particularly evident in the review and repetition cycle, which ensures that children learn, review, and practice a skill over an extended period. Multiple guiding principles form the rationale for the program's systematic scope and sequence. For instance, the program is strategic in the introduction of letters and corresponding sounds, making sure to separate easily confused letters and sounds to avoid potential difficulties and in teaching high-utility skills before less useful sound-spellings to create opportunities for children to apply their skills to authentic reading and writing contexts. Additionally, the program teaches short vowels before long vowels, progresses from simple to complex sounds, and transitions children to multisyllabic words earlier than other literacy programs. (Blevins, 2019). The program also provides pacing guides and documented rationales for the scope and sequence.

Direct, Explicit, and Systematic Instruction: What Research Says

Children's reading development flourishes best in **systematic** instructional environments. Research indicates that children's reading abilities follow a developmental progression, through which children will advance at different rates (Morris et al., 2003). Thus, reading instruction should systematically reinforce and build children's developing skills as children move through the developmental progression (Morris et al., 2003).

Simultaneously, Science of Reading research indicates that **direct and explicit instruction** is an effective approach for supporting foundational reading skills. Direct and explicit instruction involves meaningful teacher-led interactions with children to impart key reading skills and concepts (Rupley, Blair, & Nichols, 2009). Science of Reading research demonstrates that direct and explicit instruction is more effective than other instructional approaches (e.g., Denton et al., 2014). For instance, a randomized control trial demonstrated that direct and explicit instruction is useful for children experiencing reading difficulties (Ryder, Tumney, & Greane, 2008). Further the role of immediate corrective feedback and modeling is also important when learning to read. As reported by van Gorp, "In a meta-analysis, Hattie and Timperley (2007) evidenced that corrective feedback is particularly helpful while acquiring a new skill. Hattie and Timperley (2007) also found that the timing of feedback can be crucial. Rasinski, Homan, and Biggs (2009) reported that feedback while acquiring reading fluency is important. When a word is read incorrectly, it is important that a correct representation is provided, because, otherwise, the reader might store the incorrect representation. Moreover, Rasinski et al. (2009) argued that, in addition to receiving feedback, students should listen to others reading fluently. Indeed, it has been found that learners are likely to follow the model in order to increase the chance of success and hence their self-efficacy (Schunk, 2003). In a similar vein, it has been shown that children's self-efficacy can be improved, if feedback includes a suggestion for improvement rather than just an indication of whether the response was correct (Chan & Lam, 2010)." (van Gorp, 2016)

Research-Based Practice in *From Phonics to Reading*...

From Phonics to Reading uses a direct, explicit, and systematic instructional approach which covers the five pillars of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Research

Panel, 2000). For instance, in the program's five teacher-led, high-impact routines, teachers follow the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model, beginning with direct and explicit instruction, followed by guided and independent practice, to purposefully build children's independence in using specific skills and ideas (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Teachers who are learning this instructional approach can access supports for high-quality implementation of direct, explicit, and systematic instruction in *From Phonics to Reading.* The program embeds guidance for direct, explicit, and systematic instruction with modeling examples throughout the Teacher's Edition. Moreover, Sadlier Connect, the online learning platform, offers digital resources such as the Explicit Instruction Instructional Guide and the Professional Development Video Series. These resources provide teachers with further information and examples regarding how to deliver explicit instruction.

The systematic instruction in *From Phonics to Reading* guides teachers and students through each phonetic and decoding skill using a step-by-step, logical sequence that builds from the simple to the complex, breaking down harder skills into smaller parts. For instance, instruction begins with the concept of single sound represented by a single letter and proceeds along the continuum, moving to single sound represented by multiple letters and so forth. The blending lines get progressively more complex, and known words are paired with new words in minimal contrast pairs to focus students' attention on the new phonics skill. Within lessons, children regularly apply their reading skills and transfer skills from reading to writing, to support systematic reading development. Across lessons, the program follows a systematic scope and sequence, including a review and repetition cycle. The review and repetition *cycle* creates a structure through which children learn, review, and practice a skill over an extended period (four to six weeks) across lessons. The review and repetition cycle thus promotes children's mastery of foundational skills so that children become proficient readers and writers.

Daily Application to Reading and Writing

Each lesson in *From Phonics to Reading* is designed to be taught over a 5-day period, with explicit, systematic instruction and application occurring each day. The program author, Wiley Blevins, identifies Seven Key Characteristics of Strong Phonics Instruction that capture the direct, explicit, and systematic nature of the program and form the backbone of the program. Reflected in the program's Scope and Sequence, as explained earlier, in the readiness focus and instructional design, and in the High-Impact Routines, the seven characteristics are: a systematic scope and sequence; readiness skills instruction; blending; dictation; high-frequency word instruction; word awareness; and reading connected, decodable texts.

Readiness Skills: What Research Says

Phonemic awareness and **alphabet knowledge** are the two best predictors of early reading success (Adams, 1990; Beck & Juel, 1995; Chall, 1996; Stanovich, 1992). Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to detect and manipulate the smallest unit of speech (*a phoneme*) (Chapman, 2003). Alphabet knowledge skills include letter identification, letter-name knowledge, letter-sound knowledge, and letter production (Jones, Clark, & Ruetzel, 2012).

Research supports the impact of both skills on children's reading outcomes. A National Research Panel study revealed that phonemic awareness instruction had a large, positive effect on primary-grade children's acquisition of phonemic awareness skills (Ehri et al., 2001). Additionally, the benefits of phonemic awareness instruction can transfer to other reading skills, such as children's word reading, spelling, and reading comprehension skills (Ehri et al., 2001; Suggate, 2016). Research has established that early phonemic awareness instruction and intervention has long-term impacts on children's reading abilities (Suggate, 2016). Simultaneously, research suggests that alphabet knowledge instruction had small-to-moderate positive effects on alphabet knowledge outcomes such as letter-name knowledge or letter-sound knowledge (Piasta & Wagner, 2010). The authors suggest that these smaller effects may be because alphabet knowledge instruction sometimes falls secondary to other types of reading instruction. Piasta & Wagner stated that "more intensive, explicit" alphabet knowledge instruction is required in the primary grades (Piasta & Wagner, 2010, p. 12). Through

direct instruction, "active exploration of the relationships between letter names, the sounds of the letter names, their visual characteristics, and the motor movement involved in their formation," (Bear, Templeton, Invernizzi, & Johnston, 1990), and multiple exposures, alphabet knowledge is best acquired. Combining letter work and phonemic awareness is powerful instructionally (Ehri & Roberts, 2006). Other foundational skills, such as concepts of print, a basic understanding of the structure of texts, vocabulary, and academic language are important to include in early reading instruction.

Research-Based Practice in *From Phonics to Reading*...

From Phonics to Reading provides intensive and explicit opportunities to learn phonemic awareness skills and alphabet knowledge skills. Across K–1, children participate in both phonemic awareness and alphabet knowledge activities. These skills include associating sounds with letters; identifying syllables; rhyming; identifying and isolating beginning, medial, and ending sounds within words; oral blending and segmentation; manipulating phonemes; alliteration; categorizing sounds; and distinguishing long and short vowels. Instruction focuses on the power skills of oral blending and oral segmentation. Across the program levels, children engage in word building, word sorts, and dictation exercises that support phonemic awareness. *From Phonics to Reading* also provides additional "Phonemic Awareness" activities for children in grades 2–3 who experience difficulty with phonemic awareness skills and require additional, supported practice. Finally, in kindergarten, lessons provide children with the opportunity to explicitly learn alphabet knowledge skills including recognizing upper and lowercase letters, differentiating between upper versus lowercase letters, letter formation, and sequencing letters. The program's instruction promoting alphabet recognition is cumulative in nature where the initial week of instruction is just the beginning of the exploration of that skill and application to reading and writing. Each week students are adding a small amount of new content to a larger amount of previously introduced content. The pacing is designed to lead to mastery and preclude decayed learning. For those students who are ready for a more accelerated pathway, additional introduction of skills is provided as an option, but ample time is still provided and expected for students to get to mastery. Digital resources including a Sound Wall and Articulation videos are available on **sadlierconnect.com** for students to visualize and hear the proper pronunciation of letter sounds.

Blending: What Research Says

Blending individual sounds to read or say a word is a key aspect of phonological awareness. Blending describes a child's ability to combine sounds to form a word (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Children's blending skills have long-term implications for their reading development. For example, children's growth in their blending abilities across kindergarten, first, and second grade is associated with their ability to read novel words in third grade (Speece et al., 2004). Science of Reading research indicates that programs which focus on phonological awareness skills including blending are highly effective, with sustained impacts on children's reading (e.g., Fuchs et al., 2001). In particular, randomized control trials and quasi-experimental studies of reading programs which include blending as a key instructional focus show large effects in children's word-reading abilities (e.g., Buckingham, Wheldall, & Beaman, 2012; Johnston & Watson, 2004). Research shows that teachers who spend larger than average amounts of time on blending—modeling blending and providing lots of practice blending words in isolation and in the context of reading, achieve greater student gains (Haddock 1978; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1984). "I strongly recommend successive blending..." (Beck, 206). Successive blending is a more efficient form of blending that reduces memory burden and integrates sound-based decoding with meaning-making (Ginsberg, 2013).

Research-Based Practice in *From Phonics to Reading*...

Across K–3, *From Phonics to Reading* includes daily opportunities for children to practice oral blending and sound-spelling. Notably, each lesson begins with a high-impact routine that involves the teacher and children chorally blending and sound-spelling words aligned with lesson objectives. Blending is the main strategy used

in *From Phonics to Reading* to teach students to decode words. These blending routines include two types of blending, Final Blending which allows for isolation of specific letter-sound correspondences when building a word, is practiced when first introducing the principle of blending before moving on to Continuous/Successive Blending, where the sounds in a full word are slowly strung together. *From Phonics to Reading* also offers program extensions such as the Interactive Practice Bundle, which provide additional blending activities including "Blend It". This activity provides children with immediate feedback, which ultimately supports children's independent completion of blending activities.

Dictation: What Research Says

Children require teacher-guided opportunities to integrate their understanding of phonemes and orthographic symbols by writing the sounds they hear to spell a word. This practice is referred to as "**guided spelling**". Guided spelling has numerous benefits for children's acquisition of reading and writing skills. Children who write the sounds they hear may learn to read more words (Sénéchal et al., 2012). Children's ability to write and integrate the sounds they hear in kindergarten has long-term implications for their reading and writing skills. Science of Reading research demonstrates that the ability to write words based on beginning and ending consonants in kindergarten is a superior predictor of first and second grade reading skills such as reading accuracy, fluency, and reading comprehension (Morris, Bloodgood, & Perney, 2003). Additionally, kindergarteners' word-spelling skills can predict the quality of their expository writing in third grade (Kim, Otaiba, and Wanzek, 2015). Some research indicates that guided spelling is most effective when a teacher explicitly helps children associate sounds with letters to spell a word (Levin & Aram, 2003). Writing supports a child's reading development because it slows the process by focusing the child's attention on how print works. Poor spellers experience difficulties in both writing and reading.

Research-Based Practice in *From Phonics to Reading*...

From Phonics to Reading provides regular opportunities for young children to transfer phonics skills from reading to writing as they practice writing the sounds they hear. Beginning in kindergarten, children regularly participate in "Dictation" activities, during which teachers help children hear sounds in words and write those sounds. Dictation allows children to authentically engage their phonemic awareness skills to learn how to read, spell, and write. Weekly Cumulative Spelling Sentences and Word Building activities in each lesson provide further opportunities for encoding while Interact with the Text, Write About the Text, Retell and Write, and Writing Extension encourage students to write in response to a text. In addition, Spelling exercises accelerate students' transitioning of phonics skills into writing. Teachers are provided a Writing Mastery Checklist to guide collection of evidence of children's application of recently taught phonics skills in their writing, then adjusting instruction, accordingly, including forming small groups for additional dictation practice when transfer isn't evident. Moreover, extension opportunities are provided via the Interactive Practice Bundle through "Think and Write".

Word Awareness: What Research Says

Children's **word awareness skills** allow them to manipulate parts of words. The Science of Reading research indicates that word sorts are one of the most effective activities to build word awareness. Word study and word sorts provide opportunities for children to recognize patterns in words, decode words based upon letter-sound associations, and pronounce words while understanding the meaning of the word (Park & Lombardino, 2013). Randomized control trials and quasi-experimental studies of programs that emphasize word sorts demonstrate improved word reading skills (Ehri et al., 2007; Graham, Harris, & Chorzempa, 2002). Although the importance of word awareness is well-known, the quality of implementing word awareness practices can vary across teachers (Tortorelli & Bruner, 2022). This research finding signals a need for teachers to access programs that support teachers' high-quality implementation of word awareness activities and engage students in observing and thinking about how words work (Beck & Beck, 2013; Rasinski, 2005; Moats, 1995 and 2010; Bear et al., 2016).

Research-Based Practice in From Phonics to Reading…

Across K–3, *From Phonics to Reading* provides regular opportunities for children to build word awareness and consolidate and solidify learning through word work, including sound sorts, word sorts, word building activities, and word ladders. In addition, children are provided time to explore how words work and play with key spelling patterns. Word awareness activities increase in difficulty at an appropriate pace. For example, in kindergarten, children practice sound sorting in activities like "Sort It Out". It is important to note that these are not rote activities, discussions following the sorts provide time for students to verbalize their growing thinking about how words work. By third grade, children have advanced to more complicated word study activities, such as adding suffixes to words during a word study activity called "Define It". Moreover, extension opportunities are provided via the Interactive Practice Bundle through various word awareness activities, including "Sort It" "Sound It, Spell It" and "Build It."

Word Study: What Research Says

Bloodgood and Pacifici (2004) define word study as a focus on the structure and meaning of words by drawing students' attention to word parts, syllable types, and spelling patterns. Word study builds word knowledge requisite to effective and efficient use of words in reading and writing (Frazier, 2016; Henderson, 1992; Zutell, 1998; Ehri, 1992). It also develops students' abilities in phonics, word recognition, and vocabulary (Baker, 2000). Word study considers the more complex elements of reading, such as word parts. By understanding the different parts of words, students can increase their ability to decode. In word study instruction, students learn to use complex elements of reading to decode more advanced words (e.g., students learn how to decode words based on associated word meanings and by learning how to identify word parts, such as affixes and root words), forming useful generalizations they can apply in reading and writing. The scope and sequence of word study should be based on research of students' reading and spelling development (The IRIS Center, 2006; Ehri, 1997; Ehri, 2014; Invernizzi, & Hayes, 2004). As students' decoding skills progress, teachers should gradually introduce word parts (e.g., root words, prefixes, and suffixes) to help students better understand word meanings (The IRIS Center, 2006). Knowledge of common syllable patterns and structural analysis (affixes, roots) improves students' ability to read, spell, and learn the meanings of words.

Research-Based Practice in *From Phonics to Reading*…

Across K–3, *From Phonics to Reading* provides regular opportunities for word study. The program's word study scope and sequence and has its own review and repetition cycle and aligns with the phonemic awareness and phonics strands. In *From Phonics to Reading* word study integrates with phonics and phonemic awareness instruction and targets improvement of children's ability to read words, spell words accurately, and understand the meaning of words, including how adding or changing word parts modify word meanings. The exercise begins with explicit instruction and moves to guided and independent practice where "studying" words is key. Word study instruction and practice is included in each lesson. The lessons teach morphology skills, including:

1. Compound words
2. Prefixes
3. Suffixes (including plurals and inflectional endings)
4. Homophones
5. Syllabication (basic syllable patterns and high-frequency syllables).

Students are provided multiple opportunities to apply their word study skills to reading and writing.

High-Frequency Words: What Research Says

Successful readers must learn to recognize high-frequency words. **High-frequency words** describe words which occur in text more often than other words (Cooper & Kiger, 2003). Children may require as many as 5–12 exposures to a new word before they can successfully recognize the word (Steacy et al., 2020). To build sight words in memory, orthographic mapping is required. Readers must form connections between the spellings and pronunciations of specific words by applying knowledge of the general writing system. When readers see a new word and say or hear its pronunciation its spelling becomes mapped onto its pronunciation and meaning. These mapping connections serve to "glue" spellings to their pronunciation in memory. (Ehri 2014). Research demonstrates that readers store "irregular" words in their memory in the same way they store "regular" words (Gough & Walsh, 1991; Lovett, 1987; Treiman & Baron, 1981). Readers pay attention to each letter and the pattern of letters in a word and associate these with the sounds that they represent (Ehri, 1992).

Children's ability to fluently recognize words at the start of their first-grade year is a strong indicator of whether a child will read successfully or unsuccessfully by the end of their first grade year (Clemens et al., 2011). Additionally, third graders' ability to recognize words is directly linked to their third grade standardized test performance (Paige et al., 2019). Taken together, the research indicates that effective reading programs must include high-frequency words as an instructional focus.

Research-Based Practice in *From Phonics to Reading*...

From Phonics to Reading provides regular opportunities for children to learn and use high-frequency words. The program includes purposeful instruction of the top 250 high frequency words, with the Read, Spell, Write, Extend daily routine. Across grades K–3, teachers can monitor children's understanding of high-frequency words through the High-Frequency Word Assessments. The program also includes a *Teacher's Guide to High-Frequency Words* to support teachers' high-frequency word instruction.

Reading Connected, Decodable Texts: What Research Says

The introduction of this paper referenced the five pillars of reading instruction emphasized by the Science of Reading, namely: **phonics**, **phonemic awareness**, **vocabulary**, **fluency**, **and reading comprehension**.

Having already discussed the first two (phonics & phonemic awareness) in detail above, this section will shift the focus to the remaining three. As stated by Nichols & Hill (2020), "Vocabulary in the early years is related to students' reading development later in school. Evidence demonstrates the link of **vocabulary** acquisition to reading comprehension (Beck & McKeown, 1985; Hart & Risley, 2003; Stahl, 2003; Lawrence, 2021)."

Children must read **connected**, **decodable texts** to apply taught phonics skills and cultivate their reading fluency, comprehension, and decoding skills. A panel of Science of Reading experts convened by the US Department of Education issued a recommendations guide, the *What Works Clearinghouse Educator's Practice Guide: Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade*, which details research-based best practices in reading instruction. The fourth recommendation states: "Ensure that each student reads connected text every day to support reading accuracy, **fluency**, and **comprehension**" (Foorman et al., 2016, pg. 32). In other words, children need to read multiple, related sentences with recently taught sound-spelling patterns, opportunities to practice decoding, familiar grammatical structures, and identifiable words. Randomized control trials of reading programs have identified that consistent opportunities to read connected text yields small to moderate improvements in children's word reading, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension (Buckingham et al., 2012; Vadasy et al., 2006a, 2006b). Science of Reading experts recommend that children read connected, *decodable* text to simultaneously build fluency, accuracy, and comprehension alongside children's ability to decode new words (Foorman et al., 2016). Decodable texts contain words with letter-sound associations and word structures that early readers can easily read. Rigorous studies of programs that utilize decodable texts signal improvements in children's word reading, oral reading

fluency, and encoding skills (Vadasy et al., 2006a; Jenkins et al., 2004). The use of decodable controlled text in early reading instruction better prepares students to transfer their phonics skills to new words, increases their reading self-confidence and enjoyment of reading, and initiates a stronger start in their reading development (Blevins, 2006).

Subsequent to the National Reading Panel (2000) findings, summaries of reading research have also determined that there is a solid body of research that supports reading fluency instruction (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Rasinski, 2010; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003; Rasinski, Reutzel, Chard, & Linan-Thompson, 2011). Research has demonstrated that authentic fluency instruction can indeed improve students' reading fluency, comprehension, and attitude toward reading (Rasinski, 2012).

Research evidence from four separate meta-analyses show Repeated Reading to be an effective method of improving reading fluency, regardless of assessment conditions or student age (Yoon, 2017; Therrien, 2004; Chard, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000). We see strong evidence for higher numbers of repetitions, strong evidence for instructor pre-reads, and strong evidence for the importance of Repeated Reading for dyslexic students. Meta-analyses of non-repetitive fluency interventions have shown much lower results (Rasinski, 2012).

It is not enough for readers to read the words in text accurately—they need to read the words automatically. If they have to use too much of that cognitive energy to decode the words in text, they have little remaining for the more important task in reading—comprehension. These students are marked by their slow, laborious, and staccato reading of texts. Our goal should be for readers to read the words in texts accurately and automatically. When the words in text are identified automatically, readers can employ most of their limited cognitive energy to that all-important task in reading—text **comprehension**.

"The evidence is clear: writing can be a vehicle for improving reading. In particular, having students write about a text they are reading enhances how well they comprehend it." (Graham, S. and Hebert, M.A., 2010).

Research-Based Practice in *From Phonics to Reading*...

From Phonics to Reading provides multiple opportunities to read connected, decodable texts across grades K–3. Within lessons, children read and interact with Connected Texts such as poems, letters, and stories. The program also provides pre-decodable books in early kindergarten and decodable Take-Home books for children in grades K–1, as well as Take Home Passages for children in grades 2–3 connected with that day's lesson.Decodable text work includes vocabulary instruction, comprehension work, and repeated readings to promote fluency.

Vocabulary is explicitly introduced in each decodable text lesson with additional support provided for both striving learners and English learners.

In *From Phonics to Reading*, support is provided for word, sentence, and passage level fluency. For instance, in Levels B and C of the program each lesson includes fluency Speed Drills (words). At all levels, Fluency Sentences are included as a part of each lesson. In addition, across the levels, there are Fluency Mini-Lessons for each lesson. At all levels, there is a repeated reading routine, and within the lesson, each take home text is read multiple times.

There are five comprehension questions that accompany each reading—two literal, two critical thinking and one text to self question, where students are asked to write in response to the text to demonstrate understanding.

As an extension, the *From Phonics to Reading* Fluency Booster offers additional decodable texts with comprehension questions and writing prompts which reinforce children's fluency, decoding, encoding, and reading comprehension. For instance, children can complete a "Connect It" activity, in which children write about the connected, decodable text they just read. The Fluency Booster also provides Repeated Readings in

grades 2–3, so that children have increased opportunities to read and interact with a decodable text. Moreover, the Fluency Booster creates opportunities for children to further practice fluently reading decodable sentences with Cumulative Fluency Sentences. Finally, the Interactive Practice Bundle includes additional connected and decodable texts, including a Decodable Library with 240 additional texts and teacher Lesson Plans, and a Connect It comprehension game that requires sentence decoding and comprehension.

In *From Phonics to Reading*, decodable text work also includes vocabulary instruction, comprehension work, and repeated readings to promote fluency. In *From Phonics to Reading*, support is provided for word, sentence, and passage level fluency. For instance, in Levels B and C of the program each lesson includes fluency Speed Drills (words) are provided. At all levels, Fluency Sentences are included as a part of each lesson. In addition, across the levels, there are Fluency Mini-Lessons for each lesson. At all levels, there is a repeated reading routine, and within the lesson, each take home text is read multiple times, primarily to build fluency.

Assessment and Differentiation: What Research Says

The regular **assessment** of children's reading abilities, coupled with the use of assessment data to **differentiate** instruction, benefit children's reading outcomes (Connor et al., 2013; Puzio, Colby, & Algeio-Nichols, 2020). Differentiated instruction involves the use of assessment data to tailor instruction to students' current levels of understanding (Tomlinson, 2014). Teachers can successfully learn to use assessment data to differentiate children's reading instruction (Otaiba et al., 2016). Moreover, research indicates that differentiated reading instruction improves children's reading outcomes, such as their decoding outcomes (Otaiba et al., 2016; Puzio et al., 2020).

Research-Based Practice in *From Phonics to Reading*...

From Phonics to Reading includes regular opportunities for assessment. The program contains Benchmark Assessments & Expectations, which align with grade-level content, designate which program assessments to administer at each benchmarking period, and clearly outline children's expected foundational skills at the beginning, middle, and end of the academic year. Teachers can track children's progress towards benchmarks using the Letter-Name and Letter-Sound Assessment, Phonemic Awareness Assessment, Phonics Quick Check Assessment, Comprehensive Phonics Survey, and High-Frequency Word Assessments.

From Phonics to Reading also contains resources for assessment of phonics skills over an extended period of time to ensure mastery. The program's cumulative assessment helps determine which skills have truly been mastered. Progress monitoring tools include a Cumulative Fluency Check, which provides data on students' automaticity and accuracy in reading a list of words associated with specific lesson objectives. Beyond the Cumulative Fluency Check, *From Phonics to Reading* also provides a variety of formative assessments covering letter formation, spelling, reading comprehension, writing, alphabet knowledge, and print concepts. These formative assessments include Cumulative Spelling Sentences, the Reading Observation Form, Writing Mastery Checklist, and optional Letter Formation and Print-Concepts Assessments.

All the described assessment and progress monitoring tools allow teachers to collect data, which they can use to make decisions about differentiating instruction based upon children's documented needs. The assessments and related data help teachers address the needs of all students. "If-Then" Guidance for differentiating instruction is provided to support teachers as they assess and monitor student progress. Professional development videos provide guidance and assistance for teachers on how to properly administer these assessments and interpret the results. Teachers can differentiate their instruction using a range of differentiation supports that exist within the program in the Teacher's Edition, such as Teacher Table Intervention and Teacher Table English Learners, as well as online. For example, across K–3, *From Phonics to Reading* provides online resources that guide teachers' differentiation for English Learners and Above Level Students.

Conclusion

The underlying basis for the content and principles, including the seven key characteristics of *From Phonics to Reading*, a supplemental foundational skills program, is the science of reading. Direct, explicit, and systematic instruction, as well as ongoing assessment and data-informed differentiation characterize *From Phonics to Reading*. Seven key characteristics serve as the backbone of the program: readiness skills instruction, a systematic scope and sequence, blending, dictation, high-frequency word instruction, reading connected texts, and developing children's word supported components for developing the reading skills of all children, including children experiencing challenges learning to read. Moreover, the program provides guidance and professional development supports for teachers learning how to implement high-impact, direct, explicit, and systematic instruction in foundational reading skills. *From Phonics to Reading* thus may develop the respective skills of both children and teachers.

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