Top 10 Reasons to Focus on Primary Reading Instruction

10. The reading achievement gap in the U.S. is wide and persistent. According to the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), nearly two-thirds of fourth graders are not reading proficiently, and the rate of reading failure in high-poverty, minority populations is much higher.

9. Literacy has far-reaching effects on society. Illiteracy results in economic loss, and it is linked to higher crime rates, higher incarceration rates, more prisons, increased alcohol and drug use, and generational learning problems. Illiteracy has far-reaching effects on society. Illiteracy results in economic loss, and it is linked—National Council for Adult Learning, 2015— to higher crime rates, higher incarceration rates, more prisons, increased alcohol and drug use, and generational learning problems.

8. Success in beginning reading is a prerequisite for success in reading in later years. Students who are above grade level for reading in grade 3 graduate and enroll in college at higher rates than students who are at or below grade level. Students who are above grade level for reading in grade 3 graduate and enroll in college at higher rates than students who are at or below grade level. —Lesnick, et al., 2010

7. Systematic, explicit phonics is essential. Research has demonstrated that systematic, explicit phonics is a critical component of reading instruction. Students benefit from scientifically validated, explicit phonics instruction and are more likely to succeed in learning to read.

6. Prevention in the primary grades is the key to closing the reading gap. Research tells us that we can prevent reading failure for the vast majority of students with evidence-based instruction; the percentage of first graders below the 30th percentile can be reduced to 4–6% (Foorman et al., 1998; Mathes et al., 2005; Vellutino, et al., 2007; Torgesen, 2002). The right instruction and the right materials at the right time really matter.

5. Alignment of decodable text to instructional sequence is paramount. A large body of research evidence shows that with appropriate, intensive instruction, all but the most severe reading disabilities can be ameliorated in the early grades and students can get on track toward academic success. —Moats, 2011

4. Building students’ capacity to read complete text smoothly exposure to different kinds of text. Beginning readers need early exposure to different types of text; effective phonics instruction includes sufficient practice in decodable texts that have 1) a high proportion of words with phonetically regular relationships between the sounds and the letters that represent these sounds, and 2) a close match between the letter-sound relationship represented in text and those that the reader has been taught.

3. Integrated language arts supports literacy development. Phonological processing skills are always at play in reading, writing, and spelling, and both decoding and encoding lighten the burden on phonological processing. —Shaywitz, 2003

2. Early success with reading has lasting effects on motivation. Students who experience success early in life develop positive attitudes toward reading. Students who have success believe in their ability as readers and continue to read. Success is critical for motivation. Students who struggle to decode begin to avoid reading, setting off a cycle of disinterest, poorly performing, and poor self-image that makes it even more difficult for them to read.

1. The prevention of reading in kindergarten is the key to closing the reading gap. Research tells us that we can prevent reading failure for the vast majority of students with evidence-based instruction; the percentage of first graders below the 30th percentile can be reduced to 4–6% (Foorman et al., 1998; Mathes et al., 2005; Vellutino, et al., 2007; Torgesen, 2002). The right instruction and the right materials at the right time really matter.
References


