Research-Based Curriculum

Read! Explore! Imagine!

Fiction Readers

Complete Supplemental Program

Based on Respected Research

The Importance of Reading Fiction

> *School readers, especially primers, should largely disappear, except as they may be competent editings of the real literature of the mother tongue, presented in literary wholes…. The children should learn to read books, papers, records, letters, etc., as need arises in their life, just as adults do, and they should be trained to do such reading effectively (Huey 1908, 381).*

Recommending children read "literary wholes" may seem like a contemporary criticism of basal programs, but this quote is taken from a 1908 work on the teaching of reading in the United States, *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading* by Edmund Burke Huey. Huey's observations highlight what every parent and teacher of young children knows: Children love a good story. And the oral discussion that contextualizes and extends the story is just as important.

Oral discourse consists of "extended oral productions, whether monologic or multi-party, centered around a topic, activity or goal" (Lawrence and Snow 2011, 323). Oral discourse development involves the acquisition of the skills required for participation in oral discourse. Speaking and listening strategies—such as those identified in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (asking and responding to questions, using grade-level-appropriate vocabulary, and so forth)—are critical during preschool and primary grades, during which oral discourse provides the primary context for learning. Numerous correlational studies show frequent, high-quality reading experiences benefit preschoolers in vocabulary acquisition (Lawrence and Snow 2011). Further, primary students who are learning decoding skills benefit from discussions that set a purpose for reading, activate prior knowledge, ask and answer thoughtful questions, and encourage peer interaction (2011). Reading fiction, particularly in a program such as *Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers*, provides rich opportunities for oral discourse development. Fiction also has a prominent role in the CCSS.

Research to Practice
The Importance of Reading

Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers is a supplemental reading program that exposes readers to stories that combine a strong narrative with outstanding illustrations. For the beginning reader, the highly integrated illustrations foster thoughtful picture-reading and opportunities for rich discussions. The stories utilize patterns, rhyme, and repetition so young readers can achieve success with minimal prereading experiences. Engaging stories encourage the repeated readings that help young learners build literacy skills while they enjoy the oral discussion prompted by interactive reading of the stories and guided instruction.

Developing Essential Reading Skills

Teachers know there are many skills, abilities, and behaviors involved in learning to read, whether the books are storybooks, wordless picture books, or informational books. Laura M. Justice and Amy E. Sofka organize these skills into four categories: knowledge of how print is organized and used in books, the meaning of print as a form of communication, knowledge of the features and names of individual letters, and knowledge of words as units of print related to spoken language (2011). A solid foundation in these areas is a strong indicator of how children will develop as competent readers. From there, young readers begin to build their decoding and comprehension skills so they can tackle increasingly complex stories, recognize a variety of characters and settings, master increasingly difficult vocabulary, and understand concepts such as the main idea or an author's purpose. The challenge for teachers of young children is to identify and teach the stories that have a strong narrative as well as the print features that invite children to practice and master the skills required for competent reading of both narrative and informational texts.

In their work with developing readers, Justice and Sofka emphasize the need for children to have direct interactions with print. In short, in developing the skills and abilities necessary for competency, young learners need to be directed to look at and interact with the print—not just the illustrations—when listening to a story (2011). (See also Justice and Piasta 2010.)

Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers provide ample opportunities for a variety of reading experiences: a straight read-through; picture reading; print-focused reading with nonverbal interactions such as pointing to key words; and print-focused reading with verbal references to the print, such as questions and answers.

Each story is designed to engage students throughout the many literacy activities provided in this guide. Through the word work, word play, rereading, discussion, and cross-curricular connections (writing, math, and science), *Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers* help students develop reading skills, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies that will serve them in reading a wide variety of materials.

Key Reading Skills

Experts generally agree on several essential components of reading development: the alphabetic principle, phonological awareness, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Paris 2011). Without these foundational skills, students will struggle as they move into higher grades.

The Alphabetic Principle, Phonological Awareness, and Word Recognition

Recognizing that symbols (letters and combinations of letters) represent sounds is critical to early reading instruction. Phonological awareness, the ability to hear and manipulate individual phonemes (the smallest units of sound), generally develops during the preschool years. This lays the groundwork for decoding skills such as being able to rhyme, comparing words (beginning, ending, and middle sounds), segmenting, and blending syllables. Practicing word-recognition skills increases fluency and comprehension.

Oral Reading Fluency

Skilled readers process text rapidly, reading words smoothly, accurately, almost effortlessly (Phillips and Torgesen 2006). Just how is this accomplished? Through practice. "The early development of reading accuracy is important because children must *accurately* practice the pronunciations of written words several times in order to form a representation of the words' orthography in memory that will allow the words to be recognized 'by sight' or 'at a single glance'"(2006, 106). Comprehension of these sight words is an important component of building true fluency.

Vocabulary Development

When children arrive at school, their vocabulary knowledge varies widely. Andrew Biemiller cites studies that underscore the role parents play during the preschool and primary years. Once in school, children with small vocabularies acquire new words about as well as those who arrived at school with large vocabularies (2006). In his work with grades kindergarten through two, Biemiller presented words in the "context sentence" method: Stories were read, with questions following about a specific word in a sentence from the story. Biemiller's research suggests that having children discuss and explain word meanings in the context of a story accelerates vocabulary acquisition. This enhanced vocabulary readies students for reading informational books or more challenging texts (2006). In addition, we know children love to play with words. Some reading experts recommend we teach vocabulary by creating "more playful and conversational contexts for learning" (Harris, Golinkoff, and Hirsh-Pasek 2011, 60). Authentic literature excels at this.

Comprehension

While a reader's comprehension success is affected by the previously discussed skills, it is also dependent on the reader's ability to connect reading materials to his or her background experiences. In a review of various reports and studies, Cunningham and Zibulsky recommend that shared reading experiences include a variety of interactive experiences: discussing of vocabulary and pictures, having the child read aloud with the adult, and inviting responses through open-ended questions that draw upon general knowledge (2011).

Research to Practice
Key Reading Skills

The Alphabetic Principle, Phonological Awareness, and Word Recognition:
Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers include progressive word-study instruction throughout. Beginning with an emphasis on phonological awareness and high-frequency word work in the emergent levels, instruction moves to increasingly rich word work that allows readers to tackle more challenging material with confidence. Students receive a variety of opportunities to master words by sight as well as through decoding skills. For example, readers may build word families (*Ann, ban, can, Dan…*), practice sight words in a variety of contexts, or use writing patterns to extend their word knowledge through variations on the story.

Oral Reading Fluency: The lessons build fluency by inviting students to interact with the story at key points during the first reading. During rereading, students have an opportunity to use a variety of shared-reading activities such as reader's theater scripts, call and response, echo reading, and choral reading. Extension activities, such as adding lines to an existing story or creating a new version, increase the opportunity for developing fluency.

Vocabulary Development: Each lesson includes several sections of word-work activities that build vocabulary. High-frequency words are introduced and practiced before reading the story. During word study, key words needed to understand the story are taught in context. Word play, such as recognizing onomatopoeia, alliteration, and rhyming patterns, inspires students to elaborate on the vocabulary encountered in the story. Incorporating movement, mime, and other physical activity provides the youngest learners with a playful way to engage with words. The section on academic vocabulary identifies and teaches words that will be found in cross-curricular areas. The oral language follow-up activities, science and math activities, and the practice pages also deepen vocabulary development.

Comprehension: Comprehension instruction is integrated into every aspect of the lessons. Students' background knowledge is drawn upon or deepened before the story is introduced. During reading, strategic questions about the story provide ways to focus listening and encourage students to check their comprehension. Predictions about the story are confirmed or refuted. As the program progresses, students learn more about genre, storytelling, point of view, and other elements of fiction. After rereading the story, questions guide the student through an understanding of key details and the main idea. A writing activity deepens and extends comprehension.

The Power of Storytelling

Whether it's at home or in the classroom, children respond strongly to stories. Advertisements, sports events, movies, and news programs all use stories to draw in audiences and convey important information. Because they have the power to engage readers, not just intellectually, but emotionally, stories make difficult content accessible, prepare children for new life experiences, and introduce readers to new people, places, and ideas.

The Art of Fiction

Fiction is literature that stems from the imagination and includes genres such as mystery, adventure, fairy tales, and fantasy. Fiction can include facts, but the story is not true in its entirety. Facts are often exaggerated or manipulated to suit an author's intent for the story. Realistic fiction uses plausible characters and story lines that seem real, but the people do not really exist or the events narrated did not ever really take place. In addition, fiction is descriptive, elaborate, and designed to entertain. Fiction allows readers to make their own interpretations based on the text.

Each event in a story occurs in a logical order, and by the end a conflict is resolved. Fiction promises a resolution in the end, and so the reader waits for resolution as the characters change, grow, and move on to new experiences. We are drawn to fiction because it resembles our lives. Fiction suggests our own stories will have meaning and a resolution in the end.

The Benefits of Reading Fiction

Reading fiction stimulates the imagination, promotes creative thinking, increases vocabulary, and improves writing skills. Fiction readers cannot help but visualize the characters and setting of a story. Researcher Keith Oatley (2009) states that fiction also encourages empathy by allowing readers to meet new characters and imagine what they might be feeling or thinking. A great story can bring people together and make differences more understandable. Lisa Zunshine (2006) has emphasized that fiction allows readers to engage in a theory-of-mind that helps them practice what the characters experience.

Research to Practice
The Benefits of Reading Fiction

Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers books introduce readers to a wide variety of genres. Realistic fiction, historical fiction, poems, biographies, mysteries, and humorous stories are all included. Each type of text introduces students to new places, people, and ideas in engaging, memorable ways. Throughout the series, readers will be transported by the creative illustrations and embrace a wide variety of characters.

Elements of Fiction

There are many common characteristics found throughout fiction. Among such elements are **point of view**, **character**, **setting**, and **plot**. The people at the heart of each story are the characters. The **protagonist** is the main or leading character. The **antagonist** is the force or character that acts against the protagonist. This antagonist is not always a person; it could be something such as weather, technology, or even a vehicle. The setting is the **where** and **when** of a story's action. The setting takes readers to other times and places. Setting plays a large part in what makes a story enjoyable for the reader. The plot forms the core of what the story is about and establishes the chain of events that unfolds in the story. Plot contains a character's motivation and the subsequent cause and effect of the character's actions.

Language Usage

Even the youngest readers appreciate stories that use language artfully. This series includes the following literary devices: **personification**, **hyperbole**, **alliteration**, **onomatopoeia**, **imagery**, **symbolism**, **metaphor**, and **word choice**. The table below provides a brief description of each.

Language Usage	Definition	Example
Personification	Giving human traits to nonhuman things	A strong, fierce wind sprang up.
Hyperbole	Extreme exaggeration	There are also…spiders as big as Shetland ponies.
Alliteration	Repetition of the beginning sounds	The taco train is made of three tacos filled with the tastiest taco mix in town.
Onomatopoeia	Forming a word from the sound it makes	Eiji pitched. *Thud!* Straight into the catcher's glove.
Imagery	Language that creates a meaningful visual experience for the reader	At least that was what he said until he met a tall man leading a lizard on a leash.
Symbolism	Using objects to represent something else	The dinosaurs are not all dead. I saw one raise its iron head.
Metaphor	Comparison of two unrelated things	He crouches low on his tractor paws and scoops the dirt up with his jaws.
Word Choice	Words an author uses to make the story memorable and to capture the reader's attention	The kite flipped and flopped. Then, it flapped and fell.

Gradual Release of Responsibility as a Model of Instruction

Students need the opportunity to work toward independence and confidence in their reading capabilities. This process is referred to as the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model by Pearson and Gallagher (1983) and the Gradual Release of Control for vocabulary instruction (Neuman 2011). Teachers begin by giving direct instruction for a certain reading strategy or the definition of a word. They model the strategy and provide multiple opportunities for students to practice using that strategy. In the case of vocabulary development, Neuman recommends relating the instruction to students' previous and future learning (2011), allowing students to transition to independent practice of the strategy.

Research to Practice
Gradual Release of Responsibility as a Model of Instruction

Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers provide students with a variety of strategies for decoding, understanding word meanings, identifying both details and main ideas, and reaching beyond the text for personal reading and writing tasks. The lessons are structured to enable students to become independent, self-motivated readers as they read fiction, as well as other genres.

The Active Reading Process

Starting with an engaging story, teachers can use a variety of strategies to model active reading: reading with enjoyment and expression, discussing and pointing to key words, tracing the line of print with a finger, asking open-ended questions that require thoughtful responses, being attentive to children's responses and interests, ensuring attentive listening and participation, and extending the story through rich experiences (Justice and Sofka 2011).

Research to Practice
The Active Reading Process

Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers provide an engaging context for developing active readers. The lesson plans prompt teachers to use a variety of techniques that will encourage students to immerse themselves in each story before, during, and after reading. The rich stories in the *Read! Explore! Imagine!* series engage readers with creative illustrations, accessible characters, and surprise endings. The lessons provide a variety of activities through which students can demonstrate their involvement in the reading.

Benefits of Leveled Reading

Students often hold negative attitudes about reading because of dull textbooks or being forced to read (Bean 2000). Teaching reading can be a complex task because of these negative attitudes, as well as students' varied reading abilities and levels of English proficiency. In *Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency: Thinking, Talking and Writing about Reading, K–8* (2006), Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell stress students' attitudes toward a text and their ability to strategically read a text and retain all the information they need is tied to the difficulty level of the text. Providing students with texts at an appropriate reading level is vital to their achievement.

Research to Practice
Benefits of Leveled Reading

The *Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers* program contains sets of leveled books for teachers to use in reading instruction. The program is offered for a variety of reading levels, including: Emergent, Upper Emergent, Early Fluent, Early Fluent Plus, Fluent, and Fluent Plus. The books are leveled according to traditional leveling systems and designed to appeal to a wide range of student interests and reading levels.

Differentiating by Specific Needs

Today's classrooms are filled with students of varying backgrounds, reading abilities, levels of English proficiency, and learning styles. A teacher's ability to differentiate instruction and respond effectively to the needs of a variety of learners is critical to the success of any program (Henry and Pianta 2011). Two factors influence a teacher's ability to use a program: having instructional options that meet the needs of various students within the program, and having the confidence and skill to modify the instruction based on those needs or when faced with a "teachable moment." *Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers* provides an abundance of opportunities for differentiated instruction.

Below-Grade-Level Students

Comprehension problems may stem from difficulty decoding and a lack of automaticity when reading (often found with poor sight-word-recognition skills). Nonfluent readers work so hard at reading that they are unable to allocate cognitive resources to comprehension (Williams and Pao 2011). Other learners may read fluently but still struggle with comprehension (Jitendra and Gajria 2011). "For students with [learning disabilities], it is crucial to teach directly how to construct the main idea, and to

emphasize metacognitive and strategic approaches to learning" (2011, 200). Joanna P. Williams and Lisa S. Pao also emphasize the importance of addressing deeper levels of literature, going beyond plot into themes, imagery, and word choice (2011). Through thoughtful discussions and clear connections to students' lives, *Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers* focuses on deep comprehension skills, while providing ample opportunities for fluency practice.

Above-Grade-Level Students

"The ultimate goal of teaching is the development of a self-regulated learner—a student with the capacity to guide and monitor his own learning on different tasks for different purposes" (Dorn and Soffos 2005). Students performing above grade level have the metacognitive abilities to apply new concepts and vocabulary to independent work quickly and effectively. Further, above-grade-level readers can use this foundation for reading increasingly complex narratives and informational text. Providing rich resources for reading helps inspire students to utilize and stretch their reading skills.

English Language Learners

Explicit teaching builds phonological awareness, phonics skills, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills in English Language Learners (ELLs). Small group instruction and cooperative learning contribute to successful learning. In addition to direct, explicit instruction, interactive teaching that uses techniques such as modeling and guided practice helps students master requisite skills more effectively (Goldenberg 2010). Research shows that instruction should be clear, focused, and systematic for best results (Goldenberg 2010). In classrooms where only English is spoken, Goldenberg suggests posting lists and schedules for references, using graphic organizers, providing additional practice opportunities, using redundant information (words and pictures), having other ELL students summarize or clarify information, and adjusting instruction (such as rate and complexity of speech) (2010).

Research to Practice
Differentiating by Specific Needs

Below-Grade-Level Students: Every lesson in *Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers* provides rich support for below-grade-level students. Activities are designed to encourage active involvement in the reading process and provide repeated practice without losing engagement. The flexible lessons offer opportunities for building connections to previous experiences, additional in-depth vocabulary instruction, direct instruction, and extensions that combine activities such as movement with word work or word play. The open-ended questions allow students with limited literacy experiences to respond within their comfort or experiential level. The cross-curricular activities link reading to other areas of interest for young learners, such as science. Each teaching tip provides a quick idea that enhances instruction for below-grade-level students.

Above-Grade-Level Students: *Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers* instruction provides the foundation for rich vocabulary development, writing experiences, and extended reading. The word-study and word-play instruction is open-ended, giving teachers the opportunity to deepen and broaden the pool of words being learned. The various patterned stories are ideal for budding writers to create, read, and share new or elaborated stories. Discussion prompts provide opportunities to think critically about the author and illustrator's roles in story development. Independent work through the cross-curricular activities can further enrich reading.

English Language Learners: *Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers* lessons begin with a language objective in addition to the focus objectives. The instruction in high-frequency words, academic language related to the story, and elaborations on vocabulary through the word-play activities is particularly suited to English language learners. Further, each teaching tip provides a recommendation that will often benefit English language learners. During the reading and rereading instruction, activities such as paired reading can be added for more practice in developing oral fluency. The patterns, rhymes, and rhythmic nature of many of the stories enhance success when reading aloud. The open-ended questions provide opportunities to relate to students from varying backgrounds. In addition, each lesson provides a comprehension activity and a follow-up practice activity specifically designed for English language learners. The Digital Resource CD provides supplemental visual and audio support for English language learners. The Audio CD includes professional recordings of the books, which provide a powerful model for fluency. Embedded audio recordings in the interactiv-eBooks also support fluency.

Using Quality Assessment to Guide Instruction

"Monitoring and record-keeping provide the critical information needed to make decisions about the student's future instruction" (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2006, 5). The ability to properly diagnose and monitor students' reading progress is imperative in reading intervention programs. Noted researcher Yetta Goodman found that listening to a recording of oral reading with a student and discussing the student's errors with him or her is a good way to confirm the teacher's inferences about a student's skills and make the student aware of strategies the student could be using (1996). Hoffman and Rasinski (2004) also found short oral reading assessments can be used to develop fluency. They state students and teachers can make observations, reflect on, and respond to the text during oral reading. Short fluency probes are also effective reading assessment measures (Rasinski 2003). Baker and Brown (1980, 353–354) note, "If the child is aware of what is needed to perform effectively, then it is possible for him to take steps to meet the demands of a learning situation more adequately."

Research to Practice
Using Quality Assessment to Guide Instruction

Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers offers multiple assessment opportunities for teachers to use before, during, and after reading to help with instructional decisions:

Series Placement Test: This placement tool can be used to place students within the program by identifying the most appropriate kit for their reading level.

Oral Reading Records: The oral reading records for each book offer a highly detailed picture of students' abilities. This assessment includes a column for recording reader cues, allowing teachers to identify cues that have been mastered and those that the student is not using. This progress monitoring benefits students by giving them the information to set goals for mastery and offers teachers useful information to make instructional decisions.

Multiple-Choice Tests: The multiple-choice test for each book allows for an immediate measure of comprehension, providing summative assessment data at the end of a lesson.

Informal Assessment Opportunities: These assessments are embedded throughout the lessons to identify optimal times for teachers to observe students' reading behaviors and skills. This data can guide future instructional decisions.

School and Home Connections

In her research, Monique Sénéchal identifies several outcomes linked to home literacy. Parents' degree of involvement in shared reading is strongly linked to receptive and expressive vocabulary (2011). Studies show shared reading is also related to complex oral language skills, and highly interactive shared readings promote narrative knowledge, such as understanding the role of characters, setting, and plot (2011). Sénéchal also notes parental involvement positively affects alphabetic knowledge, early reading, and invented spelling in young learners (2011). Longitudinal studies demonstrate that shared reading and the teaching of early literacy skills in the home is predictive of specific reading skills, such as word reading, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension (2011). Further, "[b]ook exposure, then, can be thought of as an enduring aspect of home experience that is likely to contribute to children's reading performance" (2011, 183).

Research to Practice
School and Home Connections

The Parent Tips booklet is an important part of *Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers.* To facilitate ongoing reading practice, the Digital Resource CD includes digital versions of the books, which can be printed and replicated for students to take home. The writing opportunities in the lessons also provide students with occasions to share their own stories.

Using Technology in the Classroom

Extensive research has been conducted over the years to determine how effective technology is in improving student performance. The following positive effects have been observed:

- increased student achievement

- improved higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving abilities

- enhanced student motivation and engagement

- improved abilities to work collaboratively

Educators are challenged with preparing all students for a more technologically advanced world (Harwood and Asal 2007).

Research to Practice
Using Technology in the Classroom

Read! Explore! Imagine! Fiction Readers features a variety of resources for integrating technology into literacy instruction. The Audio CD includes recordings of the books to support fluency practice. The Interactiv-eBooks enhance instruction with response-to-literature prompts and purposeful comprehension and writing activities. The Assessment DVD found in the Assessment Guide offers series placement, reading fluency, and comprehension assessments. Finally, the Digital Resource CD provides digital files for integrating the technology resources in the classroom.

Managing Small Groups

Small groups are an excellent way to motivate students and reinforce skills. Small-group time allows the teacher to differentiate instruction by adjusting the amount of direct instruction during word study, by allowing more in-depth discussion during comprehension activities, by providing more support during writing activities or letting more competent writers extend writing opportunities, and by providing additional activities as necessary. To make the most of your small-group instructional time, you may wish to use some of the following strategies:

- **Realistic Objectives**: Plan realistic objectives for group work.

- **Appropriate Tasks**: Ensure tasks are appropriate for students' abilities. Be prepared to provide support for those students who might need redirection or additional information.

- **Clear Directions and Expectations**: State directions clearly and set specific expectations about student behavior during small-group time. Take time to practice new tasks and routines and review them prior to each activity.

- **Clear Transitions**: Create clear transitions from one activity to the next to increase time spent on tasks.

- **Individual Roles**: Assign roles and tasks for each student within the group.

- **Monitoring Work**: Monitor groups briefly as they begin each task, checking to make sure they understand the task. Answer all clarifying questions. Then, consider checking in at a mid-point during the work. For more comprehensive monitoring, consider recording selected groups as they work (either via video or audio, as appropriate).

- **Positive Reinforcement**: Provide positive reinforcement to on-task students by specifically identifying the appropriate behavior. For example, rather than saying, "Group A, you are too loud," you might say, "Group B, good job for using your inside voices."

- **Proximity**: Use proximity to monitor student behavior and maintain classroom control. Sometimes, just moving toward a student's desk will nudge students to be on task again. When giving direct instruction to a small group, position yourself so you can observe the rest of the students.

- **Off-Task Behavior**: Respond to off-task behavior during small-group time promptly, discreetly, and consistently.

- **Noise Level**: Remember a busy class will have some level of productive noise, especially during group discussions. At times, you will need to manage the noise level. Consider using a traffic-light strategy. If the noise level is too high, tape a big red paper circle on the board to indicate students are too loud. Use a yellow circle to indicate the need for a lower noise level. Use green to indicate the noise level is just right.

- **Group Signal**: There will be times when you need to address the entire class. Establish a group signal, practicing so students "freeze" when the signal is used, such as striking a chord on the piano, flicking the lights on and off, and/or raising your hand or two fingers in a *V*. This can also be used to alert students to the need to adjust the noise level or to prepare for transitions.

Before-Reading Activities

Before-reading activities are designed to introduce a book to students, generate interest, set a purpose for reading, and provide key words and information to ensure a successful reading experience. The following strategies supplement the lesson plans.

Generate interest—Understanding what students already know about a topic and the related vocabulary allows teachers to adapt lessons accordingly. The following general strategies can also help set the stage for reading:

- **Experience Web**: Write the key focal point of the story, such as having a pet or taking a trip, on the board inside a circle. Ask students what experiences they have had with these concepts. Jot down their responses around the circle. Circle each response and connect it to the main concept with a line.

- **Artifact Activity**: Display an object related to the text, such as a train set or a globe, and discuss what students know about the artifact.

- **Video or Picture**: Introduce a concept through videos or pictures. Using an image search on the Internet will produce images that are likely to spark interest, activate prior knowledge, and build vocabulary.

- **Set a purpose for reading**—The cover of each story is often used to introduce the story, remind students of their personal experiences, and prompt predictions. This is a good time to use the following general strategies to help students create a purpose for reading.

- **I Wonder**: Prompt students to set their own purpose for reading. Encourage them to ask questions using the sentence frame "I wonder…." Record their questions for reference during reading.

- **Thinking Like a Writer**: After exploring the title and cover illustration, discuss how the author might develop the story or how the illustrator might create the pictures. Once the story has been read, these predictions can be revisited.

- **Making Predictions**: Review the recommendations in the specific lesson plan before sharing the cover of the book. In some instances, obscuring the title is recommended so students focus on the picture cues to make predictions about the story. Teachers should encourage students to ask questions, infer, and draw conclusions multiple times within a story without disrupting the flow.

Preteach key vocabulary—The Word Work section of each lesson includes specific recommendations for teaching high-frequency words (High Frequency Words), key words in the story (Word Study), and high-utility words (Academic Vocabulary). The Word Play section provides instruction on rhymes, onomatopoeia, alliteration, and the like. The following activities can also be used:

- **Word Sort**: Have students organize words in meaningful ways. Sorting into rhyming words or families would be a closed sort (with structure). Having students sort a list of words into categories that make sense to them would be an open sort (without structure).

- **Word Memory**: Key words written on index cards can be used in a variety of ways: matching a word with its definition, playing Concentration with words and pictures (or definitions), playing variations on Charades, or matching words to realia or artifacts.

During-Reading Activities

During-reading activities focus on strategies that help students understand the author's message, make connections between the illustrations and the story, understand vocabulary, confirm predictions, and relate the content to their lives. The following activities can be used in addition to or in place of strategies recommended in the individual lesson plans.

Use mental images—Creating mental images promotes greater recall of the material and engages students in the reading process.

- **Three Rs (Read, Recall, Retell)**: Read a few pages of a longer story with the students (or an entire short story). Have students close their eyes and recall what they read. Tell them to think of the pictures and the print in the text. Then, pair students and have them retell the story. Have students close their eyes. Ask, "What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear? What do you feel? What might happen next?"

- **Use self-correcting strategies**—To develop into competent readers, students must feel confident in their abilities to read independently, knowing when they are on the right track or how to get back on track. These strategies will help with that process.

- **Self-Checking**: Use "teachable moments" to model that sometimes we misread a word or two and need to reread to clarify. Missing a key word, such as *not* in *He was not going home*, can misguide the reader. Remind students it is okay to double back and try again.

- **Picture Reading**: Mining the illustrations to support comprehension not only helps struggling readers, it enhances the enjoyment of a story.

- **Subvocalizing**: Teach students that it is fine to quietly try to sound out a difficult or unknown word or to whisper read a portion that seems unclear.

Clarify word meanings—One of the best predictors of success in school is having a robust vocabulary. In addition to the activities in the lesson plans, try these activities:

- **Word Banks**: Have students keep a personal bank of words. They could be written on index cards and placed in a box or kept on a ring.

- **Word Games**: Integrate impromptu word games throughout instruction. Match movement activities to help with focus.
  A game can be as simple as saying, "We've been reading color words. I'm going to say (or write) some words. Each time you hear a color word, stand up. Ready?"

Make connections—Use the reading time to actively connect text to students' predictions, personal experiences, and classroom experiences. There are various strategies in the lessons.

- **Think-Pair-Share**: Ask students questions about the story to increase comprehension. Ask them to independently think of an answer. Then, pair students and ask them to share their responses with each other. Have students share out for a group discussion or re-pair students after their pairing is complete.

After-Reading Activities

After-reading activities consist of the strategies students learn to use when they finish reading a book or a piece of text. These strategies help students reflect upon the purpose of the text, confirm comprehension, verify predictions, and extend meaning to other activities. Whenever possible, prompt students to return to the text to support their ideas, opinions, and statements.

Summarize and reason—Effective readers are able to use summary sentences, words, or phrases to determine main ideas and identify the most important parts of the story line.

- **Categories**: Ask students to give you a single word or phrase that tells what the story was about. Record the responses. Ask a few more students for their words. Then, have students look at the words and determine which ones go together. Make a new list with those words. Work on developing a heading for the list. Repeat if there are enough words with a distinct set of similarities.

Connect to prior knowledge and stories—Students should be encouraged to connect the story to other fiction and nonfiction books they have read, and to compare and contrast the elements.

- **Venn Diagram**: Compare the characters, plot, or setting of a story with those of another story. For example, if students have read several stories about animals, developing a Venn diagram can demonstrate the likenesses and differences among the animals.

Paraphrase—Students demonstrate comprehension when they are able to retell the story in their own words.

- **Draw, Pair, Share**: Have students draw pictures that show a key element of the story, a favorite part, or what they think will happen next. Students can share their pictures with partners or the class.

Developing knowledge of story elements—Students should be able to increasingly refine their understanding of how a story is developed.

- **Story Map**: Have students create a story map that shows the setting, where the characters go, and how they return (or not) at the end of the story.

Making It Memorable

We've all heard this old joke: A tourist stops a New York City resident and asks, "How do I get to Carnegie Hall?" The resident says, "Practice, practice, practice." It's true that becoming a competent reader—particularly a fluent reader—requires a lot of practice. But the practice need not be tedious. Suggestions for ways to enliven reading sessions are included in each lesson. Keep these general ideas in mind, as well.

Share—Draw upon your personal experiences that relate to the story at hand. When there is a story with an unfamiliar context, it becomes even more important for you to set the stage.

Move—It can be difficult for some children to sit still. Take advantage of stories with a lot of action, such as *How to Survive in the Jungle by the Person Who Knows.* Invite students to stand and act out the story or add sound effects.

Exaggerate—Stories such as *Queen Serena* b eg to be read with great flair. Use echo reading during which students echo your expression to develop a sense of appreciation of voice. Don't be afraid to use funny voices or to read as a French cat (*Cat-astrophe at the Opera*), or a crafty crow (*Coyote: A Trickster Tale*).

Elaborations—Some stories, such as *Felix and His Flying Machine,* are ideal for elaborations. For example, it is easy to brainstorm more adventures for the main character. Encourage students to use stories as springboards for their own imaginative creations, whether in writing or through illustrations.

Perform—When students polish a reading, look for opportunities to commemorate their efforts. Record their readings (via audio or video); perform a reading over the school's public address system; perform a reader's theater for another class; have a read-in or poetry reading for parents or other students; send recordings home or post them on the school website for families to enjoy.

Publish—When students create a new version or an elaborated story or script, publish the results online or with bulletin boards, booklets, class magazines, or posters. Set a story to music. Illustrate it. Make murals for plays. As much as possible, integrate reading and writing so young readers become inspired to become young writers, too.

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