Foundational Literacy Instruction

The Reading Mastery® Connection to Proven Teaching Strategies
Foundational Skills Promote Reading for Understanding

The ability to read is an essential skill for success in school. Unfortunately, learning to read is difficult for many children. The most common cause is a student’s inability to process the phonological features of language but this challenge can be overcome by teaching primary students critical foundational skills from Kindergarten through third grade as a means to prevent academic failure.

An Educator’s Practice Guide has been published by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to present proven teaching strategies for raising foundational reading and language skills. This guide, Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade, was developed for the What Works Clearinghouse, an organization dedicated to educational research and evidence-based education. The guide contains four recommendations for improving instruction in foundational reading skills. Based on research outcomes, teaching these skills to K–3 students makes the best use of teacher time while building the writing and reading comprehension skills students will need throughout their educational career.
Four Recommendations for Improving Instruction in Foundational Reading Skills*

Teach Academic Language

Academic language is the critical first step in both learning how to read and experiencing success in school. Kindergarten students that enter the classroom with limited language typically fall behind their classmates in reading and other subject areas throughout their school career. While social language skills typically develop naturally with family and friends, a lack of academic language skills can result in text comprehension difficulties.

To provide effective academic language instruction for students:

- Engage students in oral language opportunities that build inferential language to support articulating ideas beyond factual recall or immediate text
- Provide opportunities to build narrative language by requiring students to relate a series of events (fiction or non-fiction)
- Use and teach a wide range of academic vocabulary in the context of diverse reading activities

*Four strategies excerpted from “Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade,” published by the Institute of Education Sciences.
Develop Awareness of Segments of Sounds in Speech

The National Reading Panel found that explicitly teaching phonological awareness prepares students to read words and comprehend text. Seventy percent of monosyllabic words can be read if students have the ability to isolate and blend sounds.

In order for students to effectively decode:

- Teach students to identify and manipulate segments of sounds in particular phonemes
- Explicitly teach the letter-sound relationship and how sounds can be identified through parts of the letter name
- Use word building activities to link students’ phonemic awareness with letter-sound relationships

Decode Words and Analyze Word Parts

After students have learned a small number of sounds, they can apply their letter-sound knowledge to decode words in isolation or connected text. Students can expand their recognition of letter-sound patterns with increased daily opportunities to read.

To build accurate word recognition:

- Teach left to right blending of common sound-spelling patterns and word parts
- Provide access to decodable words in isolation and connected text
- Teach students how to decode both high frequency regular and irregular words to increase efficient and fluent reading

Read Connected Text to Increase Fluency and Comprehension

In order to read connected text with fluency and prosody, students must identify words quickly and use their background knowledge to guide their understanding of the text. Students should read connected text daily to increase their fluency and comprehension. In addition, require multiple opportunities for students to read a variety of text that expand across genres.

To facilitate sufficient opportunities in reading connected text:

- Model and scaffold opportunities to support increased accurate word identification
- Instruct students to self-correct both their word identification errors and understanding of the text
- Provide ample opportunities to develop fluency and prosody through daily oral reading practice
How *Reading Mastery* Teaches the Four Recommendations

**Teach Academic Language**

Students learn to respond to instructional words as they relate to following oral and written directions, decoding words, or learning new vocabulary that appears in their daily reading selections. Students engage in activities and discussion that support the use of inferential language. These conversations occur during teacher and student read-alouds of various text types, including narrative, poetry, and informational.

Students learn speaking and listening rules to help them learn classroom routines. In addition, they participate in language exercises to learn homonyms, opposites, classification, problem solving skills, and are asked to recall the events of a story.

**Develop Awareness of Segments of Sounds in Speech**

Students develop awareness through carefully sequenced activities of increasing difficulty that include:

- Recognize and manipulate syllables, onsets and rimes, and phonemes
- Identify letter-sound relationships, including letter names
- Blending and segmentation of phonemes

**Decode Words and Analyze Word Parts**

Students engage in daily word-reading activities to practice sounding out sound-spelling patterns. Gradually, instruction focuses on word parts including prefixes and suffixes. Ample opportunities to practice these patterns occur in every lesson through words lists and connected text.

**Read Connected Text to Increase Fluency and Comprehension**

Students read connected text every day with teacher feedback. Specific correction procedures ensure students are accurate and learn to self-monitor. They read a variety of text, including decodable narrative and informational text using words based on recently taught sound-spelling patterns. Opportunities to build fluent and accurate reading occur through repeated story readings and daily partner readings.
With *Reading Mastery*, you can build the foundational skills that are recommended by the Institute of Education Sciences:

- Teach academic language skills
- Develop awareness of segments of sounds
- Decode words and analyze word parts
- Read connected text to increase fluency and comprehension

To learn more, please visit: [mheonline.com/readingmastery](http://mheonline.com/readingmastery)