UTCRLA
The University of Texas
Center for Reading & Language Arts

Reading Strategies & Activities Resource Book

For Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties, Including Dyslexia

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Preferred Citation

University of Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts. (2004). *Reading strategies and activities resource book for students at risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia*. Austin, TX: Author.

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Reading Strategies and Activities:
A Resource Book for Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties, Including Dyslexia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Texas Center *for* Reading *&* Language Arts

College of Education

The University of Texas at Austin

Manuel J. Justiz, *Dean*

Sharon Vaughn, *Director*

Texas Education Agency

Felipe Alanis, *Commissioner*

Paul Cruz, *Deputy Commissioner*

Ann Smisko, *Associate Commissioner*

Melanie Pritchett, *Assistant Commissioner*

Development Team

Deborah C. Simmons

Edward J. Kame'enui

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Sharon Vaughn for the opportunity to contribute to such an important cause; to Sarah McDonagh, Diane Hill, Hank Fien, Nicole Brewer, and Melissa Allen, our doctoral students who contributed significantly in the design and development of the content; to Tanya Sheehan, Brittany Jones, and Katie Tate for their technical assistance in the preparation of this book; to Doug Carnine for his genius in instructional design; to our families and friends, and to the children we teach and who inspire us to design even better instruction.

Reading Strategies and Activities:

A Resource Book for Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties, Including Dyslexia

INTRODUCTION

This resource book presents sets of instructional strategies for beginning reading and is specifically and carefully designed for classroom teachers to use with students who are at-risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia. When students struggle with learning to read, they need additional instruction that is focused on the areas causing them difficulty. These areas, the "big ideas" of beginning reading and literacy, include the concepts and principles that facilitate the most efficient and broadest acquisition of knowledge (Carnine, 1994). The big ideas of reading and literacy are phonological awareness, including phonemic awareness; alphabetic understanding; fluency; vocabulary; and comprehension [National Reading Panel (NRP), 2000].

To address students who are having difficulty with learning to read, this book focuses on the role that carefully designed instruction plays in learning to read. A focus on instructional design does not discount the fact that students can differ along linguistic, neurological, experiential, and sociological dimensions. Rather, such emphasis acknowledges the very real differences that students bring to instruction and the importance of focusing on the big ideas of beginning reading and literacy.

Not all curriculum objectives and related instructional activities contribute equally to academic development, especially in reading (Carnine, 1994). This book does not try to cover the full range of knowledge and skills addressed in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). It does focus on the big ideas that enable students to translate the alphabetic code into meaningful language. When students have difficulty learning to read, it is important for instruction to target the fundamental skills and strategies necessary for them to learn to read. Big ideas go beyond just exposing students to content; big ideas cover the strategies and content that have the highest impact on learning to read.

This resource book contains sequential, in-depth, systematic instructional activities related to the big ideas of beginning reading instruction identified by scientific research: phonological awareness, including phonemic awareness; alphabetic understanding; fluency; vocabulary; and comprehension (NRP, 2000). For each big idea, strategy sets target the critical skills that facilitate the teaching and learning of broad and generalizable strategies. For example, in one of the phonemic awareness strategy sets, blending and segmenting are targeted because these two skills are strongly related to early reading success (NRP, 2000; Simmons and Kame'enui, 1998).

In addition to "what" to teach or the big ideas of beginning reading, this book uses validated principles of instructional design to illustrate how to effectively teach students with dyslexia how to read.

Critical skills are taught in a series of strategy sets. A strategy is a general set of steps used to solve problems. In beginning reading and literacy, problems can include learning how to decode unfamiliar words, how to read with sufficient fluency to maximize comprehension, and how to identify main ideas in narrative texts. For students who are struggling to learn to read and who are constantly trying to catch up, instruction must be carefully designed and delivered.

For each big idea, activity sets are designed to communicate the design and delivery of **initial instruction, review/reinforcement, and expansion/integration.** The features and approaches of instruction in this book are appropriate for regular classroom teachers to use as an intervention with students who are experiencing difficulties in learning to read. Student progress monitoring data collected during the intervention instruction can inform the student's teacher for purposes of designing instruction, and others in the event the student is referred for assessment for reading difficulties, including dyslexia.

The strategy sets are designed to provide:

Explicit, direct instruction that is systematic, sequential, and cumulative.

- Each strategy includes three activities: initial instruction, review/reinforcement, and expansion/integration.
- Strategies provide example wording and specific example selection and sequences to maximize learning opportunities.

Individualized instruction that meets the specific learning needs of each student.

- Strategy sets are designed to align with critical skills and the components of classroom-based assessment.
- Each set includes how to formatively monitor students' progress and build student success.

Intensive, highly concentrated instruction that maximizes student engagement.

- The purpose of the lessons is to provide greater opportunities for students to produce, practice, and master content.

- Activities are specifically designed to maximize opportunities for students to respond and to receive feedback. A variety of response formats is infused throughout the lessons.

Multisensory instruction that incorporates use of multiple sensory pathways.

- Strategy sets employ multiple channels of input and require children to process information at a variety of levels: phonologic, alphabetic, orthographic, semantic, morphographic, and syntactic.

In addition, resources are found at the back of the book. Examples of instructional matrices present plans that include objectives, instructional strategies detailed in this guide, and recommended instructional time. The matrices indicate the progression of skills within a big idea over five days, as well as how to integrate skills between big ideas (e.g., phonemic awareness and alphabetic understanding). Another resource lists the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that are addressed in each strategy set.

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