

A Consumer's Guide to Evaluating Supplemental and Intervention Reading Programs Grades K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis

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The selection and adoption of effective, research-based supplemental and intervention reading programs in the primary grades is a critical step in the development of an effective schoolwide reading initiative. The investment in identifying supplemental and intervention programs that align with research and fit the needs of learners in your school will reap long-term benefits for children's reading acquisition and development.

A critical review of reading programs requires objective and in-depth analysis. For these reasons, we offer the following recommendations and procedures for analyzing critical elements of programs. First, we define supplemental and

intervention programs. Following, we discuss the process for selection of these programs. Further, we offer specific guidelines regarding the review process including type of review, sampling procedures, documenting evidence, and scoring. We trust you will find these guidelines useful and usable in this significant professional process.

1. What are supplemental and intervention reading programs?

Supplemental programs are used to support and extend the critical elements of a core reading program. Typically, supplemental programs provide additional instruction in one or two areas (e.g.,

phonological awareness, fluency) and provide more instruction or practice in the particular area(s) of need. These programs can often be effective in supporting an identified gap in an otherwise strong core reading program. For example, if the core program does not provide enough fluency in reading connected text, a supplemental program could be implemented to support the core.

Intervention programs are designed specifically for children who demonstrate reading difficulty and are performing below grade level. The purpose of these programs is to provide more explicit, systematic instruction to accelerate learning and bring the learner to grade-

level performance. In general, intervention programs focus on more than one area (e.g., phonics, fluency, and comprehension). In some cases, a particular intervention program may focus explicitly and exclusively on one essential reading area (e.g., phonemic awareness.) Intervention programs allow teachers to meet the needs of individual students who are struggling in their classrooms. They are specialized, intense, and typically delivered in small group settings.

This tool is designed to evaluate supplemental and intervention programs that address one or more of the five essential components of the Reading First legislation in scientifically-based beginning reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. It is not designed for programs that exclusively target spelling, writing, visual processing, or areas other than the five essential components.

A supplemental or intervention program may be designed for a specific grade (e.g., kindergarten) or span across several grades (e.g., K/1 or 1/2, etc.).

2. What process should be used to select supplemental and intervention reading programs?

Schools may begin the selection process by conducting a thorough examination of

the core reading program that has been adopted. Using the tool [A Consumer's Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program Grades K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis](#), schools can identify the areas of strength and weakness in their core program. Schools can then focus their attention on supplemental and intervention programs that provide instruction in those areas of weakness.

In addition, schools will want to examine student assessment data to determine areas where students are experiencing difficulties (e.g., phonemic awareness, vocabulary). Again, it makes sense to direct a search toward supplemental and intervention programs that address those particular skill areas. Schools will also want to consider how discrepant the individual students' scores are from target goals on essential reading components. Some students may require strategic instruction that includes the current core program intensified or modified to some degree (e.g., time, grouping size, number of modeled examples, etc.). A supplemental program may be a very appropriate way to strengthen the instruction provided in the core for these students. Other students may require intensive instruction that involves changing the core instruction significantly or supplanting it with an intervention program. Through a combination of

examining the adopted core and considering student abilities, schools can target specific supplemental and intervention programs for review.

Once targeted programs have been identified, ideally every teacher involved in reading instruction would be involved in the review and selection of the supplemental and intervention reading programs. Realistically, a grade-level representative may be responsible for the initial review and reduce the "possible" options to a reasonable number. At minimum, we recommend that grade-level representatives use the criteria that follow and then share those findings with grade-level teams.

3. What criteria should be used to select supplemental and intervention reading programs?

A converging body of scientific evidence is available and accessible to guide the development of primary-grade reading programs. We know from research the critical skills and strategies that children must acquire in order to become successful readers by grade 3 (National Reading Panel, 2000, National Research Council, 1998; NICHD, 1996, Simmons & Kame'enui, 1998). Following, we specify criteria for reviewing critical elements of reading organized by essential component.

A Consumer's Guide to Selecting Supplemental and Intervention Programs: A Critical Elements Analysis

A key assumption is that a schoolwide beginning reading initiative will (a) address all grade-level content standards and (b) ensure that high priority standards are taught in sufficient depth, breadth, and quality that all learners will achieve or exceed expected levels of proficiency. However, all standards are not equally important. Our critical elements analysis focuses on those skills and strategies essential for early reading success.

General Review Process

1. Scope of Review and Prioritization of Items

To begin, identify the essential components (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) and grade levels that the supplemental or intervention program targets. Complete only those items that evaluate the targeted components and grades. Many programs are designed to instruct students across grade levels (e.g.,

a K-1 program). For these multi-level or multi-grade programs, mark one program rating per relevant item. Some programs have a separate, distinct level for each grade (e.g., K, 1, 2). For grade-specific programs, review each grade level separately and assign a distinct score for each grade for each item. For intervention programs, complete the relevant items by essential component then complete the additional items included in the Intervention Supplement.

2. Type of Review and Sampling Procedures

To gain a representative sample of the program, we recommend the following strategies:

(a) Within lesson procedure (w) involves identifying the first day (lesson) in which a critical skill (e.g., letter sound correspondence, word reading) is introduced and tracing that skill over a sequence

of 2-3 days. Then, repeating the process to document evidence at an additional point in time (e.g., middle/end of program).

(b) Scope and sequence procedure (ss) involves using the scope and sequence to identify the initial instruction on a skill and analyze how instruction progresses over time. Document progression in the evidence columns.

(c) Skills trace procedure (st) should be used for selected skills that involve evaluation of practice cycles or cumulative review. This procedure involves identifying the first day (lesson) in which a critical skill is introduced and tracing that skill over 10 consecutive lessons. A separate form is provided for conducting skills traces.

3. Documenting Evidence

On the review forms there is space to document specific information. Example information may include lesson number, particular skill/strategy introduced, etc. A separate form is provided for documenting

evidence on skills traces. This form requires documentation of both new and review content for 10 consecutive lessons.

4. Scoring Criteria

The criteria for scoring each element is listed below. When evaluating individual elements, place a slash (/) through the respective circle that represents your rating.

Use the following criteria for each critical element:

- = Program consistently meets/exceeds criterion.
- = Program partially meets/exceeds criterion.
- = Program does not satisfy criterion.

Program Name: _____

Date of Publication: _____

Publisher: _____

Reviewer Code: _____

Directions: Place a check (✓) next to each appropriate item that applies to your evaluation of the program.

Part A • The program targets instruction on the following essential components (select all that apply):

- _____ phonemic awareness
- _____ phonics
- _____ fluency
- _____ vocabulary
- _____ comprehension

• Specify for which grade the program is appropriate (select all that apply):

- _____ K
- _____ 1
- _____ 2
- _____ 3

• Select one of the following:

- _____ Multi-grade program. One program rating will be assigned for each relevant item.
- _____ Grade-specific program. A separate analysis will be completed for each grade.

• Decision Point:

- Part B
- _____ The program meets the criteria for a **supplemental** program and will be reviewed for that purpose.
 - _____ The program meets the criteria for an **intervention** program and will be reviewed for that purpose.

Phonemic Awareness: *The ability to hear and manipulate the sound structure of language. It is a strong predictor of reading success. Phonemic awareness is an auditory skill and consists of multiple components.*

Phonemic Awareness Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ● ○	1. Teaches skills explicitly. (w)	X	X				
● ● ○	2. Models phonemic awareness tasks and responses orally and follows with students' production of the task. (w)	X	X				
● ● ○	3. Progresses from the easier phonemic awareness activities to the more difficult (e.g., isolation, blending, segmentation, and manipulation). (ss)	X	X				
● ● ○	4. Incorporates letters into phonemic awareness activities. [NRP, pg. 2-41] (w)	X	X				
● ● ○	5. Makes students' cognitive manipulations of sounds overt by using auditory cues or manipulatives that signal the movement of one sound to the next. (w)	X					

Phonemic Awareness Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ○ ○	6. Analyzes words at the phoneme level (e.g., working with individual sounds within words). (ss)	X	X				
● ○ ○	7. In K, focus is on first the initial sound (<i>sat</i>), then on final sound, (<i>sat</i>), and lastly on the medial sound (<i>sat</i>) in words. In grade 1, focus is on phonemes in all positions. (ss)	X	X				
● ○ ○	8. Focuses beginning phonemic level instruction on short words (two to three phonemes; e.g. <i>at, mud, run</i>). (ss)	X					
● ○ ○	9. Works with increasingly longer words and expands beyond consonant-vowel-consonant words (e.g., <i>sun</i>) to more complex phonemic structures (consonant blends). (ss)		X				
● ○ ○	10. Focuses appropriate amount of daily time on blending, segmenting, and manipulating tasks until proficient. [NRP, pg. 2-41] (w)	X	X				

Please summarize evidence of sufficient and insufficient instructional quality in the area of phonemic awareness. Space for additional comments is provided on the next page. Constructive feedback is helpful. Comments may be used and distributed to a wider audience (schools, publishers, etc.).

SUMMARY	
Evidence of Sufficient Instructional Quality	Evidence of Insufficient Instructional Quality

Additional Comments

Phonics: The ability to recognize words accurately, fluently, and independently. Phonics is fundamental to reading in an alphabetic writing system. In early grades, critical skills include learning to associate sounds with letters, using those associations to decode and read simple words, and learning to recognize important nondecodable words. [NRP, pg. 2-41; pg 2-93]

Phonics Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ● ○	1. Introduces high-utility letter sound instruction early in the sequence (e.g., /m/, /s/, /a/, /r/, /t/) instead of low-utility letter sounds (e.g., /x/, /y/, /z/). (ss)	X	X				
● ● ○	2. Sequences the introduction of letter sounds, letter combinations, and word parts in ways that minimize confusion. (ss)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	3. Incorporates frequent and cumulative review of taught letter sounds to increase automaticity. (st)	X	X				
● ● ○	4. Models instruction at each of the fundamental stages (e.g., letter-sound correspondences, letter combinations, prefixes, word endings, blending, reading whole words). (w) and (ss)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	5. Introduces regular words for which students know all the letter sounds. (ss)	X	X	X	X		

Phonics Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ● ○	6. Progresses systematically from simple word types (e.g., consonant-vowel-consonant) and word lengths (e.g., number of phonemes) and word complexity (e.g. phonemes in the word, position of blends, stop sounds) to more complex words. [NRP, pg. 2-132] (ss)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	7. Incorporates spelling to reinforce word analysis. After students can read words, provides explicit instruction in spelling, showing students how to map the sounds of letters on to print. (w) and (ss)		X	X	X		
● ● ○	8. Provides teacher-guided practice in controlled word lists and connected text in which students can apply their newly learned skills successfully. (w)		X	X	X		
● ● ○	9. Begins instruction in word families, word patterns, and larger orthographic units after students have learned the letter-sound correspondence in the unit. [NRP, pg 2-13] (ss)		X	X	X		
● ● ○	10. Teaches students to process larger, highly represented patterns to increase fluency in word recognition. (w)		X	X	X		

Phonics Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ○ ○	11. Teaches advanced phonic-analysis skills explicitly, first in isolation, then in words and connected text and utilizes other program materials (e.g., trade books, anthologies) when students are proficient. [NRP pg. 2-132] (w) and (ss)			X	X		
● ○ ○	12. Teaches explicit strategy to read multisyllabic words by using prefixes, suffixes, and known word parts (w).			X	X		
● ○ ○	13. Uses structural analysis judiciously to support word recognition strategies. (ss)				X		

Phonics: *The ability to recognize words accurately, fluently, and independently. Phonics is fundamental to reading in an alphabetic writing system. In early grades, critical skills include learning to associate sounds with letters, using those associations to decode and read simple words, and learning to recognize important nondecodable words.* [NRP, pg. 2-41; pg 2-93]

Phonics Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ● ○	1. Selects words that have high utility; that is, words that are used frequently in grade-appropriate literature and informational text. (ss)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	2. Controls the number of irregular words introduced at one time. (w)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	3. Separates highly similar words for initial instruction (e.g. was/saw). (ss)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	4. Points out irregularities and provides a strategy for reading irregular words using letters or parts of the words. (w)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	5. Preteaches sight words and incorporates them into connected text. (w)	X	X	X	X		

Reviewer Code: _____

PHONICS: IRREGULAR WORDS

Critical Elements Analysis

Phonics Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ○ ○	6. Provides ample practice and cumulative review of important high-frequency sight words. (st)	X	X	X	X		

Please summarize evidence of sufficient and insufficient instructional quality in the area of phonics (decoding and irregular words). Space for additional comments is provided on the next page. Constructive feedback is helpful. Comments may be used and distributed to a wider audience (schools, publishers, etc.).

SUMMARY	
Evidence of Sufficient Instructional Quality (specify elements)	Evidence of Insufficient Instructional Quality (specify elements)

Additional Comments

Fluency: *The effortless, automatic ability to read words in isolation (orthographic coding) and connected text.*

Text Reading and Fluency Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ○ ○	1. Provides fluency practice at the word level. (w)		X	X	X		
● ○ ○	2. Introduces passage reading soon after students can read a sufficient number of words accurately. (w)		X				
● ○ ○	3. Teaches explicit strategy to permit readers to move from reading words in lists to reading words in sentences and passages. (w)		X	X	X		
● ○ ○	4. Initial stories/passages composed of a high percentage of regular words (minimum of 75-80% decodable words). (w)		X				
● ○ ○	5. Passages contain regular words comprised of letter-sounds, phonic elements, and word types that have been taught. (w) and (ss)		X	X	X		

Text Reading and Fluency Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ○ ○	6. Passages contain high-frequency irregular words that have been previously taught. (w) and (ss)		X	X	X		
● ○ ○	7. Introduces fluency practice (e.g., repeated reading) after students read words in passages accurately. [NRP, pg. 3-15] (w)		X	X	X		
● ○ ○	8. Includes sufficient independent practice materials of appropriate difficulty for students to develop fluency. [NRP pg. 3-28] (w) and (ss)		X	X	X		
● ○ ○	9. Builds toward a 60 word-per-minute fluency goal by the end of grade one. [NRP, pg. 3-4] (ss)		X				
● ○ ○	10. Builds toward a 90 word-per-minute fluency goal by the end of grade two. [NRP, pg. 3-4] (ss)			X			
● ○ ○	11. Builds toward a 120 word-per-minute fluency goal by the end of grade three. [NRP, pg. 3-4] (ss)				X		

Reviewer Code: _____

TEXT READING AND FLUENCY

Critical Elements Analysis

Text Reading and Fluency Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ○ ○	12. Assesses fluency regularly. (ss)		X	X	X		

Please summarize evidence of sufficient and insufficient instructional quality in the area of text reading and fluency. Space for additional comments is provided on the next page. Constructive feedback is helpful. Comments may be used and distributed to a wider audience (schools, publishers, etc.).

SUMMARY	
Evidence of Sufficient Instructional Quality	Evidence of Insufficient Instructional Quality

Additional Comments

Vocabulary: *The words we must know to communicate effectively. In general, vocabulary can be described as oral vocabulary or reading vocabulary. Oral vocabulary refers to words that we use in speaking or recognize in listening. Reading vocabulary refers to words we recognize or use in print.*

Vocabulary Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ● ○	1. Selects words that are highly useful for passage understanding and/or later learning. (w)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	2. Explains meanings of words in everyday language (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). (w)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	3. Provides direct instruction of targeted concepts and vocabulary. (w)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	4. Provides repeated and multiple exposures to critical vocabulary in a variety of contexts. (w) and (ss)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	5. Integrates words into sentences and asks students to tell the meaning of the word in the sentence. (w)	X	X	X	X		

Vocabulary Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ● ○	6. Engages students in processing word meanings at a deeper level (e.g., associating new words with known words, creating context for new words). (w)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	7. Reviews previously introduced words cumulatively. [NRP, p.4-4] (st)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	8. Teaches strategies to use context to gain the meanings of an unfamiliar word. (Context includes the words surrounding the unfamiliar word that provide information to its meaning.) (w)			X	X		
● ● ○	9. Teaches dictionary usage explicitly with grade-appropriate dictionaries that allow students to access and understand the meaning of an unknown word. (w)				X		
● ● ○	10. Extends the understanding of concepts and vocabulary of the English language through: (1) learning and using antonyms and synonyms; (2) using individual words in compound words to predict meaning; (3) using prefixes and suffixes to assist in word meaning; and (4) learning simple multiple-meaning words. (w) and (ss)			X	X		

Please summarize evidence of sufficient and insufficient instructional quality in the area of vocabulary. Space for additional comments is provided on the next page. Constructive feedback is helpful. Comments may be used and distributed to a wider audience (schools, publishers, etc.).

SUMMARY	
Evidence of Sufficient Instructional Quality	Evidence of Insufficient Instructional Quality

Additional Comments

Comprehension: *The complex cognitive process involving the intentional interaction between reader and text to extract and construct meaning.*

Comprehension Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ● ○	1. Explicitly teaches critical comprehension strategies (e.g. main idea, literal, inferential, retell, prediction) by providing multiple examples. [NRP, pg. 4-126; pp 4-100] (w)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	2. Teaches background information or activates prior knowledge to increase a student's understanding of what is read. [NRP, pg. 4-108] (w)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	3. The text for initial instruction in comprehension: (1) begins with text units appropriate for the learner; (2) uses familiar vocabulary; and (3) uses simple sentences. (w)	X	X				
● ● ○	4. Uses text in which the main idea or comprehension unit is explicitly stated, clear, and in which the ideas follow a logical order. (w)			X	X		
● ● ○	5. Provides guided practice in and systematic review of critical comprehension strategies. [NRP, pg. 4-126; pp. 4-100] (st)	X	X	X	X		

Comprehension Instruction							
Rating	Criterion	Grade				Initial Instruction	Additional Evidence
		K	1	2	3		
● ● ○	6. Connects previously taught skills and strategies with new content and text. [NRP, pg. 4-107] (w) and (ss)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	7. Models and guides the students through story structure (e.g., setting _____), thinking out loud as elements are being identified. [NRP, pg. 4-100] (w)	X	X	X	X		
● ● ○	8. Uses story grammar structure as a tool for prompting information to compare and contrast, organize information, and group related ideas to maintain a consistent focus. [NRP, pg. 4-112] (w)			X	X		
● ● ○	9. Teaches conventions of informational text (e.g. titles, chapter headings) to locate important information. (w) and (ss)			X	X		
● ● ○	10. Teaches explicit strategy to interpret information from graphs, diagrams, and charts. (w) and (ss)			X	X		

Please summarize evidence of sufficient and insufficient instructional quality in the area of comprehension. Space for additional comments is provided on the next page. Constructive feedback is helpful. Comments may be used and distributed to a wider audience (schools, publishers, etc.).

SUMMARY	
Evidence of Sufficient Instructional Quality	Evidence of Insufficient Instructional Quality

Additional Comments