

Research Behind All Four Blocks

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Strategies for Promoting the Four Blocks (including Building Blocks & Big Blocks)

1. If necessary, downplay Four-Blocks terminology; instead, characterize your instructional approach as “a comprehensive reading and writing framework with high-quality instruction across all components,” and discuss instructional components in the general language used in research reports
2. Quote, rather than paraphrase research reports as much as possible
3. Quote the National Reading Panel’s Reports of the Subgroups as much as possible
4. Supplement the NRP Report with other research, as necessary, especially research published since 2000

Reference for the National Reading Panel (NRP) Report

National Reading Panel (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction: Reports of the subgroups* (National Institute of Health Pub. No. 00-4754). Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

The NRP's Five Reading Instructional Components

- Phonemic Awareness Instruction
- Phonics Instruction
- Fluency Instruction
- Vocabulary Instruction
- Text Comprehension Instruction

Phonemic Awareness Instruction

Phonemic Awareness Instruction in the Four Blocks

- “Phonemic Awareness” is one of the six Building Blocks that comprise the kindergarten framework underlying the Four Blocks
- During writing in K-1, children are taught to segment spoken words into phonemes in order to spell them phonetically
- During Making Words, children are taught to segment spoken words into phonemes in order to spell them correctly
- During Making Words, children are taught to delete phonemes from spoken words in order to spell them correctly (e.g., “change one letter to make *car* into *far*”)
- During the transfer step of Rounding Up the Rhymes and Making Words, children are taught to manipulate and blend onsets with rimes

Research Support for the Phonemic Awareness Instruction in the Four Blocks—Using Tongue Twisters to Teach Phoneme Identity/Identification

- “PA training programs varied . . . in the type of phoneme manipulations taught, segmenting, blending, deleting, identifying, or categorizing phonemes, or manipulating onsets and rimes.” (NRP, p. 2-28)
- “all of the effect sizes involving phonemic awareness and reading outcomes were significantly greater than zero.” (NRP, p. 2-18)

Research Support for the Phonemic Awareness Instruction in the Four Blocks—Manipulating Onsets and Rimes, Especially Blending Them

- “PA training programs varied . . . in the type of phoneme manipulations taught, segmenting, blending, deleting, identifying, or categorizing phonemes, or manipulating onsets and rimes.” (NRP, p. 2-28)
- “all of the effect sizes involving phonemic awareness and reading outcomes were significantly greater than zero.” (NRP, p. 2-18)

Research Support for the Phonemic Awareness Instruction in the Four Blocks—Teaching PA with Letters During Writing with Invented Spelling and Making Words

- “Instruction that taught phoneme manipulation with letters helped normally developing readers and at-risk readers acquire PA [phonemic awareness] better than PA instruction without letters.” (NRP, p. 2-4)

Research Support for the Phonemic Awareness Instruction in the Four Blocks—Teaching PA during Writing with Invented Spelling and Making Words

- “When PA training involves teaching students to segment words into phonemes and to select letters for those phonemes, it is the equivalent of teaching students to spell words phonemically, which is another form of phonics instruction.” (NRP, p. 2-34)
- “instruction that teaches students to invent spellings by detecting phonemes in words and representing them with letters offers a form of PA training.” (NRP, p. 2-34)

Research Support for the Phonemic Awareness Instruction in the Four Blocks—Emphasizing Phonemic Segmentation During Writing with Invented Spelling and Making Words

- “Teaching that focused on one or two types of PA manipulations yielded larger effect sizes than teaching three or more PA skills.” (NRP, p. 2-28)

Research Support for the Phonemic Awareness Instruction in the Four Blocks—Focusing on Phonemic Segmentation and Phonemic Deletion During Making Words

- “Comparison of specific PA skills acquired during training indicated that effects were larger for segmentation and deletion outcomes than for blending.” (NRP, p. 2-20)

Research Support for the Phonemic Awareness Instruction in the Four Blocks— PA is Only One of Six Building Blocks

- Perfetti (2003) argued that there is knowledge more basic and important than phonemic awareness “for reading to get a start. What needs to be learned is that the printed forms on the page correspond to words in spoken language” (p. 17).

Reference

Perfetti, C. A. (2003). The universal grammar of reading. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 7, 3-24.

Research Support for the Phonemic Awareness Instruction in the Four Blocks—PA is Transferred to Writing and Shared Reading

- “transfer [of PA] to reading and spelling was significantly greater among mid-to-high SES than among low SES students” (NRP, p. 2-24)

Research Support for the Phonemic Awareness Instruction in the Four Blocks—Allocating Appropriate Time

- “Effect sizes were larger when PA instruction lasted between 5 and 18 hours than when either less or more time was spent training students.” (NRP, p. 2-31) [e.g., average of 6 minutes per day for a school year = 18 hours]
- “the lengthiest training [was] associated with the smallest effect size” (NRP, p. 2-29)

Research Support for the Phonemic Awareness Instruction in the Four Blocks

- “Exactly how PA instruction should be taught by teachers in their classrooms is not clearly specified by the research. A variety of programs was found to be effective. . . . Ultimately . . . teachers need to evaluate the methods they use against measured success in their own students.”
(NRP, p. 2-43)

Phonemic Awareness Instruction in our Comprehensive Reading & Writing Framework

- “Phonemic awareness” is one of the six instructional components that comprise our framework in kindergarten
- During writing in K-1, children are taught to segment spoken words into phonemes in order to spell them phonetically
- During our phonics instruction, children are taught to segment spoken words into phonemes in order to spell them correctly
- During our phonics instruction, children are taught to delete phonemes from spoken words
- During our phonics instruction, children are taught to manipulate and blend onsets with rimes

Phonics Instruction

What the NRP Means by “Phonics Instruction”

- “Systematic phonics instruction is a way of teaching reading that stresses the acquisition of letter-sound correspondences and their use to read and spell words” (NRP, p. 2-89)

Phonics Instruction in the Four Blocks

- The phonics instruction in the Four Blocks is not “embedded,” “incidental,” or “implicit,” and does not wait to “highlight elements as they happen to appear in a text.”
- Rather, each month at each grade, there is a planned sequence of lessons with specific letters, sounds, and words. In the Four Blocks, the children begin by learning phonemic awareness, letter names, and sounds. They progress to learning digraphs, blends, and vowel patterns in one- and two-syllable words. They continue to progress to decode and spell polysyllabic words.

Phonics Instruction in the Four Blocks

- The Four Blocks combines four kinds of systematic phonics instruction: analogy phonics [e.g., transfer step in Making Words and Rounding Up the Rhymes], phonics in context [e.g., Guess the Covered Word], onset-rime phonics [e.g., Rounding Up the Rhymes; sort step in Making Words], and phonics through spelling [e.g., Writing with Invented Spelling; Making Words; On-the-Back Activities with Word Wall]
- The Four Blocks generally teaches phonics to the class, rather than to small groups or individual students
- The Four Blocks teaches children to apply the phonics they are learning in order to spell specific words during working with words, to read words they encounter during guided reading, and to spell words they want to use during writing
- The Four Blocks uses alternative research-based approaches to teach children how to use spelling patterns to decode and spell polysyllabic words in grades 2 and up [e.g., Using Words You Know; Making Big Words]

Research Support that the Phonics Instruction in the Four Blocks is Systematic

- “In teaching phonics explicitly and systematically, several different instructional approaches have been used. These include synthetic phonics, analytic phonics, embedded phonics, analogy phonics, onset-rime phonics, and phonics through spelling. . . . Phonics-through-spelling programs teach children to transform sounds into letters to write words. Phonics in context approaches teach children to use sound-letter correspondences along with context cues to identify unfamiliar words they encounter in text. Analogy phonics programs teach children to use parts of written words they already know to identify new words. The distinctions between systematic phonics approaches are not absolute, however, and some phonics programs combine two or more of these types of instruction.” (NRP, p. 2-99)

Research Support for the Phonics Instruction in the Four Blocks

- “Is phonics taught more effectively when students are tutored individually, when they are taught in small groups, or when they are taught as classes? All three delivery systems proved to be effective ways of teaching phonics, . . . and no one differed significantly from the others.”
(NRP, p. 2-132)

Research Support for the Phonics Instruction in the Four Blocks

- “various types of systematic phonics approaches are more effective than non-phonics approaches in promoting substantial growth in reading.”
(NRP, p. 2-132)

Research Does **Not** Support the Need for Decodable Text in Systematic Phonics Instruction

- “very little research has attempted to determine whether the use of decodable books in systematic phonics programs has any influence on the progress that some or all children make in learning to read” (NRP, p. 2-137)

Specific Research Support for Teaching Phonics Through Spelling

- Clarke (1988) found that first-grade programs that included invented spelling produced better decoders than first-grade programs that included only traditional spelling.
- Uhry & Shepherd (1993) also found that including spelling as part of the word instruction first-graders receive improved their decoding.
- Davis (2000) found that spelling-based decoding instruction was as effective as reading-based decoding instruction for all her students, but more effective for the children with poor phonological awareness.

References

- Clarke, L. K. (1988). Invented versus traditional spelling in first graders' writings: Effects on learning to spell and read. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 22, 281–309.
- Davis, L. H. (2000). The effects of rime-based analogy training on word reading and spelling of first-grade children with good and poor phonological awareness (Doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 2000). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61, 2253A.
- Uhry, J. K., & Shepherd, M. J. (1993). Segmentation/spelling instruction as part of a first-grade reading program: Effects on several measures of reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 28, 218-233.

Justification for the Four Blocks' Alternative Research-Based Approaches to Teaching Decoding and Spelling in Grades 2 and Up

- “phonics instruction failed to exert a significant impact on the reading performance of low-achieving readers in 2nd through 6th grades” (NRP, p. 2-133)
- “the effects of systematic phonics instruction on text comprehension in readers above 1st grade . . . were not significant for the older group in general” (NRP, p. 2-133)
- “systematic phonics instruction . . . did not improve spelling in students above 1st grade.” (NRP, p. 2-134)

Phonics Instruction in our Comprehensive Reading & Writing Framework

- The phonics instruction in our framework is not “embedded,” “incidental,” or “implicit,” and does not wait to “highlight elements as they happen to appear in a text.”
- Rather, each month at each grade, there is a planned sequence of lessons with specific letters, sounds, and words. In the framework, the children begin by learning phonemic awareness, letter names, and sounds. They progress to learning digraphs, blends, and vowel patterns in one- and two-syllable words. They continue to progress to decode and spell polysyllabic words.

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- Our framework combines four kinds of systematic phonics instruction: analogy phonics, phonics in context, onset-rime phonics, and phonics through spelling
- Our framework generally teaches phonics to the class, rather than to small groups or individual students
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- Our framework uses alternative research-based approaches to teach children how to use spelling patterns to decode and spell polysyllabic words in grades 2 and up

Fluency Instruction

What the NRP calls “Fluency” is *Oral Reading Fluency*

- “Fluency [is] the ability to read a text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression” (NRP, p. 3-5)

Fluency Instruction in the Four Blocks

- Formats for “During” Reading in Guided Reading
- Re-reading the same text in a different format

Research Support for “Guided Oral Reading Procedures”

- “What do results of the meta-analysis of guided oral reading procedures show? . . . These data provide strong support for the supposition that instruction in guided oral reading is effective in improving reading” (NRP, p. 3-3)
- “Generally, the [National Reading] Panel found that [guided oral reading] procedures tended to improve word recognition, fluency (speed and accuracy of oral reading), and comprehension with most groups.” (NRP, p. 3-28)
- “such procedures work under a wide variety of conditions and with minimal special training or materials.” (NRP, p. 3-28)

What the NRP Means by “Guided Oral Reading Procedures”

- “one [of the two] approach[es examined by the Panel] is to have students read passages orally with guidance and feedback. Programs in this category include *repeated reading . . . , paired reading, shared reading*” (NRP, p. 3-1)
- “Many different instructional procedures were examined in these studies. . . . Some treatments were delivered by teachers . . . , some by other students The treatments went under names such as . . . repeated reading, peer tutoring, shared reading All were associated with positive effect sizes.” (NRP, p. 3-17)

What the NRP Does **Not** Mean by “Guided Oral Reading Procedures”

- “Historically, most of the instructional attention accorded to oral fluency was developed through round-robin reading, a still widely used approach in which teachers have students take turns reading parts of a text aloud These procedures have been criticized as boring, anxiety provoking, disruptive of fluency, and wasteful of instructional time, and their use has been found to have little or no relationship to gains in reading achievement” (NRP, p. 3-11)

What the NRP Does **Not** Mean by “Guided Oral Reading Procedures”

- “It is evident that with round-robin procedures students receive little actual practice in reading because no child is allowed to read for very long.” (NRP, p. 3-11)
- “In round-robin reading, time was severely limited because the teacher was the only one allowed to provide expert guidance; that is not true of the newer procedures. (NRP, p. 3-11)

Research Support for Partner Reading

- “There were not enough comparisons . . . to allow for a systematic determination of best procedures. For the most part, the comparisons that were done resulted in no differences. In other words, each of the procedures examined did about as well as the others. Some of the comparisons that were made included . . . various peer . . . tutoring procedures in which students read aloud together The lack of clear differences among procedures . . . suggests the robustness of these procedures for stimulating reading improvement.”
(NRP, p. 3-19)

Research Support for Partner Reading

- “Dixon-Krauss (1995) conducted a feasibility study of partner reading with 24 1st and 2nd graders in regular classrooms. The program proved to be manageable for the regular classroom teachers, and the students were positive about the activity.” (NRP, p. 3-19)

Research Support for Partner Reading and Shared Reading

- “Many different instructional procedures were examined in these studies. . . . Some treatments were delivered by teachers . . . , some by other students The treatments went under names such as . . . repeated reading, peer tutoring, shared reading All were associated with positive effect sizes.” (NRP, p. 3-17)

Fluency Instruction in our Comprehensive Reading & Writing Framework

- Our guided reading lessons have students engage regularly in the guided oral reading procedures of shared reading and paired reading/peer tutoring/partner reading
- Our guided reading lessons have students engage regularly in the guided oral reading procedure of repeated reading
- Our guided reading lessons almost never have children engage in round-robin reading

Vocabulary Instruction

What the NRP calls “Vocabulary Instruction” is *Meaning Vocabulary Instruction*

- “reading comprehension . . . cannot be understood without examining the critical role of vocabulary learning and instruction” (NRP, p. 4-1)
- “Both vocabulary and comprehension involve the meaning of the text, albeit at different levels.” (NRP, p. 4-15)

Vocabulary Instruction in the Four Blocks

Explicit/Direct Instruction:

- Teaching word meanings in the “before” part of a guided reading lesson
- Teaching how to decode and spell big words
- Teaching content-area vocabulary

Implicit/Indirect Instruction:

- Self-selected reading
- Teacher read-aloud
- Conversations about books

Research Support for Teaching Meaning Vocabulary in Multiple Ways

- “Dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning.” (NRP, p. 4-4 & p. 4-27)
- “It is clear that vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly.” (NRP, p. 4-24)
- “a variety of direct and indirect methods of vocabulary instruction can be effective.” (NRP, p. 4-27)

Research Support for Teaching Meaning Vocabulary During Guided Reading the Four-Blocks Way

- “Pre-instruction of vocabulary words prior to reading can facilitate both vocabulary acquisition and comprehension.” (NRP, p. 4-4)
- “There is a need for direct instruction of vocabulary items that are required for a specific text to be read as part of the lesson.” (NRP, p. 4-24)

More Research Support for Teaching Meaning Vocabulary During Guided Reading the Four-Blocks Way

- “Active learning is best. When students were engaged in the tasks in which they were learning vocabulary, they had larger gains This suggests that vocabulary learning tasks that advance other knowledge would be more effective.” (NRP, p. 4-26)
- “Vocabulary learning should entail active engagement in learning tasks.” (NRP, p. 4-27)

Is teaching meaning vocabulary in the content areas a part of the Four Blocks? Yes and No, but Mainly Yes

- No, because the Four Blocks is a comprehensive **reading** and **writing** instructional framework, not a full elementary curriculum
- Yes, because—unlike a reading and writing approach that includes leveled groups—the Four Blocks leaves time for teaching science, social studies, and current events
- Yes, because the guided reading block uses content-area material as much as possible
- Yes, because focused writing in the writing block often concentrates on a content-area topic

Research Support for Explicit Vocabulary Instruction in the Content Areas

- “The best gains [in learning vocabulary] were made in instruction that extended beyond single class periods and involved multiple exposures in authentic contexts beyond the classroom.” (NRP, p. 4-4)
- “When vocabulary items are derived from content learning materials, the learner will be better equipped to deal with specific reading matter in content areas.” (NRP, p. 4-4)
- “Vocabulary learning is effective when it entails active engagement in learning tasks.” (NRP, p. 4-4)

More Research Support for Explicit Vocabulary Instruction in the Content Areas

- “a large portion of vocabulary items should be derived from content learning materials” (NRP, p. 4-25)
- “Repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items are important.” (NRP, p. 27)
- “Learning in rich contexts is valuable for vocabulary learning.” (NRP, p. 27)

Research Support for Teaching Prefixes, Suffixes, and Roots

- “Other common methods of explicit [vocabulary] instruction involve the analysis of word roots or affixes.” (NRP, p. 4-17)

Research Support for Self-Selected Reading and Teacher Read-Aloud

- “Vocabulary can be learned incidentally in the context of storybook reading or from listening to the reading of others.” (NRP, p. 4-4)
- “Vocabulary can be acquired through incidental learning.” (NRP, p. 4-27)
- “Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly.” (NRP, p. 4-27)

Research Support for Self-Selected Reading

- “Most theorists are agreed that the bulk of vocabulary growth during a child’s lifetime occurs indirectly through language exposure rather than through direct teaching Furthermore, many researchers are convinced that reading volume, rather than oral language, is the prime contributor to individual differences in children’s vocabularies” (A. Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998, p. 9)
- “A positive dimension of our research is that all of our studies have demonstrated that reading yields significant dividends for everyone—not just for the ‘smart kids’ or the more able readers. Even the child with limited reading and comprehension skills will build vocabulary and cognitive structures through reading.” (p. 14)
- “We can thus elicit two crucial messages from our research findings. . . . We must ensure that students’ decoding and word recognition abilities are progressing solidly. . . . [W]e should provide all children, regardless of their achievement levels, with as many reading experiences as possible.” (pp. 14-15)

Reference

Cunningham, A. E. & Stanovich K. E. (1998).
What reading does for the mind. *American
Educator*, 22(1&2), 8-15.

Research Support for Teacher Read-Aloud

- “children in the experimental classrooms who were read to daily over long periods of time scored significantly better on measures of vocabulary . . . than children in the control groups who were not read to by an adult.”
(Morrow & Gambrell, 2000, p. 568)

Reference

Morrow, L. M & Gambrell, L. B. (2000).
Literature-based reading instruction. In M. L.
Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R.
Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. III,
pp. 563-586). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Research Support for Conversations About Books

- “Benefits in understanding text by applying letter-sound correspondences to printed material come about only if the target word is in the learner’s oral vocabulary.” (NRP, p. 4-3)

Vocabulary Instruction in our Comprehensive Reading & Writing Framework

Explicit/Direct Instruction:

- Teaching word meanings before children read as part of a guided reading lesson
- Teaching how to decode and spell polysyllabic words
- Teaching content-area vocabulary during guided reading and writing lessons

Implicit/Indirect Instruction:

- Independent/self-selected reading
- Teacher read-aloud
- Discussions and conferences about books

Text Comprehension Instruction

Text Comprehension Instruction in the Four Blocks

- “Before-And-After” Reading Activities in Guided Reading
- Formats for “During” Reading in Guided Reading

Research Support for “Before-And-After” Reading Activities in Guided Reading—KWL Charts and Graphic Organizers

- “The eight kinds of [comprehension] instruction that appear to be effective and most promising for classroom instruction are: (NRP, p. 4-5)
- “3. Graphic and semantic organizers that allow the reader to represent graphically (write or draw) the meanings and relationships of the ideas that underlie the words in the text.” (NRP, p. 4-6)

Research Support for “Before-And-After” Reading Activities in Guided Reading—Story Maps

- “The eight kinds of [comprehension] instruction that appear to be effective and most promising for classroom instruction are: (NRP, p. 4-5)
- “4. Story structure from which the reader learns to ask and answer who, what, where, when, and why questions about the plot and, in some cases, maps out the time line, characters, and events in stories.” (NRP, p. 4-6)

Research Support for “Before-And-After” Reading Activities in Guided Reading—Questioning in Think-Alouds

- “The eight kinds of [comprehension] instruction that appear to be effective and most promising for classroom instruction are: (NRP, p. 4-5)
- “6. Question generation in which the reader asks himself or herself what, when, where, why, what will happen, how, and who questions.” (NRP, p. 4-6)

Research Support for “Before-And-After” Reading Activities in Guided Reading—Monitoring in Think-Alouds

- “The eight kinds of [comprehension] instruction that appear to be effective and most promising for classroom instruction are: (NRP, p. 4-5)
- “1. Comprehension monitoring in which the reader learns how to be aware or conscious of his or her understanding during reading and learns procedures to deal with problems in understanding as they arise.” (NRP, p. 4-6)

Research Support for “Before-And-After” Reading Activities in Guided Reading—Summarizing in Think-Alouds

- “The eight kinds of [comprehension] instruction that appear to be effective and most promising for classroom instruction are: (NRP, p. 4-5)
- “7. Summarization in which the reader attempts to identify and write the main or most important ideas that integrate or unite the other ideas or meanings of the text into a coherent whole.” (NRP, p. 4-6)

Research Support for “Before-And-After” Reading Activities in Guided Reading—Questioning in Writing Before, During, or After Reading

- “The eight kinds of [comprehension] instruction that appear to be effective and most promising for classroom instruction are: (NRP, p. 4-5)
- “6. Question generation in which the reader asks himself or herself what, when, where, why, what will happen, how, and who questions.” (NRP, p. 4-6)

Research Support for “Before-And-After” Reading Activities in Guided Reading—Monitoring in Writing During Reading

- “The eight kinds of [comprehension] instruction that appear to be effective and most promising for classroom instruction are: (NRP, p. 4-5)
- “1. Comprehension monitoring in which the reader learns how to be aware or conscious of his or her understanding during reading and learns procedures to deal with problems in understanding as they arise.” (NRP, p. 4-6)

Research Support for “Before-And-After” Reading Activities in Guided Reading—Summarizing in Writing During or After Reading

- “The eight kinds of [comprehension] instruction that appear to be effective and most promising for classroom instruction are: (NRP, p. 4-5)
- “7. Summarization in which the reader attempts to identify and write the main or most important ideas that integrate or unite the other ideas or meanings of the text into a coherent whole.” (NRP, p. 4-6)

Research Support for Formats for “During” Reading in Guided Reading— Everyone Read To . . . (ERT)

- “The eight kinds of [comprehension] instruction that appear to be effective and most promising for classroom instruction are: (NRP, p. 4-5)
- “5. Question answering in which the reader answers questions posed by the teacher and is given feedback on the correctness.” (NRP, p. 4-6)

Research Support for Formats for “During” Reading in Guided Reading— Partner Reading, Playschool Groups, Book Club Groups, and Literature Circles When They Read for a Purpose

- “The eight kinds of [comprehension] instruction that appear to be effective and most promising for classroom instruction are: (NRP, p. 4-5)
- “2. Cooperative learning in which readers work together to learn strategies in the context of reading.” (NRP, p. 4-6)

Text Comprehension Instruction in our Comprehensive Reading & Writing Framework

- In our guided reading lessons, children are taught to use graphic and semantic organizers, story structure/maps, question generation, comprehension monitoring, and summarization while they read
- In our guided reading lessons, children engage in question answering and cooperative learning of comprehension strategies while they read

Writing Instruction

For a detailed discussion of this component of the Four Blocks, see “Research Behind Writing the Four-Blocks Way” by James W.

Cunningham (presentation made at the Four-Blocks Leadership Conference, 2004)

Writing the Four-Blocks Way is Research-Based Because It:

- Emphasizes self-selected writing in K-2
- Emphasizes focused writing in 3-5
- Makes self-selected writing much more environmental than whole language does
- Teaches transcription (handwriting and spelling) skills systematically

References

Graham, S., Berninger, V., Abbott, R., Abbott, S., & Whitaker, D. (1997). Role of mechanics in composing of elementary school students: A new methodological approach. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 89*, 170-182.

Hillocks, G., Jr. (1986). *Research on written composition: New directions for teaching*. Urbana, IL: National Conference on Research in English/ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.

Hillocks, G., Jr. (1995). *Teaching writing as reflective practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Our Writing Instructional Component is Research-Based Because It:

- Emphasizes self-selected writing in K-2
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- Makes self-selected writing much more environmental than whole language does
- Teaches transcription (handwriting and spelling) skills systematically

A Comprehensive Reading & Writing Framework

Research Support for a Comprehensive Reading & Writing Framework— Phonics Instruction Can Be Overemphasized

- “Programs that focus too much on the teaching of letter-sounds relations and not enough on putting them to use are unlikely to be very effective.” (NRP, p. 2-135)
- “it is important to emphasize that systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction to create a balanced reading program.” (NRP, p. 2-136)
- “Phonics should not become the dominant component in a reading program, neither in the amount of time devoted to it nor in the significance attached.” (NRP, p. 2-136)

Research Support for a Comprehensive Reading & Writing Framework— Overemphasizing Phonics Hinders Meaning Vocabulary Development

- “more instruction in letter-sound relationships [in 1st grade] was associated with *lower* [oral] vocabulary scores. In particular, the more a student experienced *unanchored* letter-sound instruction—in which the focus remained on the letter sounds rather than explicit references to word meanings or contextual links . . . —the lower the student’s predicted oral vocabulary scores” (Juel, Biancarosa, Coker, & Deffes, 2003, p. 17)

Reference

Juel, C., Biancarosa, G., Coker, D., & Deffes, R. (2003). Walking with Rosie: A cautionary tale of early reading instruction. *Educational Leadership*, 60(7), 12–18.

Research Support for a Comprehensive Reading & Writing Framework— Overemphasizing Fluency Hinders Reading Comprehension

- “the biggest effect of [guided oral reading] procedures was on word recognition and fluency measures, with the smallest effects evident in reading comprehension. It appears that oral reading practice and feedback or guidance is most likely to influence measures that assess word knowledge, reading speed, and oral accuracy.” (NRP, p. 3-18)
- “Anderson, Wilkinson, & Mason, 1991 . . . found that too much attention to fluency issues within a reading lesson could detract from reading comprehension.” (NRP, p. 3-20)

Strategies for Promoting the Four Blocks (including Building Blocks & Big Blocks)

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3. Quote the National Reading Panel’s Reports of the Subgroups as much as possible
4. Supplement the NRP Report with other research, as necessary, especially research published since 2000

Our Reading & Writing Framework is Comprehensive Because:

- It includes the National Reading Panel's Five Reading Instructional Components
- It also includes a Writing Instructional Component

Our Comprehensive Reading & Writing Framework has High-Quality Instruction Across All Components

Because:

- Instruction in each component is supported by research
- No component's instruction is hindered because the instruction in other components is overemphasized
- Links and opportunities for transfer from one instructional component to another are maximized