RESOURCE GUIDE: EFFECTIVE EARLY LITERACY INTERVENTIONS AND STRATEGIES, FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS

by

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Throughout the last few years of my teaching experience, I have noticed a dramatic increase in the number of students who are struggling academically, particularly in the area of reading. As an educator it is my personal goal, to try and help every child learn to the best of their abilities. That being said, I was beginning to feel more and more overwhelmed with their various needs, as well as the increased numbers of students needing specific reading interventions. I felt ill equipped to teach to these struggling students and didn’t always know if the interventions I was using, or the lessons I was teaching were best practice and research based. This all lead me to my journey to go back to school, and obtain my Master of Arts in Literacy Education, and ultimately lead to the development of my research focus question: *What interventions, strategies, or supplemental programs are available to address and aid primary students who struggle in reading?*

While seeking the answer to this research question, I learned a lot about the development of literacy itself. I discovered how literacy has changed throughout time, and the major theorists who contributed to these changes. I also developed a greater understanding of the components of literacy and how these components are all interrelated and contribute to one another. Not only were these components related but they also followed a progression of development. Once I had gained new understanding of these components, I dug deeper to discover that there are specific research based interventions and strategies that help students who are struggling, address their reading difficulties. I also learned that the research was expansive and constantly changing and developing.

Due to the expansive nature of the topic and the sheer volume of information available, I wanted to summarize the information that I had gained in a way that lends itself to a busy first
grade teacher like myself. I know that I would not have time to read and sift through research paper after research paper. So this developed the idea for my Capstone Project, the development of a resource guide for teachers specific to early reading interventions and strategies for struggling primary readers.

The setting for this project was a small rural P-5 elementary school in the Midwest. The school's population is roughly 330 students, and it's demographic consists of 96% White/Caucasian students, 2% two or more races, and 1% Latino, with about 30% of its students qualifying for free and reduced lunches. This school has limited resources because of its size and lack of monetary funds for additional programs, beyond what is necessary. It is also a Title I qualifying school, providing students with Title I services in math and reading, K-3. The resource guide will be provided and available for all Title I teachers, special education teachers and early elementary teachers K-1, but initial implementation started at the first grade level. The students who benefit from this resource guide are students who are identified as struggling readers in the classroom.

The resource guide is structured in a way that provides an easily accessible way for teachers find an intervention or strategy to use with a struggling student quickly. In the first part of this resource guide it provides a background as to what components are necessary for students to master in early literacy, as well as an overview of early literacy theory. It is important to understand where literacy started to better understand what it looks like today. Then the next part of the resource guide consists of early interventions that educators can use with struggling readers beginning in preschool and kindergarten particularly focusing on the alphabetic principle and phonological and phonemic awareness skills. This provides educators easy access to
interventions, but allows them to spend less time searching through resources. It is structured in a way that allows them to look up the literacy skill that students need to master, and find a variety of interventions that address that specific need.

The last part of this resource guide focuses on reading strategies that can be used with primary students, to improve and develop their reading skills. The format will be similar to that of how the interventions portion of this resource guide will be comprised. Listing the specific need and a variety of specific strategies that will address that need. This portion of the resource guide will address specific strategies that assist students in the mastery of vocabulary, accuracy and fluency, and reading comprehension.

Hopefully this resource will be helpful to those that use it, by providing a quicker alternative to finding and using research based reading interventions and strategies. Its main purpose it to have a variety of information available to teachers in one place for the various components of literacy instruction.
Resource Guide
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Purpose for this Resource Guide

As educators it is our duty to do the best we can at instructing all students and meeting their individual needs. Every student is different and every student begins at a different place in their reading journey when they start school. So how do we possibly meet all of these needs, when each student may be at various stages of literacy development? There will never be one document that will give you every strategy to help every student on their reading journey, but the purpose of this resource guide is to give you a starting point.

Through my research, I have learned so much about the development of literacy in a child, as well as so many new strategies to help my students who are striving to become better readers. In this guide I have compiled many of these strategies so that they are in one place. I begin the resource guide with an introduction to literacy skills, and the progression of literacy development. Then, I describe the progression of early literacy theory over the years to provide a background for where literacy instruction began, and how it has changed and developed over time. Next, the resource guide is broken down into five separate categories; the alphabetic principle, phonological awareness and phonics, vocabulary, accuracy and fluency, and comprehension. In each section there are all or some of the following: guiding principles for instruction, concept vocabulary, and strategies for instruction.

It is my hope that this guide will strengthen educators understanding of the components of literacy and provide tools for helping with student intervention. There are so many things that go into teaching a child how to read, and I hope that this guide will help address some needs for those children.
Literacy Skills
According to Early Literacy Development (2011), early childhood literacy instruction and a child’s reading readiness is based on whether or not they acquire a set of “prescribed literacy skills.” These “prescribed literacy skills,” fit into two domains as stated by Whitehurst & Lonigan (1998) and cited by Tichnor-Wagner, Garwood, Bratsch-Hines, & Vernon-Feagans (2016), they are called outside-in skills and inside-out skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inside-Out Skills</th>
<th>Outside-In Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symbol/sound correspondences: Relationship between a symbol (letter) and the sound.</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words within words: The ability to use known words to decode unknown words.</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word decoding: Using knowledge of letter-sound relationships to determine a word.</td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The alphabetic principle: The understanding of how written letters and spoken sounds relate to one another.</td>
<td>Narrative understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonemic awareness: The ability to hear and manipulate small sounds or phonemes to help with the decoding of words.</td>
<td>(Use of these four components with assist in the understanding and comprehension of what is being read.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Progression of Literacy Development

1. The Alphabetic Principle
2. Phonemic and Phonological Awareness
   a. Letters
   b. Sounds
   c. Sound combinations
   d. Words
3. Vocabulary
4. Accuracy & Fluency
5. Comprehension
Early Literacy Theories & Theorists
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jean Piaget</th>
<th>Piaget’s theory centers around a child’s language development, seriating (sorting objects by color, size, shape, or type), representing different modalities, and spatial relations. The child’s mind is “under construction” and constantly changing.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lev S. Vygotsky</td>
<td>Vygotsky’s theory focuses on learning occurring for children as they are exposed to new concepts or schemas defined as previous background or prior knowledge. (Early Literacy Development, 2011). Vygotsky also believed that mental functions were developed out of social relationships. He also introduced the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development, when a child can do some parts of a task but not all, and how this fosters learning in growth. (Early Literacy Development, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesell (Reading Readiness)</td>
<td>Skill based model: systematic way of teaching reading, and only when children were ready to learn early reading and writing skills. It also focused on direct instruction or time on task, routines, and practice, and had a strong focus on children obtaining new skills. (Early Literacy Development, 2011).</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Dewey (Head Start)</td>
<td>This child centered approach, had a focus on problem solving, providing children with opportunities for growth through exploring and experimenting, meanwhile learning self-regulation. There were also integrated content areas present in the classroom. Although there were many benefits to Dewey’s approach his classrooms lacked formal skill instruction. (Early Literacy Development, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Clay</td>
<td>The theory of Emergent Literacy, which gave awareness to literacy development beginning</td>
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</table>
in the first year of life, and not when a child was mature enough to read, as in the skill based model presented. Clay recognized that there was a relationship between early communication skills and literacy development. The sooner children were exposed to books and writing the better developed their literacy skills were. Clay also stated the importance of incorporating literacy into the curriculum throughout the whole day. The more embedded and integrated, the more purposeful the literacy instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi</th>
<th>Learning should be a natural process where children learn through what is of interest to them and what makes them curious. (Early Literacy Development, 2011).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria Montessori</td>
<td>Her model of literacy instruction has a strong emphasis on the use of manipulatives to learn. It was also important for students to work to foster independence in their learning, making errors and corrections independently, and working to achieve their goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friedrich Froebel</td>
<td>Theorized about the importance of using sensory experiences for children to manipulate, and emphasised how beneficial it was for children to play to learn. (Early Literacy Development, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Literacy Instruction Model, which combines the child-centered approaches of Montessori, Dewey, and Clay with the skill based model of Gesell.</td>
<td>“No single method or single combination of methods can successfully teach all children to read” (Early Literacy Development, 2011). Educators need to know many methods for teaching reading and writing to be successful, as well as teach from various social, emotional, physical, and intellectual perspectives.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Early Reading Intervention Strategy Section
Alphabetic Principle

Stages of Development (Source: Cadwell & Lesile, 2013.)

- **Logographic Stage:** identifying words like they identify pictures. Visual cues are attributed to a word. They have not mastered letters or sounds.
- **Alphabetic Stage:** the first awareness of the alphabet. Association of some letters and sounds but their knowledge is incomplete. Focus also tends to be at the beginning and then end sounds of words.
- **Controlled Word Recognition:** Further in the alphabetic stage, and using a variety of sound and spelling patterns to recognize words. Less dependent on pictures, but word reading is slow and labored.
- **Automatic Word Recognition:** reading rate begins to increase, less attention to decoding, and oral reading has more expression.

Guidelines for Alphabetic Principle

- Identify what stage of development the child is in.
- Work through the stages of development
- Begin with visual cues or picture associations
- Then focus on beginning and ending sounds
- When reading rate increases focus on encouraging the child to read with expression.

Alphabetic Principle Vocabulary (Source: University of Oregon CTL)

1. **Letter-sound:** Letter and sound identification.
   - Questions to ask: *What letter is this? What sound does this letter make?*
2. **Blending:** Blending of sounds.
   - Questions to ask: *What sound do these two letters make? Or What sound does this letter combination make?*
3. **Segmenting:** Breaking the words into parts.
   - Question to ask: *Can you break apart this word into chunks?*
4. **Manipulating letter-sound correspondences in words:** Changing letters throughout the word to make a new word.
   - Questions to ask: *What word would you make if you changed the first letter? What word would you make if you changed the vowel sound? What word would you make if you changed the ending?*
5. **Nonsense words:** Reading words that are not real words.
Questions to ask: *What word does this combination of letters make? Can you segment the word for me, then blend the word together?*

6. **Word identification**: Identifying the word.
   - Questions to ask: *Can you read this word?*

*Strategies for the Alphabetic Principle*  (Source: Allen, 1998.)

1. **Understanding rhyme**
   - Using texts with rhyming words embedded within them
   - Reciting rhyming poems
   - Playing games like Memory, Go Fish, or Bingo using rhyming words
   - Use spelling patterns with keywords
   - Using word families

2. **Cross checking strategy**
   - Using a variety of cues to help decode a word; letter sound cues, word meaning cues, grammatical cues, picture cues, and prior knowledge

3. **Learning Core Words**
   - Learning sight words or words that can’t be phonetically decoded. This can be done through chanting, clapping, snapping, or playing games such as Bingo or Memory.

4. **Teacher Modeling**
   - Direct modeling of tasks for students to accomplish.

5. **Word Wall**
   - Word cards are placed on a large wall for students to see and read on a daily basis.

6. **Children’s Literature**
   - Frequently reading children’s literature will also increase motivation and attitudes about reading.

7. **Building Letter Knowledge**: (Source: D’Agostino, Rodgers, Harmey, & Brownfield, 2016.)
   - Use a visual form of the letter, and demonstrate the movement of letters to make words. The manipulation of letters using magnetic letters, letter tiles, etc.
8. Letter dictionaries (Source: Burns, 1999.)
   - Have students use letter dictionaries with pictures and illustrations of each letter and there attributed sound.

9. Letter of the Day (Source: Burns, 1999.)
   - Have a letter of the day or week that instruction will be focused on. An activity that can be used with this strategy are having students try to “I spy” the letter around the classroom.
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

Guidelines For Instruction

- Model each activity for student slowly and explicitly. Be sure to also model pronunciations slowly and exaggerated for continuous sounds and brief and repeated for stop sounds.
- Begin with continuous sounds or sounds where the airflow is not interrupted (ex. /a/, /f/, & /s/), then move on to stop sounds where airflow stops (ex. /b/, /d/, & /g/+).
- Start with easier tasks and move to more complex tasks.
- Use manipulatives such as counters, blocks, or pictures to model how to segment a word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuous Sounds</th>
<th>Stop Sounds</th>
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<td>a</td>
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(Source: Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006.)
**Phonemic Vocabulary** (Source: University of Oregon CTL.)

1. **Sound and Word discrimination**: The ability to determine what word doesn’t fit with the other words.
   - Example: *Which word doesn’t fit in this group of words, leg, beg, tag. “Tag” doesn’t follow the same pattern as the other two words.*

2. **Rhyming**: The ability to determine if one word rhymes with another word.
   - Example: *What word rhymes with dog? Log rhymes with dog.*

3. **Syllable splitting**: The ability to split a word into its onset and rime.
   - Example: *In the word pot the onset is /p/ and the rime is /ot/.*

4. **Blending**: When given the individual sounds of a word the student can blend those sounds together to make a word.
   - Example: *What word do the sounds /p/ /o/ /t/ make? pot*

5. **Phonemic segmentation**: The ability to segment a word into its individual sounds.
   - Example: *What are the sounds in "pot"? /p/ /o/ /t/*

6. **Phoneme deletion**: The ability to delete a sound in a word and identify what the new word makes.
   - Example: *What is "sat" without the /s/? "at"*

7. **Phoneme manipulation**: Making a new word by manipulating the sounds in a word.
   - Example: *What word can we make if we change the /t/ in sat to a /p/? sap*

**Strategies for Phonological and Phonemic Awareness**

**Sequence of Phonemic Awareness Activities**

If assessment results demonstrate a need for added phonemic awareness, this is a possible sequence of phonemic awareness activities (Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006, p. 37.) It is important to model each activity explicitly and give students multiple opportunities to practice each skill.
Activity 1:

- Segment sentences into words: *The cat has a hat.* = *The ~ cat ~has ~a ~hat.*
- Blend words into a sentence: *The ~ cat ~has ~a ~hat.* = *The cat has a hat.*

Activity 2:

- Segment compound words into separate words: *sidewalk = side + walk.*
- Blend words into a compound word: *side + walk = sidewalk.*

Activity 3:

- Segment two syllable words that are not compound words: *sister = sis + ter*
- Blend syllables into a word: *sis + ter = sister*

Activity 4:

- Segment words with more syllables: *neighborhood= neigh + bor +hood.*
- Blend syllables into word: *neigh+bor+hood=neighborhood*

Activity 5:

- Segment words (and/or syllables) into onsets and rime: *cat = /k/ /at/*
- Blend segmented onsets and rimes into words: */k/ /at/ = cat*

Activity 6:

- Segment words into individual phonemes: *cat = /k/ /a/ /t/.*
- Blend individual phonemes into words: */k/ /a/ /t/ = cat*

*Practice Segmenting and Blending Words*

These activities will help students who need additional practice segmenting and blending words.

- **Matching:** matching a picture to another word that it rhymes with, or matching a picture to a word that begins with the same sound.
- **Oddity Detection:** identifying the odd word or picture in a group.
- **Same/Different Judgement:** identifying if it starts with the same or a different sound.
- **Segment Isolation:** isolating sounds in the word into segments or parts.
- **Production**: providing words that begin or end with the same sound.
- **Counting**: counting the number of parts you hear within a word.
- **Compound Production**: changing a sound in a word to make a new sound or identifying a sound that is omitted when a word is changed.

*Practice Activities*

**Letter Race** (Source: Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006.): Divide group into partners. Give each group ten cards with different letters and sounds they are familiar with. Set timer for one minute. Partner holds up one card at a time and the other partner says the sound that the letter makes. If the partners say the sound incorrectly it goes back in the pile. When the timer goes off, the partners roles reverse.

**Regular and Irregular Words** (Source: Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006.): Use a 5X5 grid with words that are familiar to the student. This can be done individually or with a partner. Time students for one minute and see how many rows and columns of words they can read in that time. If an error is made in the column the partner will direct the student to reread that row or column again.

**Personal Word Wall** (Source: Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006.): Use a file folder and divide the folder into sections for each letter of the alphabet or spelling pattern. Students add words as they learn them to their own personal word wall on word cards. Practice having the student read the words, once they can read the word with mastery then they can remove the word and take it home, then they replace it with another word.

**Rhyming and Spelling Patterns** (Source: Caldwell & Leslie, 2013.) (Source: Rasomsiki, Rupley, Pagie, & Nichols, 2016.)

This intervention is attempting to improve the students’ rhyme ability as well as other phonological skills. The children should know which letters are consonants and which are vowels. You will need letter cards with the alphabet and the rhyme ending you are going to be focusing on. Find a poem that focuses on the same rhyming pattern. Model for the student examples of rhyming words. Have the student practice identifying other words within the poem that have that same rhyming or spelling pattern.
**Bean Bag Toss** (Source: Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006.)
Stand in a small circle with the children. Say a CVC word like *dog*. Toss the beanbag to a child and ask them to segment the sounds, then they toss the beanbag to another child who blends those sounds. Then have the child say a new word, and repeat the sequence.

**Music Involvement** (Source: Selway, 2004.)
Using music and movement incorporated in phonics instruction.

**Personal Dictionaries** (Source: Burns, 1999.)
Have students make their own personal dictionaries as new words are learned. Word, definition, picture and even sentence can be included.

**Dictation Activities** (Source: Burns, 1999.)
Demonstrate that anything spoken can also be written and have students practice writing what they hear in a dictation activity.
Reading Strategy Section
Vocabulary

*Guidelines for Instruction:* (Source: Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006.)

- Word learning occurs through many different experiences, whether this be through a variety of reading, discussions with others, or through other life events.
- To learn a new word students must experience and understand the meaning of that word.
- Students will benefit from learning new words before reading them within the text. This direct instruction will help students comprehend what they are reading with greater understanding.
- Students need to have understanding of prefixes, suffixes, and inflected endings to have a better understanding of vocabulary.

*Strategies to Improve Vocabulary Skills* (Source: Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006.)

**Have an daily awareness of words that is ongoing in the classroom.**

- Display vocabulary on bulletin boards
- Word Banks
- Word Books
- Teach students to read a variety of types of texts
- Frequently read aloud to your students
- Talk and discuss new words that are encountered during reading.

**Develop an understanding of vocabulary-related skills.**

- Teach vocabulary on the concept before reading to strengthen understanding.
- Teach students about prefixes, suffixes, and inflected endings.
- Help to develop connections between words and life experiences.
- Use graphic organizers for students who benefit from a visual representation.

**Allow opportunities for students to practice and complete practice follow up activities.**

- Sort words by spelling patterns, beginning sound, ending sound, etc.
• Identifying the synonyms and antonyms of a word.
• Examine how words that are related can be similar or different with a feature analysis.

Practice Activities

Personal Dictionaries (Source: Burns, 1999.)

Have students make their own personal dictionaries as new words are learned. Word, definition, picture, and even sentence can be included.

Build Vocabulary Through Stories (Source: Burns, 1999.)

Students can listen to stories read aloud or books on tape and then have rich discussions about the text. Both fiction and nonfiction should be read, and students should have opportunities to share and even act out the story through sociodramatic play.
Accuracy & Fluency

*Guidelines for Instruction:* (Source: Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006.)

- Focus on a student's reading rate, accuracy, and expression.

*Accuracy and Fluency Vocabulary:* (Source: Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006.)

1. **Fluency:** rapid, efficient, accurate application of word recognition skills to allow for the reader to develop meaning and comprehend what they are reading.
2. **Automaticity:** automatic word recognition
3. **Sight Word:** Word is recognized right away after seeing it.
4. **Rate:** The number of words that can be read per minute.
5. **Accuracy:** The number of words that a student can read correctly.
6. **Prosody:** When appropriate expression is used.
7. **Oral Reading Fluency:** A process of assessing rate and accuracy in fluency.

*Strategies for Improving Accuracy and Fluency* (Source: Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006.)

**Modeling**

- Model what good readers do, appropriate rate of reading and adequate expression. Teach students how to pay attention to punctuation, and dialogue within the text. Also have students listen to books on tape to model what good readers do, and have students follow along reading silently as the text is read to them.

**Word Lists**

- Use word lists to increase fluency. This can be used with the help of word blending to assist in the decoding of words. Make sure that word lists have words with something in common, for example the same spelling pattern.

**Repeated Practice** (Source: Rasomski, Rupley, Pagie, & Nichols, 2016.)
• Repeated reading of the same text, to improve word recognition, accuracy, reading rate, expressive reading, as well as reading comprehension and confidence.

**Paired Reading**

• Read with someone

**Guided Reading**

• Guided reading where teacher works with a small group of students and can provide feedback as they read.

**Alternative and a Variety of Texts** (Source: Rasomski, Rupley, Pagie, & Nichols, 2016.)

• Use a variety of text types: fiction, informational books, magazines, books for different genres, newspapers, advertisements, cookbooks, etc. Use your school and community resources such as the library to have access to different types of text. Alternative texts such as poetry, song lyrics, readers theater scripts, and speeches can also be used.

**Literature Reviews**

• Book clubs
• Book reviews

**Writing**

• Use their own writing and have students present it to the class.
• Connect with parents to help students continue their reading beyond the classroom.

**Perform to an audience** (Source: Rasomski, Rupley, Pagie, & Nichols, 2016.)

• Use scripts, songs, poetry, and speeches to perform to an audience and increase reading fluency.
Comprehension

Guidelines for Instruction: (Source: Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006.)

- Determine students independent, instruction, and frustration reading level. This can be done through a QRI quantitative reading inventory or IRI informal reading inventory.
- Determine what level text you will be using for daily instruction.
- Find students listening level.
- What area of comprehension does the student struggle with: literal, inferential, critical, or vocabulary questions?
- Understand the comprehension strategies that the student already knows, and which strategies they do not know.

Comprehension Vocabulary (Source: Cooper, Chard, & Kiger, 2006.)

1. **Comprehension**: the process of understanding and interacting with a text.
2. **Prior Knowledge**: what vocabulary, ideas, or understandings a child has about the text before reading.
3. **Text Factors**: how difficult the text is, how many words are on a page, and the type of text.
4. **Strategies**: a plan for reading a text using multiple skills. These strategies are:
   a. Identifying Important Information
   b. Inferring/Predicting
   c. Monitoring/Clarifying
   d. Questioning
   e. Visualizing
   f. Summarizing
   g. Synthesizing
   h. Evaluating
5. **Independent Reading Level:** When the students can read the text without assistance.

6. **Instructional Reading Level:** The student can read the text with the help of someone else.

7. **Frustration Reading Level:** The student can not read the text even with the help of someone else.

8. **Informal Reading Inventory:** A series of passages in a progression of easy to more complex. There are also different types of questions such as literal, inferential, critical, and vocabulary.

9. **Listening Level:** The highest level passage where a student can accurately answer 75% of questions correctly.

*Strategies for Comprehension*

(Source: Burns, 1999.) (Source: Mendez, Pelzmann, & Frank, 2016.)

- Listening while reading
- Paired reading or reading to someone
- Independent reading
- Repeated reading
- Integration of other subject areas; science, math, social studies, etc.
- Read Alouds
- Strategy Instruction and having reading strategies posted
- Computer based reading activities
- Personal basket of books
- Individual comprehension reading journals
- Activity centers focused on comprehension
References


specific recommendations from america's leading researchers on how to help children become successful readers


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