SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTION BUILDS STUDENT SUCCESS:

Applying the Many Layers of Structured Literacy and Reading Research for Struggling K–5 Students

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Introduction

Success in life can be foretold by success in school and reading achievement. Educators understand to build success, there must be a clear pathway toward that end goal. This paper highlights the path to success for our most struggling readers. How do we build success for students falling behind and struggling to read and understand grade-level text? How do we build teacher success for delivering the most effective reading content and strategies that will have the most positive outcomes for students? What impact does real-time diagnostic and prescriptive teaching have on teachers and students? How do we integrate these principals into daily intervention instruction?

The framework and instructional delivery in *Voyager Passport*® is a pathway to success for both teachers and students by providing:

▶ The most effective instructional strategies for literacy instruction and intervention for students in grades K–5

▶ Instruction beyond the core that includes 30 minutes of explicit, systematic intervention to accelerate growth

▶ Students with a variety of practice of skills they have been previously taught, as teachers model and provide guided support on priority skills

▶ Immediate feedback to eliminate any misconceptions and recommendations for re-teaching lessons impactful results to student learning

▶ Formative assessments and teacher guidance on differentiating instruction based on specific student need

▶ Content and instruction based on multiple meta-analyses and reviews of effective literacy instruction for all students to include:

▷ Structured Literacy approach recommended by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA)—for all students and especially for students who struggle with literacy

▷ National Reading Panel (NRP) and subsequent research on literacy instruction that confirms and expands on the NRP's five pillars of effective reading instruction: phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension.

▷ Comprehensive research-based writing instruction and extra instructional time to help struggling readers improve, as recommended by current research-based best practices.

Executive Summary

The design of *Voyager Passport* reflects decades of research establishing the most effective literacy instruction for all students and literacy interventions for struggling readers in grades K–5.

► *Voyager Passport* follows the research-based Structured Literacy approach recommended by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA, 2019) for all students and especially for students who struggle with literacy. The program incorporates a systematic, cumulative progression of daily literacy intervention lessons for grades K–5. Explicit instruction and guided practice are organized in multilesson, theme-based Adventures. The instructional design supports diagnostic teaching, as recommended by the IDA, including ongoing assessment to determine student mastery and skill-specific reteaching activities based on student mastery data.

► *Voyager Passport* incorporates the five critical skill areas of effective reading instruction recommended by the National Reading Panel (NICHHD, 2000) and subsequent research: phonological/ phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension. Instruction within these five NRP "pillars" reflects current research about effective strategies and practices.

► *Voyager Passport* provides comprehensive writing instruction that incorporates the three essential components identified in Gersten and Baker's (2001) meta-analysis about writing interventions for students with learning disabilities—(1) helping students learn the steps of the writing process, (2) helping them identify and understand the key dimensions of different types of writing, and (3) incorporating structural supports that provide

frequent opportunities for peer and teacher feedback as students attempt to apply what they are learning about impactful writing. Helping students develop stronger writing skills is strongly linked to improved reading skills for at-risk students (Gersten & Baker, 2001).

▶ *Voyager Passport* offers a well-structured approach for providing extra instructional time to target high-priority skills gaps for struggling students, as recommended in a What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) IES practice guide (Gersten et al., 2009). Specifically, *Voyager Passport* provides for 30 minutes of additional, systematic, explicit literacy instruction and guided practice, four or five days per week.

> *Voyager Passport* offers a well-structured approach for providing extra instructional time to target high priority skills gaps for struggling students, (WWC, Gersten et al., 2009)

Research Supporting a Structured Literacy Approach

Structured Literacy is an approach to reading instruction recommended by the IDA—for all students and especially for students who struggle with literacy—"where teachers carefully structure important literacy skills, concepts, and the sequence of instruction, to facilitate children's literacy learning and progress as much as possible" (IDA, 2019, p. 6).

Structured Literacy provides a systematic and explicit approach that focuses on helping students learn to decode words and that provides support for learning the function and meaning of words. There is a substantial body of research demonstrating that this approach is more effective for all types of readers (IDA, 2015).

In the Structured Literacy approach, the following principles guide instruction:

▶ A systematic approach to instruction should follow a logical order and be cumulative so each step is based on previously learned concepts

▶ Explicit instruction should cover all concepts and skills and should provide ongoing student-teacher interaction rather than expecting students to learn on their own

▶ Instruction should feature diagnostic teaching so the instruction is individualized and based on continuous assessment through informal observation and more formal measures. The goal is to develop automaticity so cognitive resources of the student can be freed up to focus on deeper comprehension skills.

These core principles of the Structured Literacy approach have been validated by researchers as being essential for teaching reading (IDA, 2019, citing multiple sources; NICHHD, 2000; NRC, 1998).

Research Support for Structured Literacy

The National Reading Panel (NRP) in its seminal analysis of research on reading (NICHHD, 2000), as well as additional research referenced below, found strong support for major components of a Structured Literacy approach, including teaching phonology/phonological awareness, sound-symbol association, syllable association, morphology, syntax, and semantics (learning the meaning of words) (IDA, 2015).

Research indicates that a Structured Literacy approach is effective for at-risk students, including students with dyslexia and other reading disabilities, and also for English language learners (IDA, 2019, citing Baker et al., 2014; Gersten et al., 2009; Kamil et al., 2008; Vaughn et al., 2006). Successful literacy instruction and intervention, especially for at-risk students, provides a strong core of highly explicit, systematic teaching of foundational skills such as decoding and spelling, as well as explicit teaching of other important components of literacy such as vocabulary, comprehension, and writing (Fletcher et al., 2018; Gersten et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2012; Torgesen, 2004).

Research indicates if more schools used features of Structured Literacy in their curricula, many children's literacy challenges would be prevented or overcome (Foorman et al., 2016; NICHHD, 2000). Research also suggests tiered interventions could be more effective if key features of Structured Literacy were incorporated (Gersten et al., 2009).

Because Structured Literacy encompasses systematic, cumulative, and explicit instruction, teachers are able to provide more support around areas of challenge specific to different types of struggling readers. Students with dyslexia can have challenges with phonemic awareness and phonological processing skills (IDA, 2019, citing Fletcher et al., 2018; Vellutino, Fletcher, Scanlon & Snowling, 2004) and thus can benefit from explicit instruction around their areas of challenge (IDA, 2019). Students with broad language disabilities and English learners can benefit from systematic instruction in the areas that address their specific challenges (IDA, 2019).

> **Research indicates that a Structured Literacy approach is effective for at-risk students, including students with dyslexia and other reading disabilities, and also for English language learners (IDA, 2019, citing Baker et al., 2014; Gersten et al., 2009; Kamil et al., 2008; Vaughn et al., 2006).**

The National Reading Panel's Five Pillars of Effective Reading Instruction

The NRP conducted a comprehensive review of the research about effective reading instruction and concluded that to be effective, the teaching of reading needs to include the following five pillars: phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension (NICHHD, 2000). Since the publication of the NRP report, additional research has confirmed and expanded about the understanding of the effectiveness of each of these components. The following sections summarize the body of research that provides support for each of the NRP's five pillars of effective reading instruction.

Phonological/Phonemic Awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to attend to the sounds of language, as distinct from its meaning (NRC, 1998). It is comprised of two levels: phonological sensitivity, meaning a "conscious awareness of larger, more salient sound structures within words, including syllables and sub-syllabic elements (onsets and rimes)" and phonemic awareness, meaning explicit awareness of the individual phonemes—the distinct units of sound—that comprise spoken words (Brady, 2012, p. 20).

In their meta-analysis of the research about teaching reading, the NRP found "teaching children to manipulate the sounds in language helps them learn to read." The NRP found effect sizes ranging from small to large with the majority of effect sizes falling into the moderate range. The positive effects of phonemic awareness training were apparent after training had ended, helping children decode new words and remember how to read known words (NICHHD, 2000, p. 2–5).

Research conducted following the NRP report stresses the most critical skills to focus on when teaching phonological awareness are blending phonemes (putting sounds together to form words) and segmenting phonemes (breaking words apart into their component sounds). Schuele and Boudreau (2008) carried out an extensive review of research about the development of phonological awareness and concluded

learning to blend sounds and segment words were crucial for helping children learn to read and spell. Their review of the research indicated this was especially important for helping struggling students learn to read. Other researchers have found difficulty learning to blend and segment words was predictive of future reading problems (Scarborough & Brady, 2002).

A comprehensive research review about helping children effectively develop phonological awareness concluded there is clear support for having children learn larger units of sound (larger than the phoneme) and this learning should be accomplished first, followed by more formal instruction on phonemes (Goswami and Bryant, 2016). Research also confirmed there was a natural continuum of phonological ability in children that begins with word-level skills followed by syllable, rime, and then phoneme-level skills. (Goswami & Bryant, 2016, citing Anthony et al., 2002).

Linking PA with phonics. It has also been clearly established linking phonemic awareness with explicit phonics instruction greatly improves the development of reading and spelling. The NRP concluded teachers should begin by teaching phonemic awareness skills, but then quickly link this instruction to learning letter sounds. It reported instruction that taught children to manipulate phonemes using letters created effect sizes almost twice as large as instruction that taught children without letters (NICHHD, 2000). The National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) carried out a meta-analysis that confirmed the NRP findings. It concluded the effects of phonemic-awareness training were enhanced when they were combined with simple phonics tasks (NELP, 2008).

In a What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) practice guide for teachers, Foorman et al. (2016) reviewed the research and consulted with experts about the most effective ways to develop foundational literacy skills. The WWC recommendation relative to teaching phonemic awareness was for teachers to help students: "Develop awareness of the segments of sounds in speech and how they link to letters" (p. 2). The WWC advised teachers to guide students to recognize and manipulate segments of sound in speech, and especially to use word-building activities to connect student understanding of letter-sound relationships with phonemic awareness (Foorman et al., 2016).

Phonics

Teaching phonics involves focusing on the acquisition of letter-sound correspondences to support reading and spelling. As children better understand the correspondences between sounds and letters, and between sounds and letter combinations, they are then better equipped to take on the more challenging tasks of decoding and encoding words.

The NRP found strong evidence in support of phonics instruction that is explicit and systematic (NICHHD, 2000). Explicit phonics instruction means the teacher provides clear and precise instruction, and systematic phonics instruction means the teacher has a specific plan or sequence for introducing letter-sound relationships (Kilpatrick, 2015). The NRP recommended systematic and explicit approaches to phonics include "a planned, sequential introduction of a set of phonic elements along with teaching and practice of those elements" and "the identification of a full array of letter-sound correspondences" (NICHHD, 2000, pp. 2–89, 2–99).

Further research following publication of the NRP report indicates systematic and explicit instruction in phonics is the most effective way to ensure reading growth (Berninger et al., 2003; Boyer & Ehri, 2011; Henry, 2003).

Specific phonics approaches. The NRP found using synthetic phonics instruction—the explicit teaching of letter-sound correspondences and then the blending of sounds to form words—resulted in improved reading abilities and that effect sizes of these interventions were larger than other comparison interventions. In addition, the NRP found reading programs that combined synthetic phonics with a focus on larger-units also produced positive results (NICHHD, 2000, citing Lovett et al., 2000).

Following the NRP report, a U.S. Department of Education teacher practice guide recommended teaching students to blend letter sounds and sound-spelling patterns from left to right to sound out a "recognizable pronunciation." The Department of Education advised teachers to begin with simple consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words students already know and then show students how to blend the sounds while providing feedback as they work toward independence and gradually progress to new and longer words (Foorman et al., 2016, p. 23).

The NRP report indicates systematic and explicit instruction in phonics is the most effective way to ensure reading growth (Berninger et al., 2003; Boyer & Ehri, 2011; Henry, 2003).

Teaching both decoding and encoding. Research shows that to become proficient readers and writers, early readers need to learn decoding and encoding skills. Helping children understand sound-symbol connections by learning the visual-to-auditory relationship between letters and sounds is essential for learning to read (decoding) and learning the auditory-to-visual relationship is needed to write words (encoding). In a review of research in this area, Foorman et al. (2016) concluded there is strong evidence for teaching decoding and encoding skills, especially in grades K–3.

Weiser and Mathes (2011) conducted a review of the research about effective instruction for learning to decode and encode words and noted that research is especially strong in support of teaching encoding skills to students who are at risk of literacy failure. They found learning to manipulate phoneme-grapheme correspondences enhances literacy performance and there is a synergistic relationship in using encoding and decoding instruction. Weiser and Mathes conclude there are long-term benefits from teaching children encoding beginning in kindergarten.

Pairing phonics instruction with reading texts. Research conducted by Adams (1990) found systematic instruction in phonics is more effective for all readers—struggling through advanced—when it is paired with the reading of meaningful, connected text. The NRP verified Adams' research (NICHHD, 2000), and later research confirmed the NRP review (Brady, 2012, Dehaene, 2009; Moats, 2012; Strickland, 2011). The What Works Clearinghouse recommends starting early with daily reading of connected texts as soon as students can identify a few words (Foorman et al., 2016).

Fluency

The NRP defines fluency as the ability to read text with speed, accuracy, and proper expression (NICHHD, 2000). Fluent readers are able to focus on comprehension without directing large concentrations of cognitive processing resources to decoding words. The NRP notes fluency is a precursor to comprehension and is frequently overlooked in classroom instruction (NICHHD, 2000).

The National Assessment of Education Progress estimated 40 percent of fourth grade students in the U.S. were deficient in using proper expression and syntax in their reading and 25 percent of students read with less than 95 percent accuracy. Proper expression, syntax, and accuracy are key components of reading fluently (Daane et al., 2005).

Guided oral reading to improve fluency. The NRP analysis found clear research support for repeated oral reading with feedback and guidance, which has been shown to have a positive effect on fluency (NICHHD, 2000). Before students have the necessary skills to read connected text, fluency instruction should include the building blocks of reading, including letters or sounds and reading regular and sight words automatically. Once students can read connected text, guided instruction in the form of oral reading using choral, echo, and repeated reading with feedback are effective practices for improving fluency and reading achievement (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Homan, Klesius, & Hite, 1993; NICHHD, 2000). Developing fluency in reading requires practice, and repeated readings can improve reading and also lead to improvement in decoding, reading rate, and comprehension (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000; NICHHD, 2000).

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary development is at the root of learning any language. It entails learning the meaning of new words and concepts in different contexts. Teaching students to learn new words involves providing explicit instruction about important words from text and helping them learn strategies to independently learn new words. As texts increase in complexity, students need strategies to continue to expand their oral and written vocabulary abilities (Kamil et al., 2008; Loftus-Rattan & Coyne, 2013).

Expanding the size and depth of a student's vocabulary is linked to higher levels of reading comprehension (Adolf & Perfetti, 2014; Kamil et al., 2008; Rasinski et al., 2011, citing multiple sources).

The NRP identified vocabulary instruction as an essential skill students need to improve reading performance (NICHHD, 2000). Research conducted after the NRP report confirms expanding the size and depth of a student's vocabulary is linked to higher levels of reading comprehension (Adolf & Perfetti, 2014; Kamil et al., 2008; Rasinski et al., 2011, citing multiple sources).

Conclusive research reported explicit vocabulary instruction in the early grades results in children learning more words (Graves & Silverman, 2011, citing Beck & McKeown, 2007). Explicit instruction about word meaning can be provided in many different ways: teachers can explain the meaning of a word, give students examples of a word in different contexts, assist students with word choice when writing, and ask children to give examples of how to use words.

Providing explicit instruction, focusing on important words from text, helping students learn strategies to independently decipher word meanings, and gradually increasing the complexity of student word learning enables students to read more complex and grade-appropriate text (Kamil et al., 2008; Loftus-Rattan & Coyne, 2013). In an extensive review of the research about vocabulary instruction, researchers verified the effectiveness of using explicit instruction to help children learn new words (Butler et al., 2010). Explicit vocabulary instruction has been found to be particularly effective in teaching struggling readers (Lehr, Osborn, & Hiebert, 2004).

Rich and multiple contexts. The NRP report indicated learning new vocabulary words within rich and multiple contexts is effective in helping children increase their word learning. The authors concluded that though some time needs to be devoted to direct instruction about vocabulary, it is vital and more motivating for students to spend time learning vocabulary in rich and multiple contexts. The NRP stated: "Repetition, richness of context, and motivation may… add to the efficacy of incidental learning of vocabulary" (NICHHD, 2000, p. 4–4).

Using rich texts providing different types of content helps students learn new vocabulary, whereas solely relying on isolated word drills is insufficient. Research following the release of the NRP report confirms that ideally, explicit instruction should be combined with using rich contexts. The findings indicated this held true for all students: those with learning disabilities and those without identified challenges (Biemiller, 2011).

Teaching roots, prefixes, and suffixes. Researchers of vocabulary development found an effective strategy to teaching students word meaning was to teach morphology, namely the use of clues found in the structure of a word itself, such as word roots, prefixes, and suffixes (Baumann et al., 2012). A review of recent research about vocabulary instruction found support connecting the learning of morphology to increases in reading comprehension (Graves & Silverman, 2011, citing multiple resources).

Teaching use of context clues. Another strategy, teaching students to use context clues in addition to simply providing word definitions, helps children develop a greater depth of knowledge (Graves & Silverman, 2011). The effectiveness of teaching students to use context clues with vocabulary development has been confirmed by a large body of research (Baumann et al., 2012; Graves & Silverman, 2011, citing multiple sources).

Vocabulary development for English language learners (ELLs). ELLs benefit from the same strategies for vocabulary development as those that are effective with English speakers (Graves & Silverman, 2011, citing August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). Additional strategies have also been found to be particularly helpful for English language students, e.g., showing children pictures and real objects that represent words, and practicing pronunciation of words on multiple occasions (Graves & Silverman, 2011, citing multiple sources).

Comprehension

Comprehension, the ability to understand and gain meaning from language, is closely related to a student's background knowledge. The National Research Council (NRC, 1998) asserted a child needs both background knowledge and conceptual sophistication to understand the meaning of a text. Students extract meaning as well as construct meaning as they build representations and gain new meaning (Snow & Sweet, 2003). Comprehension abilities are the direct result of active reading in which readers think about their reading, making connections and inferences to understand text.

Multiple strategies instruction. The NRP found helping students learn specific cognitive strategies and guiding students to reason strategically when challenges occur can result in improved reading comprehension. The NRP concluded teaching different reading comprehension strategies is effective and results in increased understanding and retention of texts, and instruction about the flexible use of multiple strategies is effective in teaching comprehension (NICHHD, 2000).

Research about comprehension following the NRP report has confirmed the effectiveness of explicit teaching of multiple strategies. It is recommended students be taught to distinguish the elements of narrative and expository text and to apply specific comprehension strategies, including self-monitoring their own reading (metacognition), previewing the text and making predictions; organizing and retelling information presented; recognizing story structure; generating questions about the text; identifying main ideas and summarizing text passages; engaging in self-questioning and visualization; and confirming or revising predictions (Carlisle & Rice, 2002; NICHHD, 2000; Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997; Rosenshine, Meister, & Chapman, 1996).

Teacher-directed, explicit reading comprehension instruction should include the use of modeling, thinking aloud, questioning, summarizing, and other techniques that promote active construction of meaning (Moats, 2005). In addition, increasing the amount of time spent in reading appropriate level texts with teacher supports or scaffolds results not only in improved word reading but in comprehension as well (Kuhn et al., 2006).

Multiple genres and engaging texts. Researchers Roskos and Newman recommend instruction should include having students read from multiple genres to build comprehension skills. Reading storybooks can "convey information in ways that spark children's imagination and thought processes" and reading narratives and informational texts provide students with opportunities to build content knowledge and develop vocabulary (Roskos & Neuman, 2014, p. 508).

Teacher-directed, explicit reading comprehension instruction should include the use of modeling, thinking aloud, questioning, summarizing, and other techniques that promote active construction of meaning (Moats, 2005).

Literacy experts recommend texts be carefully selected to increase student motivation and engagement, which can result in higher levels of reading comprehension. Motivation helps increase student perseverance, especially when reading difficult or challenging texts, and increased engagement can also help students improve their use of strategies when approaching a text, which can boost reading abilities. (Robertson et al., 2014, citing Alexander, 2005; Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield, & Guthrie, 2008/2009). In addition, choosing texts students are interested in—texts that include intriguing characters and captivating stories—helps motivate students to read more. Greater time spent reading can foster greater comprehension (Robertson et al., 2014).

Interspersing comprehension questions. Based on more than a decade of study, Beck and McKeown (2006) developed an effective approach to help boost reading comprehension that incorporates questions designed to anticipate likely comprehension challenges. While traditional reading instruction often requires students to complete the reading of a text followed by answering comprehension questions, Beck and McKeown recommend interspersing comprehension questions throughout the reading of a text. In their research, they discovered that having students read the entire text was problematic, because as students encountered challenges while reading a text, they could develop misconceptions or feel lost. Interspersing questions during the reading process helps students stay on track and results in greater understanding of each section of a text. This strengthens and "settles local understanding" so "global understandings" can be solidified (Beck & McKeown, 2006, pp. 31–32).

Using graphic organizers. Graphic organizers can also be used to help boost comprehension by representing visually the meanings and relationships of the ideas being conveyed by a text. The NRP reviewed 11 research studies about graphic and semantic organizers and found these tools helped students increase comprehension and resulted in greater understanding and memory of the content (NICHHD, 2000).

Research About Comprehensive Writing Instruction for Struggling Writers

A meta-analysis of writing interventions for students with learning disabilities found that to be effective, there must be explicit teaching of the following three components:

▶ "The steps of the writing process"

▶ "The critical dimensions of different writing genres"

▶ "Structures for giving extensive feedback…from either teachers or peers" (Gersten & Baker, 2001, p 251).

Helping struggling students improve their writing skills is linked to improved reading skills (Gersten & Baker, 2001). In their meta-analysis, Gersten and Baker focused on interventions that addressed writing content, which they found to be especially effective for students with learning disabilities, rather than interventions addressing writing mechanics (Gersten & Baker, 2001).

Gersten and Baker established the scope of their meta-analysis as reviewing and analyzing studies focused on the teaching of "expressive writing," which is defined as "writing for the purpose of displaying knowledge or supporting self-expression (Gersten & Baker, 2001, citing Graham & Harris, 1989). The goal of expressive writing is to develop writers who are "self-regulating"—that is, writers who can analyze task requirements, verbalize goals, and adapt or create strategies to accomplish their writing assignments. Self-regulating writers are able to monitor their progress throughout the writing process, and adapt and adjust strategies as needed to meet their objectives (Gersten & Baker, 2001, citing Butler et al., 2000).

Helping struggling students improve their writing skills is linked to improved reading skills (Gersten & Baker, 2001).

In examining the research, Gersten and Baker found that across 13 studies reviewed, the mean effect size on the aggregate writing measure was 0.81, providing clear evidence that the writing interventions had a significant positive effect on the quality of student writing.[1] They concluded: "Overall, the multiple-baseline studies suggest that writing interventions for students with learning disabilities are effective and feasible" (Gersten & Baker, 2001, p. 264). They noted that components of all but one of the 13 interventions overlapped significantly and that these components could be sorted into **three broad areas**:

1 ▶ **Explicit instruction in planning:** Students need to be shown how to organize and plan what they want to communicate in their writing, and they need guidance in how to get their thoughts down on paper. Peer editing can be particularly effective in helping students with the planning, drafting, and revising phases of writing (Gersten & Baker, 2001).

2 ▶ **Explicit instruction in the conventions of a writing genre:** Explicitly teaching different types of text structures or genres provides students with models and prompts to follow. "Planning think sheets" help students organize their writing and prompt students to recognize different genres, their structure, and what is expected to be included when writing in a specific genre (Gersten & Baker, 2001, p. 266).

3 ▶ **Structures for giving guided feedback from teachers or peers:** Feedback provided by teachers or peers needs to be frequent and address issues of quality, missing elements, and strengths. This feedback also helps create a common vocabulary for discussing writing, which results in better writing. Feedback encourages students to begin to take into account the needs of readers and to start thinking about how to engage readers as they write. Across studies, Gersten and Baker found what was most important in giving feedback was having a structure and prompts for helping focus the feedback, and it was effective regardless of whether a teacher or a peer was providing the feedback (Gersten and Baker, 2001).

[1] "In educational research, an effect size of this magnitude is typically considered a strong effect." (Gersten & Baker, 2001, citing Cohen, 1988).

Research Support for Extra Instructional Time to Target High-Priority Skills Gaps

Struggling readers need to be provided with evidence-based interventions to strengthen their reading skills. In a What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) IES practice guide devoted to identifying how to effectively support struggling readers in grades K–5, researchers found strong evidence[2] in support of the effectiveness of providing systematic instruction to small groups for 20 to 40 minutes at a time (Gersten et al., 2009).

The WWC panel found 11 studies that met WWC standards or met WWC standards with reservations. The WWC noted that because seven of the 11 studies reviewed "produced a significant effect on at least one reading outcome, and all seven studies used explicit instruction," it could conclude explicit instruction is effective in tier 2 reading interventions.[3] (p. 20)

Based on the studies reviewed, the authors of the WWC practice guide recommended that tier 2 instruction should be provided to small homogeneous groups using curricula that address the major components of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension) (Gersten et al., 2009)—that is, the NRP's five pillars.

The WWC panel recommended instruction in reading needs to be systematic, which entails gradually addressing specific skills and then integrating those skills with other skills so that with practice, students can better generalize these skills (Gersten et al., 2009, citing multiple sources). The panel also recommended explicit reading instruction should provide many opportunities for teacher-student interaction and include practice and corrective feedback. Helping students think aloud is considered an important part of all components of reading instruction (Gersten et al., 2009).

> **Researchers found strong evidence5 in support of the effectiveness of providing systematic instruction to small groups for 20 to 40 minutes at a time (Gersten et al., 2009).**

[2] Strong evidence refers to consistent and generalizable evidence that a program causes better outcomes. It is the highest IES standard of evidence (Gersten et al., 2009, p. 1).

[3] Tier 2 interventions target students who are struggling with reading based on demonstrating weak progress during classroom instruction or based on screening measures.

How *Voyager Passport* Aligns to the Research

Voyager Passport follows the Structured Literacy approach recommended by the IDA—for all students and especially for students who struggle with literacy—and addresses all of the critical skill areas of effective reading instruction recommended by the National Reading Panel (NRP) and subsequent research about literacy instruction. *Voyager Passport* also provides comprehensive writing instruction in accordance with research about interventions for struggling students. The program is designed to provide below-level students with the extra instructional time they need to target their high-priority literacy skill gaps.

Voyager Passport follows the IDA's Structured Literacy approach

Voyager Passport provides a systematic, cumulative progression of daily literacy intervention lessons that spans grades K–5. Explicit instruction and practice are organized in multilesson, theme-based Adventures. In each lesson, instruction is divided into two parts:

▶ Word Works, where (depending on the grade level), instruction focuses on letter and sound identification; phonological and phonemic awareness (grades K–2); phonics (grades K–5); word reading; advanced word study (grades 2–5) including morphology; and spelling.

▶ Listen to Understand (early grade K) or Read to Understand (later grades K–5), where instruction focuses on comprehension and vocabulary development, including syntactical and semantic knowledge.

Students also have opportunities for appropriate practice in the use of letters, sounds and words; building reading fluency; listening, speaking, and language usage; vocabulary development; comprehension; and guided writing.

Thus, *Voyager Passport* addresses all of the curriculum content focuses recommended by the IDA.

Diagnostic Teaching

Also, in keeping with the Structured Literacy approach, teachers are guided to engage in diagnostic teaching, including:

▶ An instructional design that includes ongoing assessments to determine student mastery, and skill-specific reteaching activities to be used based on student mastery data

▶ Embedded correction procedures provided at the point of use in a lesson to address anticipated student errors and misconceptions

Additional guidance to teachers comes in the form of Teacher Talk and research-based tips about what to Look For, Watch For, and Remember about skill development, expectations, and support to students to foster their success.

Support for Struggling Readers

Lesson scripting in *Voyager Passport* supports teachers in providing explicit instruction in all literacy skill areas, consistent with the IDA's research-based recommendations for teaching at-risk students and those with reading disabilities. Interspersed suggestions about providing differentiated instruction help ensure struggling students get the extra support they need.

Tips for supporting ELLs are provided at the point of need throughout each multilesson Adventure.

The *Voyager Passport* curriculum addresses the NRP's 5 pillars of effective reading instruction

Voyager Passport provides systematic, explicit instruction and practice in the **five essential reading skill areas** recommended by the NRP and supported by subsequent research:

1. ▶ Phonological/phonemic awareness

2. ▶ Phonics

3. ▶ Fluency

4. ▶ Vocabulary development

5. ▶ Comprehension

1 ▶ Phonological/phonemic awareness

As noted above, Word Works provides daily instruction and practice in phonological and phonemic awareness (PA) for students in grades K–2. Explicit PA instruction covers sound and word discrimination; rhyming; alliteration; syllable blending, deletion, and counting; onsets and rimes; phoneme discrimination, initial and final sound matching and substitution, and phoneme blending and segmenting with all phonemes found in spoken English. In general, the sequence of lessons in grades K and 1 is in keeping with children's typical continuum of phonological ability—from a focus on syllables, then rime, then phonemes. Phonemic awareness instruction progresses from a focus on words with two phonemes to words with three phonemes, then to words with four or more phonemes.

As letters and their sounds are introduced in kindergarten, *Voyager Passport* Word Works lessons quickly integrate phonemic awareness training with explicit phonics instruction, as recommended by the NRP, the National Early Literacy Panel, and the WWC.

2 ▶ Phonics

Systematic, explicit synthetic phonics instruction. In *Voyager Passport*, systematic, explicit introduction of letters and letter-sound correspondences starts with the earliest Word Works lessons at the kindergarten level, with one or two letters introduced in five-lesson sets and a new vowel introduced every 10 to 15 lessons. Starting with theme-based Adventure 3, kindergarten students receive explicit instruction with VC and CVC words that use letter-sounds they have learned. Blending and segmenting simple written words starts with Adventure 5, and work with CVCC words begins with Adventure 6.

In later grades, students are gradually introduced to and work with blends and digraphs, as well as challenging letter combinations.

Encoding through spelling activities. Spelling activities with words built from previously introduced letter combinations start with Kindergarten Adventure 8 and continue through grade 5, so students gain experience with encoding (in addition to decoding).

Phonics work paired with reading meaningful text. Starting at mid-kindergarten and thereafter, students read a series of progressively more challenging controlled readers that provide experience applying their learned phonics skills to engaging, relevant texts that are tied to the current Adventure's over-arching theme. These controlled readers are also used to develop reading fluency and in comprehension instruction.
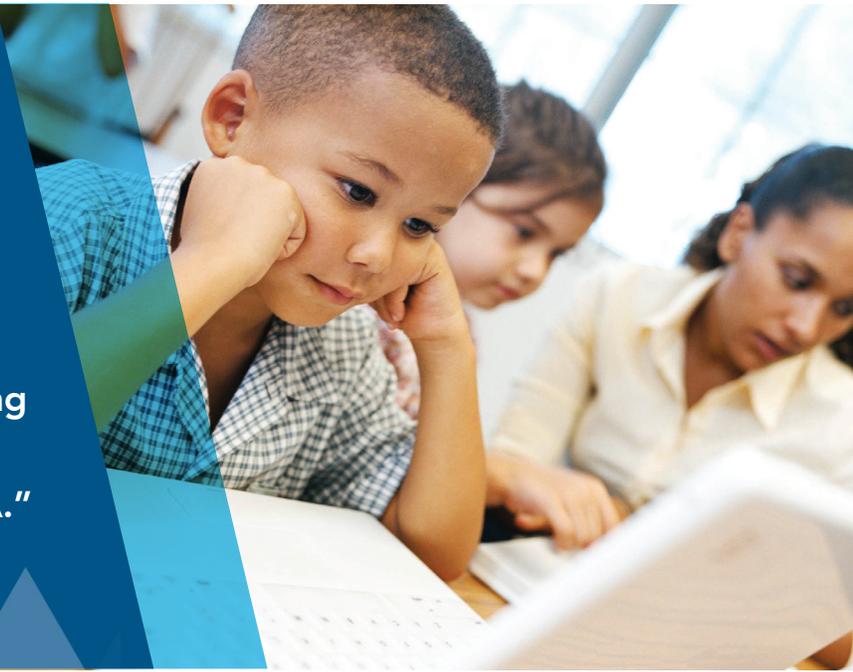
"Appropriate practice in the use of letters, sounds and words; building reading fluency; listening, speaking, and language usage; vocabulary development; comprehension; and guided writing addressing all of the curriculum content recommended by the IDA."

3 ▶ Fluency

Beginning at mid-kindergarten, students learn basic sight words and practice applying phonics skills to build automaticity. Students also practice fluent reading of sentences: the teacher models oral reading of a written sentence, then the students read the sentence aloud.

In grades 1–5, students engage with *Voyager Passport* controlled readers in a variety of fluency practices, including partner reading, repeated reading, activities focused on reading with expression, and timed reading as formative assessment.

Echo reading activities for ELLs are interspersed throughout the curriculum.

4 ▶ Vocabulary Development

Starting in kindergarten, as part of the Listen to Understand/Read to Understand portion of the *Voyager Passport* lessons, students are taught to use context clues and their own prior knowledge to get the meaning of unfamiliar words. Starting at grade 1, students are taught dictionary skills. Use of context clues, prior knowledge, and dictionary skills are practiced in later grades.

Also, in grades K–2, students learn to organize words in meaningful categories, are introduced to common synonyms and antonyms, and learn words according to their function in English (e.g., story words, action words, sequence signal words, descriptive words). They also learn words with multiple meanings (using graphic organizers), homophones, compound words, and words that are important in comprehending science and social studies texts. Some activities help students develop concepts more deeply. For example, in preparation for reading a text about a Family Day in a park, the teacher and students use a word web to develop students' understanding of the concept of a park.

Starting at mid-grade 2, students are taught common roots, prefixes, and suffixes, and how these provide clues to the meaning of words (i.e., morphology). Also, in preparation for reading a lesson's Read to Understand text, students learn a specific set of target vocabulary words to support comprehension.

Multiple exposures and contexts. Consistent with the findings of the NRP and subsequent research, *Voyager Passport* provides multiple exposures to new vocabulary in a variety of contexts, including reading texts, classroom discussion, and teacher questioning.

Support for ELLs. Guidance about how to support ELLs in their development of English vocabulary is interspersed throughout the *Voyager Passport* program.

5 ▶ Comprehension

Comprehension learning activities are included in every lesson within *Voyager Passport*.

For the first half of kindergarten, the Listen to Understand part of the lesson typically starts with preparatory vocabulary or concept development activities. Then, a text is read aloud and becomes the focus of explicit comprehension instruction and practice. Skills and strategies addressed include recalling information, retelling a story, further developing concepts based on the text, making predictions or inferences supported by details, and drawing comparisons based on details.

Starting at mid-kindergarten, each lesson includes a Read to Understand part, which is divided into three segments: Before Reading, During Reading, and After Reading.

▶ Before Reading: The purpose for reading is set, students' prior knowledge is activated, and they identify text features, structure, or genre. They also make predictions and participate in discussions about the topic.

▶ During Reading: Instruction guides students to form ideas about what they are reading, and students learn strategies to organize their thinking. They begin to ask the questions for the prereading activities and form new ones as they read.

▶ After Reading: Instruction guides students to retell or summarize the main themes and understandings in the text, answer questions, and evaluate what they read.

Multiple strategies and explicit instruction. Lesson scripting guides teachers to provide explicit instruction and support as students learn and practice applying multiple comprehension strategies and skills, including:

▶ Distinguishing between fiction and nonfiction

▶ Identifying features of different literary forms and different forms of communication

▶ Setting a purpose for reading and/or identifying the author's purpose

▶ Self-monitoring their understanding of what they are reading (metacognition)

▶ Making and supporting predictions and inferences

▶ Identifying cause and effect

▶ Verifying outcomes

▶ Drawing conclusions

▶ Retelling a story

▶ Recalling the sequence of events

▶ Identifying story elements

▶ Character analysis

▶ Identifying literary devices

▶ Summarizing

▶ Understanding the main idea of a text

▶ Understanding connections between characters or ideas in a text

▶ Asking and answering questions about a text

In *Voyager Passport*, comprehension strategies and skills are explicitly taught. The teacher is guided to present each skill and explain the reasons for learning it, model how to do it, and probe students about their initial understanding. Students then engage in teacher-guided practice before moving on to independent application of the skill.

Mix of genres. At the kindergarten level, most of the texts are fiction. Starting at grade 1, there is an even mix of fiction and nonfiction.

Engaging texts. Students love *Voyager Passport's* engaging, relevant, adventured-themed units and related texts that build background knowledge in core subject areas and include content related to science, social studies, the arts, and social-emotional learning.

Interspersed questions. Questions to support comprehension are interspersed in both the During Reading and After Reading parts of a lesson. Students are also encouraged to ask and answer their own questions as they read.

Graphic organizers to support comprehension. Graphic organizers are used to build background knowledge about the theme of the Adventure and to support development of specific comprehension strategies and skills, including identifying cause and effect, drawing comparisons, identifying problem and solution, story mapping, concept mapping, identifying and supporting main ideas, and making inferences based on information from a text.

Voyager Passport provides comprehensive writing instruction for struggling writers

At every grade level, *Voyager Passport* includes three writing projects related to the theme of the current reading Adventure, with embedded comprehensive writing instruction.

Explicit instruction in planning. Each writing project consistently guides students through sessions in brainstorming and planning, organizing their ideas, drafting, revising, editing, preparing a final draft, and sharing their written work. At various phases of the project, the teacher explains and models the process, and students support each other in pairs to encourage dialogue and review of other's work.

Explicit instruction on three writing genres. At each grade level, *Voyager Passport* writing projects focus on three different writing genres: one project on informational writing, one on narrative writing, and one on opinion writing.

Key characteristics of the genre are introduced explicitly. For example, at the start of an informational writing project about an animal that lives in the desert, students are introduced to the concepts of purpose for writing, organization into paragraphs with main ideas, language used (usually third person, present tense, with specific adjectives and adverbs to describe number, shape, color, size, and movement), and text features such as charts, maps, and diagrams.

Genre-specific prompts and graphic organizers are used to guide students through the writing project. For example, in a story writing project, students use graphic organizers to think through story elements, to add details about each character in the story, and to plan the sequence of events.

Structures for giving guided feedback. Genre-specific prompts are provided suggesting review and feedback at various phases of the writing project, by the teacher or a student peer. Discussion about how to improve the writing is encouraged. Revision and editing checklists guide students' review of their own work.

Voyager PASSPORT

Voyager Passport offers a well-structured approach for providing extra instructional time to address the needs of struggling students.

Voyager Passport is structured to give struggling students 30 minutes of additional, explicit literacy instruction, four or five days per week. As noted, the curriculum provides a systematic, gradual progression of skill development in each of the five pillars of reading instruction recommended by the NRP and the WWC, plus instruction in writing.

As recommended by the WWC, lessons are designed for small-group instruction. This small-group design allows for a high level of teacher interaction with each student in the group, with ample opportunities for practice, feedback, and reteaching as needed.

Preview the proven intervention solution that takes only 30 minutes per day. Download your sample: voyagersopris.com/literacy/voyager-passport/try-it

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