



The Readtopia® Evidence-Based White Paper Summary Table



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This publication was developed by Dr. Karen Erickson of the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies with Don Johnston Incorporated.

The Center for Literacy and Disability Studies (CLDS) is a center within the Department of Allied Health Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Center's mission is to promote literacy and communication for individuals of all ages with disabilities.

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COMPONENT OF READTOPIA

VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

By understanding words and their connections to concepts and facts, students develop skills that eventually help them comprehend text (Kamil & Hiebert, 2005; Neuman & Dwyer, 2009).

The evidence-base regarding vocabulary instruction suggests that effective vocabulary instruction:

- (a) includes direct instruction of vocabulary words specific to the texts we want students to read (Anderson & Nagy, 1991);
- (b) provides students with repeated opportunities to encounter words in a variety of contexts (Stahl, 2005);
- (c) focuses on the words students are most likely to encounter across texts and contexts (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002);
- (d) helps students understand the word's definition and how the word functions in different contexts (Nash & Snowling, 2006; Stahl & Kapinus, 2001); and
- (e) integrates a variety of approaches (National Institute for Child Health and Development, 2000).

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COMPONENT OF READTOPIA

COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

In general, reading comprehension is improved when students are engaged in curriculum that provides ongoing opportunities for engagement and interaction regarding text (Trabasso & Bouchard, 2002).

Consistent with the evidence-based findings in Guthrie and Davis (2003) effective comprehension instruction involves:

- (a) the purposes for reading each chapter are interesting content goals that are systematically related to concrete experiences and prior knowledge for each student;
- (b) students are encouraged to engage socially with one another related to the text and the specific purposes for reading; and
- (c) the texts are interesting and written using *considerate text* that addresses the language and learning needs of older, struggling readers.

Current research on teaching students with significant disabilities to comprehend text focuses primarily on key ideas and details, or surface level memory of the text (Mims, Browder, Baker, Lee, & Spooner, 2009; Mims, Hudson, & Browder, 2012).

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COMPONENT OF READTOPIA

VIDEOS TO ANCHOR LEARNING

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Videos serve an important role in building background knowledge, teaching vocabulary, and providing critical multimedia content delivery that supports learning for students with disabilities (Vaughn, Roberts, Swanson, Fall, & Stillman-Spisak, 2014).

Background knowledge and vocabulary knowledge are often diminished among students with disabilities (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Video provides educators with an important means of addressing background knowledge and vocabulary knowledge while controlling every moment of the instruction (Mayer, 2011).

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COMPONENT OF READTOPIA

CLOSE READING OF INFORMATIONAL TEXT

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Through close reading, students can acquire important background knowledge as they study and work to remember the information in the text (Cervetti, Jaynes, & Hiebert, 2009).

Given that background knowledge and domain specific vocabulary are often underdeveloped among students with disabilities (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), close reading is an important intervention for older students with a range of disabilities.

Care must be taken to ensure that the text is not so complex that close reading is a futile task that fails to build comprehension and negatively impacts motivation (Thomason, Brown, & Ward, 2017).

In close reading, students are taught to carefully and critically examine a text, which usually involves repeated reading for different purposes (Fisher & Frey, 2012).

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COMPONENT OF READTOPIA

PHONICS INSTRUCTION WITH *MAKING WORDS*

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Attention to these letter-sound relationships allows readers to decode unknown words, master unfamiliar spelling patterns, and become a more fluent reader (*Mesmer & Griffith, 2005*).

Being able to successfully decode words in text supports the development of the ability to read words with automaticity and accuracy, which supports comprehension (*Ehri, 2005*).

In a spelling-based approach to phonics, students are taught to manipulate individual letters to make words that differ from one another by just one or two letters or use the same letters organized in different ways (*Beck & Beck, 2013; Cunningham, 2016; Stahl, Duffy-Hester, & Stahl, 1998*).

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COMPONENT OF READTOPIA

WORD STUDY WITH AN EMPHASIS ON MORPHEMES

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

As words become more complex, the ability to process orthographic units at the morpheme level positively impacts decoding and comprehension of words with multiple syllables (Goodwin & Ahn, 2010; Nagy, Beringer & Abbot, 2006; Wolter & Green, 2013).

Meta-analyses provide evidence that targeted morphological interventions can result in significant literacy gains for school-age children, particularly for those with speech, language and literacy challenges (Bowers, Kirby, & Deacon, 2010; Goodwin & Ahn, 2010, 2013; Reed, 2008; Wolter & Green, 2013).

Strong mental graphemic representations are important to support the development of reading fluency and, therefore, comprehension. Furthermore, strong mental graphemic representations allow readers to identify unfamiliar words by analogy with stored mental graphemic representations from other words (Goodwin & Ahn, 2010).

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COMPONENT OF READTOPIA

ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Intrinsic motivation and engagement are both directly related to long term reading achievement (Froiland & Worrell, 2016; Guthrie, Klauda, & Ho, 2013).

By helping teachers create learning communities that promote intrinsic motivation and engagement, Readtopia maximizes the likelihood of success in learning (Froiland & Worrell, 2016).

Readtopia promotes engagement and motivation by connecting instruction to student experiences (Guthrie & Davis, 2003), encouraging collaborative learning (Guthrie & Davis, 2003; Trabasso & Bouchard, 2002), and focusing on knowledge goals (Kover & Worrell, 2010).

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COMPONENT OF READTOPIA

SHARED READING

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

There is promising evidence for shared reading, which builds important skills in the domains of oral language and print concepts (NIFL, 2009; US Dept of Education, 2010, 2015).

Shared reading has been used successfully to promote oral language and print concepts in students with significant disabilities (e.g., Bellon-Harn & Harn, 2008; Liboiron & Soto, 2006; Skotko, Koppenhaver & Erickson, 2004).

Shared reading has been used to teach students with significant disabilities and complex communication needs to respond to comprehension questions (Mims, Browder, Lee, & Spooner, 2009).

The language and literacy skills that are acquired during shared reading are the result of the ways that adults communicate with students while reading (Bellon-Harn & Harn).

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COMPONENT OF READTOPIA

ALPHABET KNOWLEDGE

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Alphabet knowledge is a strong predictor of later reading success in young children without disabilities (Hammill, 2004; NIFL, 2009; Storch & Whitehurst, 2001).

Alphabet knowledge is also strongly related to word and nonword reading as well as later reading comprehension for students with significant disabilities (Sermier Dessemontet & de Chambrier, 2015).

When alphabet knowledge is taught and immediately applied in the context of comprehensive, shared and independent reading and writing that extends over a period of months and years, students with significant disabilities can develop alphabet knowledge and apply it meaningfully to reading and spelling (e.g., Allor et al, 2010; Fallon et al, 2004; Johnston et al, 2009; Koppenhaver & Erickson, 2003).

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COMPONENT OF READTOPIA

EMERGENT WRITING

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Emergent writing contributes to understandings of letters and phonemes and eventual reading achievement (Bloodgood, 1999; Dickinson et al., 2003; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002; Ukrainetz et al., 2000).

Writing is also critical for independent and autonomous communication for students with significant disabilities that include complex communication needs (Barker, Saunders, & Brady, 2012; Erickson, 2017).

If writing is going to have maximal impact on literacy and communication for students with the most significant disabilities, it must help students learn to translate thought into text (van Kraayenoord et al, 2014).

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