Creating Literacy Instruction for All Students
Anticipation Guide

Complete the anticipation guide below. It will help to activate your prior knowledge so that you interact more fully with the chapter. It is designed to probe your attitudes and beliefs about important and sometimes controversial topics. There are often no right or wrong answers; the statements will alert you to your attitudes about reading instruction and encourage you to become aware of areas where you might require additional information. After completing the chapter, you might respond to the anticipation guide again to see if your answers have changed in light of what you have read. For each of the following statements, put a check under “Agree” or “Disagree” to show how you feel. Discuss your responses with classmates before you read the chapter.

1. Before children learn to read, they should know the sounds of most letters.
2. Reading should not be fragmented into a series of subskills.
3. Oral reading should be accurate.
4. Phonics should be taught only when a need arises.
5. Reading short passages and answering questions about them provide excellent practice.
6. Mistakes in oral reading should be ignored unless they change the sense of the passage.

Using What You Know

This chapter provides a general introduction to literacy instruction in preschool and grades K–8. Before reading the chapter, examine your personal knowledge of the topic so that you will be better prepared to interact with the information. Sometimes, you may not realize what you know until you stop and think about it. What do you think reading is? What do you do when you read? What do you think the reader’s role is? Is it simply to receive the author’s message, or should it include some personal input? How about writing? What processes do you use when you write? How would you go about teaching reading and writing to today’s students? What do you think the basic principles of a literacy program should be? What elements have worked especially well in programs with which you are familiar?

The Nature of Reading

“Awake! Awake!” These are the first words I remember reading. But the words were as magical as any that I have read since. Even after all these years, I still have vivid memories of that day long ago in first grade when reading came alive for me, and, indeed, awakened a lifetime of reading and a career as a reading teacher.

Reading is, first and foremost, magical, as those who recall learning to read or who have witnessed their students discover the process will attest. It opens the door to a vast world of information, fulfillment, and enjoyment. After having learned to read, a person is never quite the same.
Although magical, reading is complex. Becoming an effective teacher of reading requires a grounding in the theories behind reading acquisition and instruction. As Pinnell, a noted literacy researcher and practitioner, states:

Understanding learning is the only true foundation for sound teaching. No matter how good the materials, the program, or the instructional approach, teaching will miss the mark if it is not based on a coherent theory of learning. The word theory simply refers to the set of understandings that a teacher holds and believes about how children learn. Everything teachers do in the classroom proceeds from this set of beliefs and understandings, whether they are conscious of it or not. (2006, p. 78)

**Major Theories of Literacy Learning and Language Development**

The first step, then, in understanding reading requires understanding how children learn and how language develops. There are a number of theories that describe how children learn. They fall into two broad areas: behaviorism and cognitivism.

**Behaviorism**

Behaviorism stresses observable responses to stimuli. In a behavioral approach, learning consists of the acquisition of new behaviors. Responses that are reinforced increase in frequency. Responses that are not reinforced are extinguished (do not occur again). A response that has been conditioned to a particular stimulus should be elicited if that stimulus is presented. Behaviors are learned or increased when a person receives reinforcers such as praise, privileges, gold stars, or monetary rewards or simply sees that the responses are correct. A basic principle of behaviorism is that we tend to repeat behaviors that are rewarding and avoid those that are not. According to behaviorism, we are passive receivers of knowledge rather than active constructors. Behavioral approaches tend to be teacher-centered.

Scripted programs, such as Reading Mastery, often take a behavioral approach. In Reading Mastery, students first learn individual letter sounds and then learn to blend the sounds to form words. The teacher points to a letter and says, “Here is a new sound.” The teacher touches the letter and says the sound for the letter. Students are told to say the sound when the teacher touches the letter. Signals are used so that students respond in unison. Then individuals are called on to say the sound. One objective of this procedure is to obtain as many correct responses from each child as possible. Incorrect responses are quickly corrected so that they will be extinguished.

**Cognitivism**

Behavioral approaches to learning, with their emphasis on external forces, dominated from about the 1890s until about the 1950s. Rejecting a strictly external view of learning, cognitive psychologists became interested in the inner workings of the mind. Cognitivism is based on the proposition that mental processes exist and can be studied. A related proposition is that humans are active participants in their learning rather than passive recipients. Reinforcement is seen as being important in learning, not just because it strengthens responses, but because it is a source of information or feedback (Woolfolk, 2001). Cognitive approaches tend to be student-centered.

Piaget’s theories are examples of a cognitive approach to learning. Piaget is also known as a constructivist because of his emphasis on the ways in which children construct an understanding of the world.
Piaget’s Theories

Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, stressed stages of cognitive development and the unique nature of children’s thinking. As an adherent of constructivism, he believed that children construct their own understanding of reality and do not simply reproduce what they see and hear. Children’s thinking, according to Piaget, is qualitatively different from adults’ thinking, and it evolves through a series of hierarchical stages. He also believed that children’s thinking develops through direct experience with their environment. Through adaptation, or interaction with the environment, the child constructs psychological structures, or schemes, which are ways of making sense of the world. Adaptation includes two complementary processes: assimilation and accommodation. Through assimilation, the child interprets the world in terms of his or her schemes. Seeing a very small dog, the child calls it “doggie” and assimilates this in his or her dog scheme. Seeing a goat for the first time, the child might relate it to his or her dog scheme and call it “doggie.” Later, realizing that there is something different about this creature, the child may accommodate the dog scheme and exclude the goat and all creatures with horns. Thus, the child has refined the dog scheme. To Piaget, direct experience rather than language was the key determiner of cognitive development.

Social Cognitive Views of Learning

According to social cognitive theories, people are an important element in the learning equation. We learn from and with others. L. S. Vygotsky, an adherent of social constructivism, stressed the importance of social factors in cognitive development (1962). Although both Piaget and Vygotsky believed that children need to interact with the world around them, Vygotsky thought that learning results from both direct experience and social interaction. If, in examining minerals, a teacher emphasizes the hardness of the minerals, that is what the students will learn. If another teacher emphasizes the value or usefulness of the minerals, that is what the students will learn. Vygotsky is best known for the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). He distinguished between actual and potential development. Actual development is a measure of the level at which a child is functioning. In a sense, it is a measure of what the child has learned up to that point. Potential development is a measure of what the child might be capable of achieving. The difference between the two levels is the zone of proximal development. As explained by Vygotsky (1978), the zone of proximal development is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 84). In other words, the zone of proximal development is the difference between what a child can do on his or her own and what the child can do with help.

Focusing on the importance of interaction with adults or knowledgeable peers, Vygotsky’s theory is that children learn through expert guidance. In time, they internalize the concepts and strategies employed by their mentors and so, ultimately, are able to perform on a higher level. The support and guidance provided by an adult or more capable peer is known as scaffolding (Bruner, 1975, 1986). When parents

Vygotsky differentiated between learning and development. According to him, learning can often cause qualitative changes in the nature of thought. Certain kinds of knowledge can lead to higher levels of thinking (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Behaviorists assert that the child simply acquires more knowledge.
converse with a child acquiring language, they respond at a higher level of language use but one that is in the child’s zone of proximal development. In their responses, they provide contextual support by restating, repeating key words, and/or focusing on meaning rather than form. Support at the beginning levels of language learning is extensive but is gradually decreased as the child progresses.

Ideally, instruction should be pitched somewhat above a child’s current level of functioning. Instruction and collaboration with an adult or more capable peers will enable a child to reach a higher level and ultimately function on that level. Instruction and interaction are key elements. The overall theories of evaluation and instruction presented in this book are grounded in Vygotsky’s concepts of actual and potential development and the zone of proximal development.

Implications for classroom instruction based on an integration of the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky are listed below:

- Provide students with hands-on experiences and opportunities to make discoveries.
- Be aware of and plan for individual differences. Because children have different experiences and come from different backgrounds, they develop at different rates.
- Children learn best when activities are developmentally appropriate. Careful observation of the processes a child uses provides insight into the child’s level of development. According to Piaget, the child’s current level of development determines what she or he will learn. Teaching needs to be adjusted to the child. According to Vygotsky, teaching should be directed to a child’s emerging skills. It should be in the zone of proximal development.
- According to Vygotsky, classrooms should be rich in verbal guidance. Interactions with the teacher and peers foster learning. Modeling of strategies for improving comprehension and using context clues are examples of ways teachers foster social cognitive learning.

**Cognitive Behavioral Approach**

Behavioral and cognitive principles have been combined in an approach known as **cognitive behavioral modification**. Our behavior is affected by the set of rewards and punishments we have experienced in the past and by our beliefs, thoughts, and expectations (Westmont Psychology Department, 2008). Suppose that, based on your past experience of receiving low grades on tests, you believe that you are not very smart and therefore it won’t make much difference if you study for a test; so you don’t study, and you get a poor grade, thus reinforcing your lack of self-efficacy. A cognitive behavioral approach helps students change their attributions, so they see that effort is required for success. They also learn to see themselves as competent learners. Cognitive behavioral classroom management provides techniques for students to gain control of their learning. Students are taught to set goals, establish and follow a plan for reaching each goal, monitor their progress toward reaching that goal, and evaluate whether they have reached it. Along with learning strategies for improving reading and writing, students are taught self-regulation strategies. A student might set as a goal improving comprehension of text content. The student might then use a checklist or self-talk to prompt herself or himself to set a purpose for reading, survey the text, think about what she or he knows about the topic, make predictions, ask questions while reading, and summarize at the end of each section. The student monitors the use of the strategies to see if they are helping and evaluates whether she or he is reaching the goal of improved comprehension of the text. As Meichenbaum and Biemiller (1998) explain, practice usually involves “both physically performing the skill or skills involved in the task and verbally guiding oneself (thinking out loud—demonstrating self-regulation overtly) while carrying out the task” (p. 126).
Major Theories of Literacy Learning and Language Development

Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches

Another way of looking at theories of literacy learning is to note where those who apply them fall on a continuum. On one end of this continuum are those who espouse a subskills, or bottom-up, approach; on the other end, there are those who advocate a holistic, or top-down, approach. In between are the interactionists.

Bottom-Uppers

In the bottom-up approach, children literally start at the bottom and work their way up. First, they learn the names and shapes of the letters of the alphabet. Next, they learn consonant sounds, followed by simple and then more complex vowel correspondences. As Carnine, Silbert, and Kame’enui (1990) explain, “Our position is that many students will not become successful readers unless teachers identify the essential reading skills, find out what skills students lack, and teach those skills directly” (p. 3). Bottom-up procedures are intended to make learning to read easier by breaking complex tasks into their component skills. Instruction proceeds from the simple to the complex. In essence, there are probably no 100 percent bottom-uppers among reading teachers. Even those who strongly favor phonics recognize the importance of higher-level strategies.

Top-Downers

A top-down approach, as its name indicates, starts at the top and works downward. Learning to read is seen as being similar to learning to speak; it is holistic and progresses naturally through immersion. Subskills are not taught because it is felt that they fragment the process and make learning to read more abstract and difficult (Goodman, 1986). One of the most influential models of reading is that proposed by Ken Goodman (1994b). According to Goodman, readers use their background knowledge and knowledge of language to predict and infer the content of print. Readers “use their selection strategies to choose only the most useful information from all that is available” (Goodman, 1994b, p. 1125). When reading the sentence “The moon is full tonight,” the reader can use his or her knowledge of the moon, context clues, and perhaps the initial consonants f and t to reconstruct full and tonight. According to Goodman’s theory, it is not necessary for the reader to process all the letters of full and tonight. However, in order to make use of background knowledge, context clues, and initial consonant cues, the reader must consider the whole text. If the words full and tonight were read in isolation, the reader would have to depend more heavily on processing all or most of the letters of each word. As far as comprehension is concerned, the top-down view is that students build their understanding through discussions of high-quality literature or informational texts. There is generally no direct, explicit instruction of comprehension strategies.

Interactionists

Most practitioners tend to be more pragmatic than either strict top-downers or dyed-in-the-wool bottom-uppers and borrow practices from both ends of the continuum. These interactionists teach skills directly and systematically—especially in the beginning—but they avoid overdoing it, as they do not want to fragment the process. They also provide plenty of opportunities for students to experience the holistic nature of reading and writing by having them read whole books and write for real purposes. In his study of highly effective teachers, Pressley (2006) found that most were inter-
actionists: “There is a great deal of skills instruction, with as many as 20 skills an hour covered, often in response to the needs of a reader or writer. Skills instruction is strongly balanced with holistic reading and writing, with students reading and experiencing substantial authentic literature and other texts that make sense for them to be reading given their needs” (p. 3). As cognitive psychologist M. H. Ashcroft (1994) notes, “Any significant mental task will involve both data-driven (bottom-up) and conceptually driven (top-down) processing” (p. 75).

In an interactive compensatory model, students use top-down processes to compensate for weakness in bottom-up processes or vice versa. For instance, students who have weak decoding skills make heavy use of context to make sense of a passage. On the other hand, when content is unfamiliar, readers get all they can out of the data. They read every word carefully, may reread it several times, and may even read it out loud. Think about how you read a set of directions for completing a complex, unfamiliar activity or a list of new tax regulations.

Where do you fit on the bottom-up, top-down continuum? Go back to the anticipation guide at the beginning of the chapter. Take a look at how you answered the six statements. If you agreed with only the odd-numbered ones, you are a bottom-down advocate. If you agreed with only the even-numbered statements, you are a top-downer. If your answers were mixed, you are probably an interactionist.

**Reader Response Theory**

Still another way of looking at reading is from a literary, or reader response, view. Literary theory explores the role of the reader. In the past, the reader’s role was defined as being passive, getting the author’s meaning. Today, reading requires a more active role—the reader must construct meaning from text. The model of transmission of information in which the reader was merely a recipient has given way to transactional theory, a two-way process involving a reader and a text:

> Every reading act is an event, or a **transaction**, involving a particular reader and a particular pattern of signs, a text, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context. Instead of two fixed entities acting on one another, the reader and the text are two aspects of a total dynamic situation. The “meaning” does not reside ready-made “in” the text or “in” the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between reader and text. (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 1063)

In her study of how students read a poem, Rosenblatt (1978) noted that each reader was active:

> He was not a blank tape registering a ready-made message. He was actively involved in building up a poem for himself out of his responses to text. He had to draw on his past experiences with the verbal symbols. . . . The reader was not only paying attention to what the words pointed to in the external world, to their referents, he was also paying attention to the images, feelings, attitudes, associations, and ideas that the words and their referents evoked in him. (p. 10)

The type of reading, of course, has an effect on the transaction. The reader can take an **efferent** or an aesthetic **stance**. When reading a set of directions, a science text, or a math problem, the reader takes an **efferent** stance, the focus being on obtaining information that can be carried away (efferent is taken from the Latin verb *effere*, “to carry away”). In the **aesthetic** stance, the reader pays attention to the associations, feelings, attitudes, and ideas that the words evoke.

Does it make any difference whether reading is viewed as being transmisssional, transactional, or somewhere in between? Absolutely. If reading is viewed as transmisssional, students are expected to stick close to the author’s message. If reading is viewed as transactional, students are
expected to put their personal selves into their reading, especially when encountering literature. From a transactional perspective, building background becomes especially important because it enriches the transaction between reader and text. Personal response and interpretation are at the center of the reading process. The reader’s role is enhanced when a transactional view prevails. See Table 1.1 for a summary of theories of learning and language development.

**Importance of Literacy Theories**

Why is it important to be aware of different theories of teaching reading? For one thing, it is important that you formulate your own personal beliefs about reading and writing instruction. These beliefs will then be the foundation for your instruction. They will determine the goals you set, the instructional techniques you use, the materials you choose, the organization of your classroom, the reading and writing behaviors you expect students to exhibit, and the criteria you use to evaluate students. For instance, whether you use children’s books or a basal anthology, how you teach phonics, and whether you expect flawless oral reading or are satisfied if the student’s rendition is faithful to the sense of the selection will depend on your theoretical orientation (DeFord, 1985).

**Approach Taken by This Book**

This book draws heavily on research in cognitive psychology, combines an interactionist point of view with a holistic orientation, and takes an integrated approach. Both the bottom-up and top-down approaches are step by step (Kamhi & Catts, 1999). In the bottom-up model, the reader progresses from letters to sounds to words. Seeing the word *moon*, the novice readers sounds it out as /m-/oo-/n/ and then blends the sounds to compose the word *moon*. In the top-down process as Goodman explained above, the reader uses language cues to predict and to confirm the word. Seeing the sentence “The wolf howled at the moon,” the reader uses her knowledge of language and wolves

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<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Behaviorism</td>
<td>Observable behavior is stressed. Responses to stimuli are reinforced or extinguished. Drills, guided practice, and acquisition of facts, skills, and concepts are emphasized.</td>
<td>Present and reinforce skills, such as phonics, in systematic fashion. Reinforce appropriate behavior.</td>
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<td>Cognitivism</td>
<td>Mental processes are important. Students are active learners as they use strategies to acquire facts, skills, and concepts.</td>
<td>Teach strategies. Ask questions that help reveal students’ thinking.</td>
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<td>Social Constructivism</td>
<td>Thoughts and ideas of others are an essential element in constructing knowledge. Students learn through expert guidance from more knowledgeable others. Social interaction, the zone of proximal development, and scaffolding are key elements in learning.</td>
<td>Make sure students are in their zone of proximal development. Co-construct knowledge with students. Scaffold students’ learning.</td>
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<td>Cognitive Behavioral</td>
<td>Learning is affected by the learning task and situation and the ability, interests, and attitudes of the students. Students use self-regulation to acquire facts, skills, and concepts.</td>
<td>Build self-efficacy. Teach students to set goals and self-regulate. Walk students through the process of setting goals, working to reach goals, and monitoring progress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactionist</td>
<td>Both top-down and bottom-up processes are used. Students are active learners as they employ strategies to acquire facts, skills, and concepts.</td>
<td>Teach students to use phonics skills and context. Encourage students to relate new learning to what they already know. Use compensatory mechanisms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reader Response</td>
<td>Reading is a transaction in which the reader affects the text and is affected by it.</td>
<td>Emphasize personal responses and interpretations. Encourage students to make personal connections to what they have read.</td>
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*Source: Portions of the chart are adapted from Woolfolk (2001), Table 9.8, Four Views of Learning (p. 358).*

**FYI**

- To clarify your philosophy of teaching, ask: “What are my instructional practices, and why am I doing what I’m doing?” Examining your practices should help you uncover your beliefs.
- This book takes the position that all sources of information—semantic, syntactic, background knowledge, and letter–sound relationships—are essential when processing text and emphasize the use of both context and phonics. However, the book also agrees with the view that even in mature reading, nearly all words are processed.
to predict that the word is *moon* because that makes sense in the sentence. She may decode the initial letter but doesn’t have to decode all the sounds in the word to predict that the word is *moon*. However, in an integrated approach, the processes occur in parallel fashion. For instance, when students decode words, four processors are at work: orthographic, phonological, meaning, and context (Adams, 1990, 1994). The orthographic processor is responsible for perceiving the sequences of letters in text. The phonological processor is responsible for mapping the letters into their spoken equivalents. The meaning processor contains one’s knowledge of word meanings, and the context processor is in charge of constructing a continuing understanding of the text (Stahl, Osborne, & Lehr, 1990). The processors work simultaneously, and they both receive information and send it to the other processors; however, the orthographic and phonological processors are always essential participants. Context may speed and/or assist the interpretation of orthographic and phonological information but does not take its place (see Figure 1.1). (Context would speed the decoding of *moon*.) When information from one processor is weak, another may be called on to give assistance. With a word such as *lead*, the context processor provides extra help to the meaning and phonological processors in assigning the correct meaning and pronunciation.

In an integrated model, both top-down and bottom-up processes are used. However, depending on circumstances, either bottom-up or top-down processes are emphasized. If one is reading a handwritten note in which some words are illegible, top-down processes are stressed as knowledge of language and knowledge of the world are used to fill in what is missing. If one is reading unfamiliar proper names or words in isolation, bottom-up processes are emphasized.

In an integrated approach, reading is considered an active, constructive process, with the focus on the reader, whose experiences, cultural background, and point of view will play a part in her or his comprehension of a written piece. The focus is on cognitive processes or strategies used to decode words and understand and remember

**FIGURE 1.1** Modeling the Reading Systems: Four Processors

text: using phonics and context to decipher unknown words, activating one’s knowledge of a topic, predicting meaning, summarizing, and visualizing.

Stress is also placed on teaching strategies in context and holistically applying them to children’s books, periodicals, ads and other real-world materials, and content-area textbooks. The integrated approach is a balanced approach in which systematic instruction and immersion in reading and writing play complementary roles.

The Status of Literacy

According to national testing results, some 67 percent of fourth-graders and 76 percent of eighth-graders can read at least on a basic level (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). Some 34 percent of fourth-graders and 34 percent of eighth-graders performed at or above the proficient level. Some 8 percent of fourth-graders and 3 percent of eighth-graders performed at the advanced level. Although there were more fourth- than eighth-graders at the advanced level, there were more fourth-graders (33 percent) than eighth-graders (24 percent) at the below-basic level. What do the levels mean? Table 1.2 provides descriptions of the performance at each level. The basic level is a conservative estimate of grade level reading. Students at the below-basic level are reading below grade level. The proficient level is apparently above grade level (Pellegrino, Jones, & Mitchell, 1999). NAEP data provides an overview of the kinds of literacy instruction that students in the elementary grades and middle school will need. Students at the upper end will need to be challenged. Those at the lower end, especially those performing below the basic level, will need extra help and, in some cases, extensive intervention.

Impact of the Elementary and Secondary Act

The Elementary and Secondary Act plays a highly influential role in literacy instruction and assessment. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, a version of the Elementary and Secondary Act, had as its goal 100 percent of all students reaching proficiency at their grade level in state math and reading/language arts by the 2013–2014 school year, a provision that was waived in 2011. Although criticized because it led, in many instances, to teaching to the test and a narrowing of the curriculum, and demanded that English language learners be assessed before they have had adequate time to learn English, NCLB succeeded in drawing attention to the neediest students. It conveyed the idea that making provision for all students, including struggling learners, is every teacher’s responsibility. The Elementary and Secondary Act (currently

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Should be able to locate relevant information, make simple inferences,</td>
<td>Should be able to integrate and interpret texts and apply their understanding of the texts to draw conclusions and make evaluations.</td>
<td>Should be able to make complex inferences and construct and support their inferential understanding of the text and apply their understanding of the texts to make and support a judgment.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and use their understanding of the text to identify details that support</td>
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<td>a given interpretation or conclusion. Students should be able to</td>
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<td>interpret the meaning of a word as it is used in the text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Should be able to locate information; identify statements of main idea,</td>
<td>Should be able to provide relevant information and summarize main ideas and themes. They should be able to make and support inferences about a text, connect parts of a text, and analyze text features. Students performing at this level should also be able to fully substantiate judgments about content and presentation of content.</td>
<td>Should be able to make connections with in and across texts and to explain causal relations. They should be able to evaluate and justify the strength of supporting evidence and the quality of an author's presentation. Students performing at this level should also be able to manage the processing demands of analysis and evaluation by stating, explaining, and justifying.</td>
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<td>theme, or author’s purpose; and make simple inferences from texts. They</td>
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<td>should be able to interpret the meaning of a word as it is used in the</td>
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known as No Child Left Behind or NCLB) is up for renewal. Although its basic purpose will remain the same, emphasis will be on improving the effectiveness of teachers, using measures of students’ performance as part of teacher evaluation systems, and using measures of growth rather than percentages of students passing a proficiency standard to assess the progress of schools. A key provision will be establishing standards that will prepare students to be college and career ready.

**Common Core State Standards**

One problem with NCLB was that each state set its own standards and used its own tests to determine proficiency. When individual state standards were translated into NAEP equivalent scores, most states had proficiency levels that were below NAEP’s basic level (Bandeira de Mello, 2011). Current emphasis is now on having states adopt a challenging set of standards known as the Common Core State Standards and using an assessment system, now being constructed, that will be aligned with the standards so that every student will be college and career ready. The Common Core State Standards “define the knowledge and skills students should have to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs” (National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). There are ten anchor standards for reading, writing, language, and content-area reading and content-area writing. The anchor standards are broad statements of objectives, which are further broken down into more specific grade-specific objectives. The anchor standards are listed on the inside front cover. To find specific standards by grade level, consult the Common Core State Standards at [http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf) for English Language Arts and also Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects.

The Common Core State Standards emphasize teaching for transfer. In other words, for teaching in such a way that the literacy skills presented can be used in other classes and in the world outside school. Emphasis is also placed on helping students see and understand the big ideas and answer essential questions. Higher-level thinking skills and reading informational text are given a more prominent role just as technology is (Kallick, & Troxell, 2011).

In a sense, the primary skill advocated by the Common Core State Standards is the ability to read complex text. ACT researchers (2006) found that “the clearest differentiator in reading between students who are college ready and students who are not is the ability to comprehend complex texts” (pp. 16-17). Since workplace text is equal in complexity to college-level text, the implication is that in order to prepare all students to be college and career ready, it is essential to prepare students to read complex texts. Learning to read complex text is a long-term objective that starts at the earliest levels and develops up through the elementary, middle school, and high school levels, as each level builds on skills and understandings established at earlier levels. Comprehending complex text requires vocabulary and background development, instruction in skills, and the development of higher-level discussion and writing skills. A key feature of the Common Core State Standards is the reading of a greater proportion of informational text. Reading additional informational text should not be interpreted as spending less time reading literary texts (Langer, 2011). It does mean, though, that students should be doing more reading in science and social studies and other content areas.

However, the most drastic change in the Common Core State Standards is the implementation of grade bands. There is an apparent gap between the reading skills possessed by today’s students and those required for college and career readiness and also between the difficulty level of materials that students are reading at the end of high school and those that they will be required to read to become college and career ready (National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a). To close both gaps, the Common Core State Standards have incorporated a feature known as grade bands. The bands include grades 2–3, 4–5, 6–8, 9–10, and 11–12. The difficulty level at each band has been expanded so that by senior year students will be
expected to be able to read at or close to college and career level. In other words, the standards call for students to be able to read more challenging material at every grade level beginning with grade 2. Even though Common Core Standards call for having students read more challenging materials, this does not mean that students should be given material that exceeds their reading ability. Giving students material that is too hard is virtually guaranteed to stunt their literacy growth.

**Scientifically Based Literacy Instruction**

Because large numbers of students are reading on a basic level or below and because the gap between the reading achievement of poor and middle-class students is substantial, there has been a call in federal regulations for programs that are scientifically based. In federal regulations, scientific evidence is interpreted as meaning studies in which Method A has been compared with Method B and/or a control group and found to be statistically superior. The International Reading Association (2002) uses the term *evidence-based* rather than scientifically based. *Evidence-based* is a broader term and includes qualitative studies as well as the more scientifically based studies that include comparison of experimental and control groups.

The most extensive study of research-based programs was conducted by John Hattie (2009), a New Zealand educator, who analyzed more than 800 meta-analyses. A meta-analysis is a study of studies that use statistical techniques to determine effect size. **Effect size** is the power of the element being tested to improve achievement or some other outcome. The effect size is the degree to which the experimental group did better than a matched group of students. Effect sizes are typically expressed in standard deviations. A **standard deviation** is a measure of the variability of performance and can be translated into percentiles or other units. One standard deviation at the average level is equal to 34 percentile points. For instance, summarizing and note taking have an effect size of 1 (Marzano, Gaddy, & Dean 2000). This is equal to a percentile gain of 34 points. If students were at the fiftieth percentile (an average rank) before the treatment, they would be at the eighty-fourth percentile after the treatment. In other words, instead of doing better than 50 percent of students, they would be doing better than 84 percent.

Average effect size is .4 (13.6 percentile points). An effect size of .2 (6.8 percentile points) is small, and one of .8 (27.2 percentile points) is high (Cohen, 1992). Effect sizes can also be negative. They can detract from progress. Negative effect sizes include summer vacation (–.09), retention (–.16), television (–.18), and mobility (–.34). Throughout the text, effect sizes, if available, will be noted in terms of percentiles so that you can better judge the value of teaching practices and techniques.

Back in the United States, researcher and educator Robert Marzano (2010) identified 41 instructional factors that have a positive impact on learning. In general, the factors he discovered mirror those uncovered by Hattie. Two of Marzano’s highest factors are (1) setting goals and (2) tracking student progress and using scoring scales, which are similar to rubrics. These, of course, are key elements in visible teaching and learning. A third meta-analysis was conducted by the National Reading Panel (2000), which restricted its study to literacy. These three main sources and others have been used to help select the research-based strategies presented in this text. Table 1.3 shows the effect sizes of a number of instructional elements.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect size</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Percentile rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is the power of the element being tested to improve achievement or some other outcome. The effect size is the degree to which the experimental group did better than a matched group of students. Effect sizes are typically expressed in standard deviations. Average effect size is .4. An effect size of .2 is small, and one of .8 is high (Cohen, 1992).</td>
<td>is a measure of variance or how much dispersion there is from the average. A low standard deviation means there is little variance. Scores cluster around the mean or average. A high standard deviation means that there is a wide variance. Scores are more widely dispersed.</td>
<td>is the point on a scale of 1 to 99 that shows what percentage of students obtained an equal or lower score. A percenttile rank of 75 means that 75 percent of those who took the test received an equal or lower score.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Hattie (2009) considers an effect size of .6 to be large.
Visible Teaching and Learning

Based on his analyses, Hattie (2009) concluded that what is most effective is visible teaching.

Visible teaching and learning occur when learning is the explicit goal, when it is appropriately challenging, when the teacher and the student both (in their various ways) seek to ascertain whether and to what degree the challenging goal is attained, when there is deliberate practice aimed at attaining mastery of the goal, when there is feedback given and sought, and when there are active, passionate, and engaging people (teacher, student, peers, and so on) participating in the act of learning. It is teachers seeing learning through the eyes of students, and students seeing teaching as the key to their ongoing learning. The remarkable feature of the evidence is that the biggest effects on student learning occur when teachers become learners of their own teaching, and when students become their own teachers. When students become their own teachers, they exhibit the self-regulatory attributes that seem most desirable for learners (self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-assessment, self-teaching). (p. 22)

The theme of this text will be to make teaching and learning visible. To accomplish that purpose, the text will highlight key effective factors. Each chapter will conclude with a feature entitled “Extending and Applying,” in which you will be asked to extend your knowledge of key effective practices and apply them, and also “Professional Reflection,” in which you will be asked to reflect on your ability to implement key assessment and instructional practices. The Professional Reflection checklists are modeled on highly effective teacher evaluation systems in widespread use such as those constructed by Robert Marzano (2010), Charlotte Danielson (2010), and those used by charter schools such as Achievement First (2010), and those used by school districts such as the District of Columbia (2010) and also the IRA Standards for Reading.

### Table 1.3 Effect Size of Selected Instructional Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Effect Size in Percentiles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracking progress</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher clarity</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher–student relationships</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting goals</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student engagement</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not labeling students</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching strategies</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching vocabulary</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home environment</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic status</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom cohesion</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer influences</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group learning</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration/persistence/engagement</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool program</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of students’ efforts</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professionals. The Professional Reflections only cover practices related to literacy instruction. Classroom management and routines are not addressed. The overall intent of this book is to equip you with the knowledge, understanding, and skills to become a highly effective literacy teacher. By focusing on key practices, you can develop the skills and practices needed to become a highly effective teacher.

As a teacher, you should become acquainted with the major findings of literacy research so that you can construct a literacy program that is based on research and so that you can assess whether new techniques or materials that you are thinking about trying are supported by research. You should also assess the research base to see if it is applicable to your students and your situation. A technique that works well on a one-to-one basis may not be effective with small groups. Of course, research doesn't answer all the instructional questions that arise. You need to become a teacher–researcher so that you can test methods and materials and have a better basis for selecting those that are most effective in your situation. You also need to assess all aspects of your program with a view to replacing or improving elements that aren’t working and to adding elements that are missing.

As far as possible, the suggestions made in this text are evidence-based. However, in some instances they are based on personal experience or the experience of others. Teaching literacy is an art as well as a science.

Role of Language

As magical as it may be, reading is our second major intellectual accomplishment. Our first, and by far, most important, intellectual accomplishment is our acquisition of language. Without language, of course, there would be no reading. Reading is very much a language activity, and, ultimately, our ability to read is limited by our language skills. We can’t read what we can’t understand. Even if we can pronounce words we don’t understand because of superior phonics skills, we are not reading. Reading is a process in which we construct meaning from print. Without meaning, there is no reading.

Components of Language

Language has a number of interacting components: phonology (speech sounds known as phonemes), morphology (word formation), syntax (sentence formation), semantics (word and sentence meaning), prosody (intonation and rhythm of speech), and pragmatics (effective use of language: knowing how to take turns in a conversation, using proper tone, using terms of politeness, etc.) (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2003).

Developing Language

Theories of language learning are similar to those of cognitive learning. From the behavioral standpoint, language is learned through reinforcement. As babies make sounds and toddlers say words, they are reinforced by their caregivers. Imitation is also a factor. The nativist viewpoint maintains that children are born with a language acquisition device (LAD) that predisposes them to learn and generate language structures (Chomsky, 1968). According to nativist theorists such as Noam Chomsky, syntax is too complex to be learned by imitation or instruction. The mental structures for syntax are activated by verbal input. Using words that they hear, children are able to understand and generate sentences that follow rules too complex for them to learn simply by imitation or instruction. Interactionists stress the interaction of children’s
cognitive abilities and environmental factors, such as input from caregivers and others. Interactionists note that caregivers use a number of strategies, such as speaking slowly, repeating, and filling in missing words, to encourage and scaffold emerging speech. According to social interactionists, humans use these strategies naturally. We have an inborn need and desire to communicate.

Although young children learn many words through imitation, language learning is also a constructive process. If children were mere imitators, they would only be able to repeat what they hear. But they construct sentences such as “Mommy goed work,” which is something that adults do not say. Creating a hypothesis about how language works, young children note that -ed is used to express past action and then overapply this generalization. With feedback and experience, they revise the hypothesis and ultimately learn that some action words have special past-tense forms.

Learning a Second Language

Large numbers of students learn English as a second or even a third language, so it’s important to have some understanding of the acquisition of additional languages. Learning a second language is easier than learning a first language. Students who have a firm foundation in their first language have an easier time learning a second language. Concepts about language and its functions have already been formed. If English is similar to the first language, there may be a transfer of word and syntactical knowledge. Students are best able to learn a second language when their native language is accepted and they feel secure and confident. Input that is comprehensible is another key factor (Krashen, 2003). In reading, English language learners (ELLs) will acquire more language and comprehend better if they know 98 percent of the words in the text (Nation, 2001). Input can be enhanced through boldfaced vocabulary words and marginal glosses and illustrations. Speaking slowly, using gestures and visuals, and explaining new words help make oral input comprehensible. Motivation is also a key factor. The desire to make friends can be a powerful motivator (Lessow-Hurley, 2003). Initial success in acquiring language is also a motivator and leads to increased language acquisition.

Growth of Vocabulary

By age 3, children have a speaking vocabulary of about 1,000 words. By the time they enter kindergarten, they may know 5,000 words or more. The major influence on the size of children’s vocabularies is the quantity and quality of the kind of talk they are exposed to. According to language expert Todd Risley (2003), the most important thing parents and other caregivers can do for their children is to talk to them. The amount of talk directed toward infants and toddlers is powerfully related to their verbal abilities and their success in school. Hart and Risley (1995) collected data on the quantity and quality of parent talk. They collected enough data on a sufficient number of families that they could reliably estimate the average amount of parent talk. They found that the sheer volume of talk that infants and toddlers hear varies greatly. Some children hear fewer than 500 words in an hour of family life. Others are exposed to 3,000 words in an hour. Some parents express approval or affirmation forty times an hour, whereas others, fewer than four times an hour. These differences add up. By age 4, some children have heard more than 50 million words, while others have heard just 10 million words. By age 4, some children have had 800,000 affirmations, while others have heard just 80,000. But there is more than just a quantitative difference between the most talkative and the least talkative families. The least talkative families use talk primarily to control and guide children. The most talkative families also use talk in this way, but they go beyond giving directions. Much of their extra talk consists of descriptions and explanations and

| Pragmatics is the component of language that has to do with engaging in effective communication. | whose native language is not English and who cannot participate effectively in the regular curriculum because they have difficulty speaking, understanding, reading, and writing in English-speaking classrooms. |

| FYI | Adults clarify and extend children’s ideas and provide additional information and advanced vocabulary, which lift children’s thinking to higher levels (Raines & Isbell, 1994). |

| FYI | By engaging students in discussions and conversations that ask them to see likenesses and differences and to categorize and make predictions, you are building higher-level thinking skills. |

| English language learners (ELLs) are students who were not born in the United States or whose native language is not English and who cannot participate effectively in the regular curriculum because they have difficulty speaking, understanding, reading, and writing in English-speaking classrooms. |
contains a more complex vocabulary and structure and added positive reinforcement. The amount and quality of talk to which children are exposed are correlated with the size of their vocabularies and their later language and cognitive development.

Although studies show that the amount of talk is not strictly related to socioeconomic status, professionals talk the most, and parents on welfare talk the least. However, there is a great variability among the working class. Many of the most talkative parents, along with the quietest, are in the working class. And it is parental talkativeness rather than socioeconomic status that relates to later verbal ability. In other words, it isn’t how much money parents have or how much education they have or whether they are members of a minority group that counts; it is how much and how well they talk to their children. As Risley (2003) hypothesized, “The accumulation of language experience is the major determiner of vocabulary growth and verbal intellectual development” (p. 2).

In a longitudinal study of children in Bristol, England, Wells (1986) found that children’s language was best developed in one-to-one situations in which an adult discussed matters that were of interest and concern to the child or the two talked over a shared activity. It is also essential that the adult adjust his or her language so as to take into consideration and to compensate for the child’s limited linguistic ability, something parents seem to do intuitively.

In his extensive study, Wells (1986) found that some parents intuitively provided maximum development for their children’s language. Far from being directors of what their children said, these parents were collaborative constructors of meaning. Careful listeners, they made genuine attempts to use both nonverbal and verbal clues to understand what their children were saying. Through careful listening and active involvement in the conversation, parents were able to help the children extend their responses so that both knowledge of the world and linguistic abilities were fostered.

As a teacher, you can’t change the quality or quantity of language to which children have been exposed, but you can increase the quantity and quality of talk in your classroom and encourage parents and other caregivers to do the same. This book emphasizes high-quality, language-rich social interactions of the type conducted by the parents who best foster their children’s language development.

**Importance of the Students’ Cultures**

Living as we do in a multicultural, pluralistic society, it is important for us to explore and understand the literacy histories of our pupils. We have to ask such questions as these: In students’ culture(s), how are reading and writing used? What values are placed on them? What are the ways in which the students have observed and participated in reading and writing? Is literacy in their environment primarily a group or an individual activity? Given this information, instruction should build on the students’ experiences and develop and reinforce the skills and values important to their culture(s) as well as those important to the school.

**Using Technology**

The Web site of the New Literacies Research Team offers videos and articles exploring the New Literacies.

http://www.newliteracies.uconn.edu/pubs.html

**Literacy and Technology: The New Literacies**

The New Literacies are the reading, writing, and communication skills that are required for the successful use of information and communications technologies, especially the Internet. The Internet has a number of positive features that can be used to foster
higher-level thinking and literacy, and it offers virtually unlimited content that is up-to-date and, in many instances, unavailable elsewhere. Students can work with real-life problems, such as global warming or hunger, and can interact with other students and publish their work on the Internet. However, because of its unlimited and unregulated content, the Internet demands critical thinking, including analysis and evaluation. A key feature of the Internet is the ease with which hyperlinks can be used to go from site to site. Students are able to direct their learning by deciding which links to click on. Again, this means that students must analyze, synthesize, and evaluate as they progress through sites via hyperlinks (Bradshaw, Bishop, Gens, Miller, & Rogers, 2002).

On the minus side, the Internet offers some unique challenges. As Bradshaw and colleagues (2002) warn, “The vast amount of information available can be overwhelming and lead to disorientation, information overload and devaluation of information” (p. 277). Students can suffer from “information fatigue” and simply give up. They might also experience navigational disorientation and have difficulty finding their way around the Internet. Knowledge of the topic and experience with effective search techniques can help overcome these problems. Another problem, and perhaps the most significant, is the danger of falling into shallow thinking patterns. Students might gather a lot of information but not process it. Seeing the amount of information they have collected may give them the false impression of having a greater understanding of the topic than they actually do have. A related issue is the uneven quality of online information. The accuracy, reliability, and depth of information on the Internet can vary dramatically, which calls for careful, critical reading.

“At its best the web offers opportunities that simply cannot be replicated via other media without the learning environment becoming ridiculously clumsy and inefficient. The web offers options and access that can change the way teachers teach and learners learn” (Bradshaw et al., 2002, p. 278). But making the most of the Internet and other technologies requires careful planning and teaching. “Successful searchers used the skills of thinking, acting, integrating, transforming and reaching resolution, but not all searchers are able on their own to use these skills” (p. 279). As researchers note, using the Internet is more complex than traditional inquiry. The New Literacies required for its use include the

intricacies of rapidly integrating a physical process of clicking the mouse, dragging scroll bars, rolling over dynamic images, and navigating pop-up menus that intertwine with a cognitive process of planning, predicting, monitoring, and evaluating one’s pathway through open Internet text spaces (as opposed to multiple printed texts or closed hyper-text systems). In addition, this self-regulated cycle often occurred across much shorter and disparate units of Internet text than the continuous text passages typically included in printed text comprehension tasks. (Coiro & Dobbler, 2007, p. 242)

In addition, as Coiro (2010) notes, “Each online reading activity may require very different skill sets (e.g., informational websites, search engines, email, IM, blogs).” As teachers, we need to determine our students’ current level of proficiency in these areas and build on that level.

Adapting Traditional Skills

A key reading skill for the era of the information superhighway is the ability to decide quickly and efficiently whether an article, study, or other document merits reading. With so much information available, it is essential that students not waste time reading texts that are not pertinent or worthwhile. Having more data to work with means that students must be better at organizing information, evaluating it, drawing conclusions from it, and conveying the essence of the information to others. They also need cognitive flexibility in order to utilize the vast amounts of information when proposing diverse solutions to increasingly complex problems. The more complex skills required to make the best use of technology will be addressed in subsequent chapters. Of course, these more complex skills build on traditional comprehension and
study skills. Technology is also changing the way teachers present materials, make assignments, assess students, and manage pupil data. Technology as a teacher tool will be explored in upcoming chapters.

**A Reading and Writing Program for Today’s Students**

What kind of program will help meet the literacy needs of today’s students? That is a question that the remainder of this book will attempt to answer. However, when all is said and done, the ten principles discussed below, if followed faithfully, should make a difference in determining such a program.

1. **Children learn to read by reading.** Learning to read is a little like learning to drive a car—instruction and guidance are required. In addition to instruction and guidance, novice readers, like novice motorists, require practice. They must read a variety of fiction and nonfiction books, newspapers, and magazines to become truly skilled. In a way, each book or article makes a child a better reader. As Hirsch (1987) pointed out, children must have a broad background in a variety of areas in order to be able to understand much of what is being written and said in today’s world. For example, a child who has read the fable “The Boy Who Cried Wolf” will have the background necessary to understand a story that includes the sentence “Frank cried wolf once too often.” Reading is not simply a matter of acquiring and perfecting skills; it also requires accumulating vocabulary, concepts, experiences, and background knowledge.

   To provide the necessary practice and background, children’s books are an essential component of a reading program. Unfortunately, large numbers of students are illiterate: They can read, but they do not, at least not on a regular basis. Only 56 percent of students ages 6 to 8 are frequent readers, which means they read at least five days a week. That percentage drops to 38 percent for 9- to 11-year-olds and 30 percent for 12- to 14-year-olds (Harrison Group, 2010). Lewis and Samuels (2003) found that additional reading was beneficial for all students. For average students, it added about 17 percentile points, a half-year’s gain in reading skills, but it was especially beneficial for ELLs, struggling readers, and students just beginning to learn to read.

   The case for including children’s books in a reading program is a compelling one. First, as just noted, those who read more, read better. Second, research suggests that students who read widely and are given some choice in what they read have a more favorable attitude toward reading (Harrison Group, 2010). As a practical matter, wide reading builds the skills needed to do well on assessments for the Common Core Standards.

   To succeed on the . . . assessments, students need access to a wide range of materials on a variety of topics and genres, both in their classrooms and in their school libraries, to ensure that they have opportunities to independently read widely among texts of their own choosing during and outside of the school day in order to develop their knowledge and joy of reading. (PARCC, 2011, p. 6)

   Using children’s books in the reading program not only leads to greater enjoyment of reading but also builds skill in reading. In addition, allowing some self-selection should produce students who can and do read. To assist you in choosing or recommending books for your students, lists of appropriate books are presented throughout the text along with a description of several extensive lists of leveled books (see Chapter 3). Chapter 3 also describes a number of devices for leveling or assessing the difficulty level of books.
2. **Reading should be easy—but not too easy.** Think about it this way: If children find reading difficult, they will acquire a distaste for it and will simply stop reading except when they have to. Because of inadequate practice, they will fall further behind, and their distaste for reading will grow. In addition, students will be unable to apply the strategies they have been taught, and learning will be hampered if the text is too difficult (Clay, 1993a). As Fry (1977a) put it years ago, make the match: Give students a book that they can handle with ease. Research by Berliner (1981), and Gambrell, Wilson, and Gantt (1981), and Nation (2001) suggested that students do best with reading materials in which no more than 2 to 5 percent of the words are difficult for them.

3. **Instruction should be functional and contextual.** Do not teach skills or strategies in isolation—teach a word-attack skill because students must have it to decipher words. For example, teach the prefix *pre-* just before the class reads a selection about prehistoric dinosaurs. Students learn better when what they are being taught has immediate value. Suggestions for lessons that are both functional and contextual are presented throughout this book.

4. **Teachers should make connections.** Build a bridge between children’s experiences and what they are about to read. Help them see how what they know is related to the story or article. Students in Montana reading about an ice hockey game may have no experience either playing hockey or watching the sport. However, you could help create a bridge of understanding by discussing how hockey is similar to soccer, a sport with which they probably are familiar. You should also help students connect new concepts to old concepts. Relate reading, writing, listening, and speaking—they all build on each other. Reading and talking about humorous stories can expand students’ concept of humor and remind them of funny things that have happened to them. They might then write about these events. Also build on what students know. This will make your teaching easier, since you will be starting at the students’ level. It will also help students make a connection between what they know and what they are learning.

5. **Teachers should promote independence.** Whenever you teach a skill or strategy, ask yourself: How can I teach this so that students will eventually use it on their own? How will students be called on to use this skill or strategy in school and in the outside world? When you teach students how to summarize, make predictions, or use context, phonics, or another skill or strategy, teach so that there is a gradual release of responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Gradually fade your instruction and guidance so that students are applying the skill or strategy on their own. Do the same with the selection of reading materials. Although you may discuss ways of choosing books with the class, you ultimately want students to reach a point where they select their own books.

6. **Teachers should believe that all children can learn to read and write.** Given the right kind of instruction, virtually all children can learn to read. There is increasing evidence that the vast majority of children can learn to read at least on a basic level. Over the past two decades, research (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2006) has shown that Reading Recovery, an intensive 12- to 20-week early intervention program, can raise the reading levels of about 76 percent of the lowest achievers to that of average achievers in a class. Reading Recovery uses an inclusive model:

- It has been one of the surprises of Reading Recovery that all kinds of children with all kinds of difficulties can be included, can learn, and can reach average-hand performance for their class in both reading and writing achievement. Exceptions are not made for children of lower intelligence, for second-language children, for children with low language skills, for children with poor motor coordination, for children who seem immature, for children who score poorly on readiness measures, or for children who have already been categorized by someone else as learning disabled. (Clay, 1991, p. 60)

A number of intervention programs have succeeded with struggling readers (Hiebert & Taylor, 2000). An important aspect of these efforts is that supplementary assistance is complemented by a strong classroom program. These results demonstrate
the power of effective instruction and the belief that all children can learn to read. Actually, a quality program will prevent most problems. A national committee charged with making recommendations to help prevent reading difficulties concluded, “Excellent instruction is the best intervention for children who demonstrate problems learning to read” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 33).

7. The literacy program should be goal-oriented and systematic. In keeping with the current concern for preparing all students to be college and career ready and the widespread adoption of the Common Core State Standards, this text has incorporated these standards throughout the text. The margin note “CCSS” designates places in the text where suggestions for implementing a particular standard are presented.

8. Teachers should build students’ motivation and sense of competence. Students perform at their best when they feel competent, view a task as being challenging but doable, understand why they are undertaking a task, are given choices, feel part of the process, and have interesting materials and activities. For many students, working in a group fosters effort and persistence. Students also respond to knowledge of progress. They work harder when they see that they are improving, and they are also energized by praise from teachers, parents, and peers, especially when that praise is honest and specific (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997; Sweet, 1997; Wigfield, 1997).

9. Teachers should build students’ language proficiency. Reading and writing are language-based. Students’ reading levels are ultimately limited by their language development. Students can’t understand what they are reading if they don’t know what the words mean or if they get tangled up in the syntax of the piece. One of the best ways to build reading and writing potential is to foster language development. In study after study, knowledge of vocabulary has been found to be the key element in comprehension. Students’ listening level has also been found to be closely related to their reading level. The level of material that a student can understand orally is a good gauge of the level at which the student can read with understanding. While fostering language development is important for all students, it is absolutely essential for students who are learning English as a second language.

10. Teachers need to know how students are progressing so that they can give them extra help or change the program, if necessary. Assessment need not be formal. Observation can be a powerful assessment tool. However, assessment should be tied to the program’s standards and should result in improvement in students’ learning. In each chapter in which lessons are presented, suggestions are made for assessing those lessons. Suggestions for assessment can also be found in annotations in the margins and in Chapter 3. In addition, there are several assessment instruments in the Appendix.

Highly Effective Teachers

In the 1960s, the U.S. Department of Education spent millions of dollars in an attempt to find out which method of teaching reading was the best (Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Graves & Dykstra, 1997). More than a dozen approaches were studied. There was no clear winner. No method was superior. Although the research didn’t directly prove it, many professionals concluded that the teacher was key. Teachers using the same methods got differing results. Some teachers were simply more effective than others. Hattie’s (2009) research found that two of the most powerful factors in student achievement were the clarity of instruction and teacher–student relationships.

What are the characteristics of effective teachers? A number of top researchers have visited the classes of teachers judged to be highly effective. Their students read more books and wrote more stories. Virtually all read on or above grade level. Their writing skills were surprisingly advanced. They also enjoyed school. On many occasions, observers watched in surprise as students skipped recess so that they could continue working on an activity. Their work was more appealing to them than play.
Chapter 1  The Nature of Literacy

Caring and High Expectations
Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of highly effective teachers is that they cared for their students and believed in them (Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001). They were genuinely convinced that their students could and would learn, and they acted accordingly. In writing, for instance, typical first-grade teachers believed that writing was difficult for young students and expected their students would only be able to produce pieces of writing composed of a sentence or two by year’s end (Wharton-McDonald, 2001). Their expectations were discouragingly accurate. By year’s end, most students in their classes were producing narratives that consisted of one to three loosely connected sentences with little attention to punctuation or capitalization.

Highly effective teachers had higher expectations. They believed that first-graders were capable of sustained writing. By year’s end, they expected a coherent paragraph that consisted of five or even more sentences, each of which started with a capital letter and ended with a period. And that’s the kind of writing their students produced.

Students have a way of living up to or down to teachers’ expectations. However, the highly effective teachers realized that high expectations are in the same category as good intentions; they need to be acted upon. High expectations were accompanied by the kind of instruction that allowed students to live up to those expectations. Highly effective teachers were also superior motivators. The teachers created a feeling of excitement about the subject matter or skill areas they taught (Ruddell, 1995).

Balanced Instruction
As students evidenced a need for instruction, effective teachers were quick to conduct a mini-lesson. A student attempting to spell boat, for instance, would be given an on-the-spot lesson on the oa spelling of long o. However, essential skills were not relegated to opportunistic teaching. Key skills were taught directly and thoroughly but were related to the reading and writing that students were doing.

Extensive Instruction
Effective teachers used every opportunity to reinforce skills. Wherever possible, connections were made between reading and writing and between reading and writing and content-area concepts. Often, students would develop or apply science and social studies concepts in their writing.

Scaffolding
Exemplary teachers scaffolded students’ responses. Instead of simply telling students answers, these teachers used prompts and other devices to help students reason their way to the correct response.

Classroom Management
Highly effective teachers were well organized. Routines were well established and highly effective. The core of their classroom management was building in students a sense of responsibility. Students learned to regulate their own behavior. One of the things that stood out in the rooms of highly effective teachers was the sense of purpose and orderliness. The greatest proportion of time was spent with high-payoff activities. When students composed illustrated booklets, for instance, the bulk of their time was spent researching and composing the booklets. Only a minimum of time was spent illustrating them.

Students learned how to work together. The classroom atmosphere was one of cooperation rather than competition. Effort was emphasized. Praise and reinforcement were used as appropriate. Students were also taught to be competent, independent learners.

FYI
In the past, emphasis was on instructional input. There was an assumption that given high-quality teaching, students would learn. However, in many teacher evaluation systems, the importance of learning has been added to the quality of instructional input. Increasingly, teachers are being assessed on how much their students learn. As a result, this text will emphasize assessing for learning to make sure students are learning what is being taught and are making adequate progress.
They were taught strategies for selecting appropriate-level books, for decoding unfamiliar words, and for understanding difficult text. Their efforts were affirmed so that they would be encouraged to continue using strategies. “Jonathan, I liked the way you previewed that book before selecting it to read. Now you have a better idea of what it is about and whether it is a just-right book for you.”

High-Quality Materials

The best teachers used the best materials. Students listened to and read classics as well as outstanding contemporary works from children’s literature. There was a decided emphasis on reading. Classrooms were well stocked with materials, and time was set aside for various kinds of reading: shared, partner, and individual.

Matching of Materials and Tasks to Student Competence

Highly effective teachers gave students materials and tasks that were somewhat challenging but not overwhelming. Teachers carefully monitored students and made assignments on the basis of students’ performance. If the book students were reading seemed to have too many difficult words and concepts, students were given an easier book. If they mastered writing a brief paragraph, they were encouraged to write a more fully developed piece. However, they were provided with the assistance and instruction needed to cope with more challenging tasks.

Becoming a Highly Effective Teacher

Although a great variety of topics will be covered in later chapters, the ten primary principles discussed earlier are emphasized throughout. Teaching suggestions and activities are included for fostering wide reading, keeping reading reasonably easy, keeping reading and writing functional, making connections, setting goals and assessing progress, and, above all, building a sense of competence and promoting independence. This book is based on the premise that virtually all children can learn to read and write.

Essentials for an Effective Lesson

In order to translate the key concepts discussed so far into a practical instructional context, the basic components of an effective lesson are listed below. These components are based on research and incorporate the essential elements contained in widely used teacher evaluation systems, which means that when your lessons are being evaluated, these are the elements that will most likely be considered. A variety of sample lessons are provided in this text. The lessons will incorporate these essential elements.

Objectives: Objectives incorporate key skills or understanding that are based on national, state, or district standards and students’ needs. They are clearly stated and shared with students. They might be posted. One way of checking on clarity of objectives would be to ask students to explain what they are learning and why.

Content/Texts/Activities: Content and activities are challenging but engaging. Texts/materials are of high quality and on students’ instructional levels. Where appropriate, students are given a choice of activities or texts. Texts might be traditional print, digital, or online.

Instruction: Instruction includes an explanation of what is being taught and why. Skills, strategies, or understandings are presented explicitly through modeling, demonstration, simulation, and/or explanation. Students are provided with guided practice interspersed with additional instruction as needed. The teacher continuously checks for understanding and modifies instruction as necessary. Ultimately, students apply what they have learned. Emphasis is on lots of reading and writing.

Evaluation: Using observation, quizzes, and checks for understanding, and other means, teachers assess students’ grasp of the skills, strategies, and understandings
presented. Instruction is modified as needed. Teachers document progress and reflect on the effectiveness of the lesson. What went well? What might need improvement?

The following key elements are not specifically described in the sample lessons but are implied:

**Differentiation:** Students are grouped, as appropriate, and are also provided with additional instruction and practice, as required. Adjustments are made in instruction, activities, and materials to meet the needs of all students.

**Classroom Atmosphere:** The classroom is set up for maximum efficiency, management routines are established, and students are engaged in learning. Instructional time is maximized. A caring, supportive atmosphere is established, and there is a spirit of mutual cooperation and respect and a we-are-readers-and-writers attitude.

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### Summary

Reading is an active process in which the reader constructs meaning from text. Key elements in learning to read are cognitive development, language development, and background of experience. Reading development is also affected by one's culture. Approaches to teaching reading can be viewed as being bottom-up, top-down, or interactive. Behavioral theories of learning favor bottom-up approaches, focus on observable phenomena, describe the student as being a passive recipient, tend to be teacher-centered, and emphasize subskills and mastery learning. Cognitive theories tend to be top-down or interactive in their approach, emphasize the active role of the reader as a constructor of meaning, are often student-centered or teacher-student interactive, and stress mental activities. Social cognitive theories stress the social aspects of learning, scaffolding of instruction, and the zone of proximal development.

In their language theories, behaviorists emphasize imitation and reinforcement, nativists stress an inborn propensity for learning language, and interactionists stress the interaction of the learner with opportunities to learn. According to Vygotsky, language is key to the development of thinking.

Learning a second language is easier than learning an original language, but an accepting environment, self-confidence, and motivation foster second-language development.

Current trends in literacy instruction include research-based instruction, Common Core State Standards, educational legislation such as the renewal of the Elementary and Secondary Act, performance on national tests such as the NAEP, and New Literacies. New Literacies build on traditional literacy skills but are more complex.

Widespread reading and functional instruction commensurate with children's abilities are essentials of an effective reading program. Also necessary is instruction that helps students make connections and fosters independence. Believing that virtually every child can learn to read and building students' motivation and sense of competence are important factors in an effective literacy program, as are setting goals; systematic, direct instruction; managing classroom behavior; building language proficiency; building higher-level literacy; and ongoing assessment. These factors can be translated into effective literacy lessons. The ultimate key to a successful program is a highly effective teacher.

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### Extending and Applying

1. Analyze one or more of your lessons in terms of the Essentials of an Effective Lesson discussed earlier in the chapter. What changes might you need to make to your lessons?
2. Evaluate your literacy program in terms of the major characteristics listed earlier in the chapter. What are the strengths of your program? What changes might you need to make? How would you go about making those changes?
3. Take another look at the characteristics of Highly Effective Teachers. What are your strengths and weaknesses in this area? What might you do to build on
your strengths and work on your weaknesses?

4. Many school systems require teacher applicants to submit a portfolio. Some require new teachers to complete portfolios as part of the evaluation process. Even if a portfolio is not required in your situation, creating and maintaining one will provide you with the opportunity to reflect on your ideas about teaching and your teaching practices. It will help you to know yourself better as a teacher and so provide a basis for improvement. Set up a professional portfolio. The portfolio should highlight your professional preparation, relevant experience, and mastery of key teaching skills. Also, draw up a statement of your philosophy of teaching reading and writing.

**Professional Reflection**

**Do I**

___ Have an understanding of the nature of literacy?
___ Have an understanding of the key components of an effective literacy program and a plan for implementing them in my teaching situation?
___ Have a general understanding of the Common Core State Standards or other standards in the school district where I teach or plan to teach?
___ Have a personal philosophy for teaching literacy?

**Reflection Question**

In the past, teachers were evaluated on the quality of their presentations. Today, many school districts also evaluate teachers on the basis of how much their students learn. How might you prepare yourself for an evaluation system that combines quality of presentation with degree of student learning?

**Building Competencies**

To build competencies, consult the following sources for more detailed information:


The site of the New Literacies Research Team at the University of Connecticut, [http://www.newliteracies.uconn.edu](http://www.newliteracies.uconn.edu), has a wealth of information about the New Literacies.

Go to the Topic “Media/Digital Literacy” in the MyEducationLab (www.myeducationlab.com) for your course, where you can:

- Find learning outcomes for “Media/Digital Literacy” along with the national standards that connect to these outcomes.
- Complete Assignments and Activities that can help you more deeply understand the chapter content.
- Apply and practice your understanding of the core teaching skills identified in the chapter with the Building Teaching Skills and Dispositions learning units.
- Examine challenging situations and cases presented in the IRIS Center Resources.
- Check your comprehension on the content covered in the chapter by going to the Study Plan in the Book Resources for your text. Here you will be able to take a chapter quiz, receive feedback on your answers, and then access Review, Practice, and Enrichment activities to enhance your understanding of chapter content. (optional)

A+RISE® Standards2Strategy™ is an innovative and interactive online resource that offers new teachers in grades K–12 just-in-time, research-based instructional strategies that meet the linguistic needs of ELLs as they learn content, differentiate instruction for all grades and abilities, and are aligned to Common Core Elementary Language Arts standards (for the literacy strategies) and to English language proficiency standards in WIDA, Texas, California, and Florida.